Life as a Circular Paradox

by Bittie752

Summary

Everything has a beginning, a middle and an end, but not always in that order. Never, it seems, in that order if you are a part of the time traveling Tyler family. Sequel to an Unexpected Family, reimagining the events of Series 6.
Chapter 1

A Gathering at Lake Silencio

It had been three months of newly-wedded bliss for Rory and Amy Tyler, or Tyler-Pond as Amy always insisted. Either way, it had been fantastic. Once a week, usually on Saturdays, the Tyler clan met up at Tony and Trisha's house in London. Many times they were joined by members of the extended family: Jack, Sarah-Jane, Mickey and Martha. They traded tales of their lives.

Tony’s stories involved his children or an interesting case at work. Trisha limited her tales of the bureaucracy of UNIT, focusing on the kids' antics. The new Uni student, Sabrina, filled them in on her classes, her friends and this new guy she had been seeing. When her two big brothers started interrogating her about the young man’s identity she rolled her eyes and told them to stuff it.

There were exciting tales to be told from the four current time travelers as well. Amy was fond of the one from her and Rory's romantic trip to Venice, where they ran into fish-vampires but sadly missed Casanova (not that Rory was upset by that) by a hundred years or so. They had also met Vincent Van Gogh, helped him out a bit and the artist had dedicated one of his paintings to Amy.

Rose and The Doctor also had few thrilling tales. They had run into a group of Silurians who were looking to reawaken from hibernation and take back the Earth. The Doctor had almost negotiated a peace deal, but it soon became clear that humanity was not quite ready to share the planet.

Then Rose had everyone in stitches as she regaled them with an account of the time that the Doctor got trapped outside the TARDIS and was forced to become the lodger of a delightful bloke named Craig. The Doctor had appropriately blushed as she praised his football skills and the matchmaking he had done between Craig and Sophie.

Everyone deserved a shot at the woman they love, the Doctor had declared. Then it was Rose's turn to blush.

Family dinners seemed to be a highlight for those who were currently Earth based and a respite for those who weren't. It was a routine that worked for their unconventional family and no one would know if it was actually two weeks between visits for Amy and Rory because they had managed to find themselves in the middle of a rebellion. They would simply make up for it by jumping ahead and attending two in a row. Or that it had actually been a month for the Doctor and Rose because the Doctor had insisted on piloting the TARDIS himself.

Rory actually kept a close eye on visits home, not wanting to keep Amy away for long periods. The last thing he wanted was for her to begin to age prematurely compared to Tony, Trisha or Sabrina. It was not a problem his mum and the Doctor had to worry about, though, so who knew how long they stayed away between visits. In fact, Rory was constantly teasing his mum about not knowing her real age. Once she had stuck her tongue out at him and reminded her son that he would have that problem too one day.
Still every week, linearly at least, Rose and the Doctor happily arrived for family dinners and came if and when anyone called. In fact, they had been the first to arrive at the hospital a few days ago when Mickey and Martha's son, Gareth, was born. That was probably due more to his mum's driving than anything else.

Currently though everyone was traveling separately. The honeymooners, Rory and Amy, were returning from helping reinstate a small colony of what humans would refer to as fairies from their dying home world to a new planet.

"Home sweet home," Amy said as she and her husband entered their slightly purple, Police Box shaped time and space machine. "As much fun as the adventure is," she said, wrapping her arms around Rory's neck, "there is nothing like alone time." She gently pressed a kiss against his lips and giggled when he picked her up and carried her to one of the jump-seats.

"What's that?" Amy asked, breaking their kiss.

"Probably nothing," Rory muttered before going back in for another snog.

"No really, Rory, there's something on the console." Pushing him off of her, Amy stood and picked up a blue envelope. It was the color of the Doctor's TARDIS and had a number two emblazoned on the front. Her hand was poised to open it when Rory ripped it out of her hands.

"Oi!" the red-head protested. "What did you do that for?"

Bringing the envelope to his nose, Rory sniffed it and said, "Someone managed to get through the TARDIS' defenses to get this here. It could be dangerous." Nothing toxic was registering.

"So you can tell if it's dangerous by sniffing it?" Amy asked as she quirked an eyebrow.

"Time Lord Superpowers," Rory retorted with a smirk and a shrug. "And just be glad I don't lick things like Dad did."

Laughing, Amy said, "How Mum ever kissed that man, I will never know."

Rory gave her a wistful smile. It had been almost a year since Dad had died, and it was nice to talk about him without his memory being tinged with pain.

"So, is it dangerous?" Amy asked, snapping him out of his reverie. For a fraction of a second something about her seemed off, like it wasn't really her. Before he could really register it, whatever it had been was gone.

Turning the envelope over in hands, Rory inspected it. "No I don't think so…"

Without warning Amy snatched the envelope back and ripped it open. "What does it say?" Rory asked, peering over her arm.

22/04/2011

16:30 MDT

37º 0º 38ºN 110º 14º 34º W
"Just a date, a time and a place. Looks like we've been invited somewhere, Mr. Tyler-Pond. The question is, who invited us?" Amy tapped the invitation against her chin.

"And how did they get inside the TARDIS to deliver it?" His gaze traveled up to the Time Rotor. "Friend or foe?"

"Of course it's friend. I would never let a foe in here if I had the choice," the TARDIS' voice reverberated through his head.

"Fair enough," Rory said, tilting his head slightly. "Care to elaborate on who the friend was then?"

A tinkling laughter filled his head. "Sorry, my cub, nothing I can say right now. You'll have to follow this path on your own, but I will implore you to head to the destination. Post Haste."

Heaving a sigh, Rory traced a hand across the console. "Do you always have to be so cryptic?"

"Did she say who it was?" Amy asked, pointing at a bit of the console.

"Just that it was a friend and we should go." Rory flicked a few switches. "Ready?"

With a big grin, Amy came over and bumped his shoulder. "Allons-y!"

The door to the TARDIS opened allowing Rory and Amy to step out into the dry, desert heat. The area seemed quiet, nothing around but a lonely stretch of highway containing an old diner and a rundown petrol station.

"Utah," Rory said, turning around in a circle. A flash of light caught his eye and Jack Harkness appeared.

"Hello, you two gorgeous creatures," Uncle Jack said, coming over to hug them. "Are you behind the mysterious invites?" the Captain asked, pulling a blue envelope out of his pocket.

Rory shook his head. "Four, you're number four?"

"Yep, and apparently you weren't the one who invited me to the middle of nowhere," Jack said as he pulled off his long military jacket.

"No, that would be me. Howdy." The familiar voice of the Doctor came from a short distance away.

"Doc!" Jack exclaimed at the same time both Amy and Rory said, "Doctor!" Only Rory noticed the Doctor's slight wince at the sound of his name.

After a round of hugs, Rory had started to ask where his mum was when another highly familiar voice called, "Hello, Sweeties."

Another round of greetings followed River's arrival and then the five of them retreated to the diner. Rory hung back and grabbed the Doctor's arm. "Doctor." The man in question flinched again although this time he tried to hide the reaction. "Where's Mum? And where's the TARDIS? I don't feel either of them near here."
"That's because they're not here," the Doctor said sadly.

"Is everything alright? Is Mum okay?" Rory said in a slight panic. The Doctor hadn't been letting Rory's mum out of his sight as of late. It was to be expected when he thought he'd lost her forever.

"Of course she is. Rose Tyler is more than alright, she's perfect. She just dropped me off here and went to visit your brother and before you ask, everyone else is absolutely fine as well." He waved a hand towards the door. "Let's go inside, shall we?"

River and Amy were already sitting on opposite side of a booth and Jack was at the counter probably flirting with the waitress. The Doctor slid in next to Amy and Rory next to River.

"I ordered us drinks and French fries," Jack said, swinging a chair around to sit at the end of the table.

Cracking open her journal, River asked, "Alright, then. Where are we? Have we done the family vacation on Easter Island?"

Amy was already flicking through the pages of her own red one. "Nope, no Easter Island yet."

Pulling out a small black journal, one that was unmistakably not his, what with a red rose emblazoned on the cover, the Doctor said, "Um... yes! I've got Easter Island.

River laughed. "They worshiped you there. Have you seen the statues?"

"Seen them? Rose gave me a miniature one for a Christmas present," the Doctor said with a laugh.

Leaning forward, Rory studied the man in front of him. There hadn't been a Christmas since the wedding. More to the point, Rory doubted that his mum would have celebrated one without her children, much less her grandchildren. While adjusting Rose's journal in his hands, Rory saw it. A ring with a pair of entwined gold and silver ropes, prominently displayed on the ring finger of the Doctor's left hand. A wedding ring.

Married, the Doctor was married. Did he and his mum just run off and get married and forget to invite him, Rory pondered.

"Jim the Fish," the Doctor exclaimed.

River smiled and said, "Oh! Jim the Fish! How is he?"

"Still building his dam," the Doctor said in jest. The waitress came up to the table and passed the sodas around the table before setting the baskets of fries down.

"Well," Jack said, tossing a few of the fried potatoes into his mouth. "I'm from a few days after the family trip to Crupta. Fantastic water slides, very slippery, and might I say, Dr. Song, you looked exceptionally magnificent in that green swimsuit." He tossed a wink in River's direction.
"I'll have to remember that, Captain." Her voice had suddenly become huskier. The Doctor rolled his eyes but didn't tell Jack to cut out the flirting like he usually did.

Something was wrong here. Something was very, very wrong. Rory's mind reached out to the Doctor's but he was met with heavy shielding. Something was not adding and Rory was determined to get to the bottom of it.

Amy's voice brought him back to reality. "So what's been happening, then? 'Cause you've been up to something." Cutting to the heart of the matter, that's his girl, Rory thought.

Shrugging, the Doctor put the journal back in his pocket. "We've been running. And I've been running my whole life. Now it's time for me to stop. And tonight I'm going to need you all with me."

Jack nodded solemnly as if a secret was passed between them. "We're here for you, Doc. What's up?"

Rubbing his hands together, the Doctor smiled. "A picnic and then a trip, somewhere different, somewhere brand new."

Rory smiled at that and was unable to resist teasing him. "There are places you haven't been yet."

The Doctor seemed to relax a little as he met Rory's eye. "Of course there are places I haven't been yet, far fewer than you, though. It's why we keep traveling. But this time we're going to space. 1969."

A short time later the quintet found themselves on a large picnic blanket not far from the edge of a quiet lake. The Doctor was leisurely lying on his side. River and Jack were shamelessly flirting. Amy was popping grapes into her mouth while Rory was scrutinizing everything.

"So why are we here exactly?" Amy asked in a voice that was obviously trying to sound casual.

Letting out a sigh, the Doctor rolled over and sat up. "Is it so improbable that I wanted to spend some time with a few members of my family?"

"Not at all," Rory said. "It's just odd that certain people aren't here."

Momentarily closing his eyes, the Doctor let out another deep breath and then stared at Rory. "I know that you're suspicious. Everything will be clearer soon. For now, can you please just trust me?"

Blinking at the unexpected mental contact, Rory nodded and tried to relax and enjoy the day. It was difficult. More than anything he wanted to question why the Doctor was obviously out of his timeline. There is no way that the Doctor would be married to anyone other than his mum, and she never would have gotten married without at least telling him. No, this was a future version of the Doctor, one who flinched when Rory or Amy said his name. Apparently they called him something else now.

Amy pointed up a high ridge. "Who's that?"
Following her eye line, Rory looked up but didn't see anything. "Hm? Who's who?"

Her eyes were slightly glazed as they slid back into focus. "Sorry what?" Amy asked, looking confused.

Once again for a moment that was too infinitesimal to measure, Amy didn't look like herself. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end. "What did you see? You said you saw something." Rory said, his eyes still scanning the area. He noticed River and Jack looking around suspiciously too.

Laughing, Amy said, "No, I didn't. Are your Time Lord Superpowers causing you to hear things now?"

Before anyone could respond, the Doctor butted into the conversation. "Ah! The moon! Look at it! Of course you lot did a lot more than look, didn't you? Big silvery thing in the sky, you couldn't resist it. Quite right."

"The moon landing was in '69. Is that where we're going?" Rory asked, trying to piece together whatever puzzle the Doctor was laying out for him.

The elder man smiled sadly. "Oh, a lot more happens in '69 than anyone remembers. Human beings. We will never get done saving them."

"Hey Doc," Jack said, pointing over to the lake. The still surface of the water had started rippling and bubbling. "I think there's something out there." A helmet emerged from the water, followed by a torso in a space suit.

The Doctor looked unfazed. Looking away from the lake, he acknowledged an old man standing next to a pickup truck. "You all need to stay back. Whatever happens now, you do not interfere. Clear?"

Rory was astonished. "That's an astronaut. That's an Apollo astronaut in a lake."

"I know," the Doctor said aloud softly. But in his mind he reached out to give some semblance of an explanation. "Rory, look at me."

Stepping forward, the young man looked into his eye and saw the strangest sight he had ever beheld. And for him that was saying something.

Normally when you looked into this Doctor's eye you saw bright green hiding the depths of time. Today, Rory saw what looked to be a long corridor with a miniature Doctor waving at him from inside.

"What's going on?" Rory demanded, knowing that whatever it was, he couldn't ask the question aloud.

"This is not the end, Rory. I promise you that you are brilliant enough to figure out what needs to be done here. Make me come back when your mum is eight months gone and we have just seen me with an old face. And tell Amy this isn't real; make sure she knows before this happens that this isn't real. But you both need to play along. Got it?" the Doctor pleaded with him.

"What's about to happen?" It had to be bad if the Doctor wanted him and Amy to know that it wasn't real. "Doctor!"
The Doctor, or whatever, shook his head and walked away. Amy tried to follow but Rory grabbed her around the waist and pulled her back. Through their bond Rory pushed the Doctor's message to her. "Not real, what is happening isn't really happening. Play along, we'll figure everything out later."

Rory kept the part about his mum being eight months gone to himself. It explained why she wasn't here, though. A suddenly pregnant Rose Tyler would have been hard to explain. And probably would have earned the Doctor a black eye for not only marrying her but getting her up the duff without so much a word to any of her children.

At the edge if the lake, the Doctor held his hands up in surrender. "Hello, my sweet girl. It's okay, I know it's you." The astronaut opened its helmet. "You have no choice. I know that. Never forget that you are loved, my dear."

Rory could barely make out the words that the Doctor was saying, but it was obvious that he not only knew who this was but also knew what was going to happen. The astronaut raised their hand, brandishing a weapon.

This could not be happening again. Letting go of Amy, Rory lunged forward but Jack caught him. "No!" Rory screamed both at the astronaut and Jack. It was too late, though; a blast came from the gun and hit the Doctor (or maybe the fake Doctor) in the chest.

It was palpable as the fixed point locked itself into place. But what was it about this moment that was fixed? The Doctor said it wasn't real but Rory and Amy were supposed to act as if it were. Was this for show?

A golden light began to emit from the (fake) Doctor's hands. "I'm sorry," the man that looked like the Doctor but wasn't said.

Rory had never seen regeneration first hand before but he was certain that this is what the beginning of it looked like. Another blast erupted from the weapon, hitting the Doctor and abruptly stopping the golden glow. The deed was done. Calmly, the astronaut turned back towards the lake, leaving the lifeless Doctor lying on the sand.

River raised her gun and shot at the retreating figure. Even after the clip was empty, she continued to fire. She reached for Jack's sidearm but he stilled her hand and shook his head.

Amy ran forward and fell to the ground next to the Doctor. "He can't be dead. This cannot be happening again." Her small hands felt for a pulse on his neck; none could be found. She laid her head on his chest, placing her ear over each heart in turn. Nothing.

Kneeling down beside him, Rory pulled back an eyelid. The miniature Doctor was no longer around, but on the back of his tongue he could taste the metallic tang that was indicative of a teleport. Clever.

A way around the fixed point, that was what Rory was supposed to figure out. The Doctor apparently needed to appear to be dead but wouldn't be.

River's voice broke him from his thoughts. "Whatever that was, it killed him in the
middle of his regeneration cycle. His body was already dead. He didn't make it to
the next one. I'm sorry."

"No, no," Amy said, shaking her head. "He can't be! And where the hell is Mum?"
The older gentleman who had been standing by the truck had made his way down
to the group. "I can save you some time," he said, his gravely, unfamiliar voice
sounding out of place. "That most certainly is the Doctor. And he is most certainly
dead. He said you'd need this."

"Gasoline?" Jack asked, a hint of bemusement in his voice.

River held back a sob. "A Time Lord's body is a miracle. Even a dead one. There
are whole empires out there who'd rip this world apart just for one cell. We can't
leave him here. Or anywhere."

"What do we do, Rory?" Amy asked, now clutching her husband.

"We're his family. We do what the Doctor's family always does, what needs to be
done." River said, squaring her shoulders and looking Rory in the eye. Her eyes
flicked to another object on the shoreline.

Nodding that he understood, Rory squeezed Amy tightly before realizing her.
"There's a boat. If we're going to do this, let's do it properly." He walked off down
the beach to drag the boat closer to the Doctor's prone form. No one moved from
their positions until Rory was back.

Then River rounded on the new man. "Who are you? Why did you come?"
The man smiled. "Same reason as all of you." He pulled out a blue envelope with
the number five on it. "Doctor Song. Amy. Rory. Captain Jack. I'm Canton Everett
Delaware the Third. I won't be seeing you again, but you'll be seeing me. And
Rory, give your mother my best." With that he turned and left leaving the grieving
family.

The sun was just beginning to set as Jack and Rory set the Doctor in the small boat.
Rory swallowed back the bile in his throat as Jack doused the body with the
accelerant. However when Jack went to strike the match, Rory stopped him.

"No, Uncle Jack, that's my job." If Mum could light Dad's funeral pyre, certainly he
could do this, Rory thought. I hope you were right, Doctor, I hope you made it out
alive.

Once the fire had taken hold, Jack and Rory pushed the boat into the water. Jack
walked back up the beach and wrapped an arm around both Amy and River. He
gently pressed a kiss into River's hair.

Rory stood stock still on the shoreline staring over the water, past the burning boat
to the opposite shore line. Four people stood there having basically appeared out of
thin air, a man and three women. Two of them pregnant women. If he squinted, he
could make out who they were.

Fantastic, a circular paradox. Let the fun begin, he thought ruefully.
The walk back into town had been quiet for the most part. Amy felt numb. Even though Rory had assured her that what was happening wasn't real, she had still watched the Doctor die in front of her, again. She had to stand by and watch as the man she had started to think of as her dad die. Rory and the Doctor owed her one hell of an explanation for that stunt.

More than anything though, she hoped the Doctor was alright. It had only been three months, but the Doctor had begun to fill the void left when Dad died. And to lose him now would be devastating to everyone.

"Five," River said as they approached the diner.

"Sorry, what?" Rory said, shaking his head.

"The Doctor numbered the envelopes. You got Two, I was Three, Jack was Four, and Mr. Delaware was Five." River said as they stepped inside.

Jack looked confused. "So?"

"So, where's One?" River asked.

"What, you think he invited someone else?" Rory looked around as if expecting someone else to be there.

River nodded. "Well, he must have. He planned all of this to the last detail."

"Where's Rose?" Jack asked. "That's the real question." There was something in the way he said it that led Amy to believe that Jack knew more than they did.

Amy couldn't take this right now. "Will you three shut up, it doesn't matter."

Turning to face Amy, River said, "He was up to something."

"He's dead," Amy said before she knew the words were coming out of her mouth. Play along, easy enough, she thought morosely. Her world once again felt like it was on shaky ground. Rory came over and wrapped an arm around her waist.

" 'Space, 1969.' What did he mean?" River asked, her gaze traveling from one face to another.

Suddenly Amy was angry. She knew she shouldn't be, but right now she didn't care. "You're still talking, but it doesn't matter."

Rory pulled her into a hug and gently said, "Hey, it mattered to him."

"So it matters to us," Jack replied.

Unshed tears filled Amy's eyes. "He's dead."

River pulled on Amy's shoulders until they faced each other. "But he still needs us. I know. Amy, I know. But right now we have to focus." Abruptly River strode over to the back table. It was set for two, with a basket of fries set between two glass bottles of soda. "When you know it's the end, who do you call?"
Jack shrugged. "Your family, people you can trust."

Picking up another blue envelope from the table, River inspected it and handed it over to Rory. "Number One. Who did the Doctor trust the most?"

"We all know the answer to that but she's wasn't here," Rory said as he passed the envelope to Jack.

The rear door creaked open and the Doctor strolled in, alone.

"This is cold. Even by your standards, this is cold," River ground out.

"Or 'hello' as people used to say," the Doctor said, confused.

He was here. Amy let out a small sob. "Doctor," she breathed.

"Just popped out to get the special straws, they add more fizz." The Doctor awkwardly held out a pair of straws. "I would have grabbed more if I'd known you lot would be here."

"Where's Mum?" Rory asked, looking behind the newest arrival.

The Doctor spun around. "Rose was just here. I was only gone for a minute. What's going on here?"

"You're okay. How can you be okay?" Amy pushed through everyone and hugged the Doctor tightly. All Rory's assurances that somehow whatever just happened somehow didn't were starting to sink in.

Gripping her tightly, the Doctor kissed the top of her head. "Hey, of course I'm okay. I'm always okay. I'm the king of okay. Oh, that's a rubbish title. Forget that title. Rory the Roman! That's a good title! Hello, Rory." Letting go of Amy, the Doctor turned his attention to the younger Time Lord. "Is everything okay?"

Rory hugged him fiercely. "Yeah, we're fine."

"Good," the Doctor replied, sounding skeptical as he pulled away. "Captain Jack, a pleasure." The two men shook hands and Jack gave him a wink. "And Doctor River Song, what trouble have you got for me this time?"

Reeling back, River slapped him hard across the face just as Rose walked back in the room. "River! What the hell was that for?" Rose looked concerned. "I pop off to the loo for a moment and when I come back you're slapping him. Although knowing him he probably deserved it."

"Blimey. Are you sure you aren't a Tyler because that slap puts you on par with Jackie," the Doctor said, rubbing his jaw.

Her eyes were still hard and her stance still stiff as River turned to Rose. "That was for something that he hasn't done yet."

"Ah," Rose said as she turned to survey the others in the room.

"Good, looking forward to it," the Doctor muttered, still rubbing his jaw.

"I don't understand. How can you be here?" Rory said as he hugged his mum.

"We were invited. Date, map reference, same as you lot, I assume. Otherwise it's a hell of a coincidence," the Doctor said, holding up the envelope from the table.
When Rose was done hugging Rory, Amy launched herself into her mum's arms. "Rory, what's going on?"

Rory grabbed his wife's hand. "He's not wearing a wedding ring anymore. Ask them when the last time we saw them was?"

"So where are you two then? When did we see you last?" Amy said, pulling back and trying to force herself to calm down. Whatever was happening, it wouldn't be good to panic.

"We just saw you and Rory a few days ago. Mickey and Martha's house, baby Gareth's birth. Are you okay? You look like something has scared the life out of you." Rose looked at her daughter with apprehension in her eyes.

Rounding on the Doctor, River asked, "So where does that leave us, huh? Jim the Fish? Have we done Jim the Fish yet?"

"Who's Jim the Fish?" the Doctor asked curiously, looking between River and Rose.

"I don't understand," Amy said, shaking her head and backing away.

"Yeah you do," Jack said quietly. Amy turned to look at him. It was the first time Jack had spoken in a while, that was really not like him. He definitely knew more than he was saying.

"I don't. What are we all doing here?" Rose said, looking directly at Jack.

"We've been recruited. Something to do with space, 1969. And a man called Canton Everett Delaware the Third." Rory said.

"Recruited by whom?" the Doctor asked.

Jack stepped forward. "Someone who trusts you more than anyone else in the Universe."

Half-laughing, the Doctor said, "The majority of those people are in this room. So who do you mean?"

"Spoilers," River said with a forced smirk.

"Why don't we continue this someplace more private?" Rose suggested, gesturing to the door the Doctor had just come through.

"Yes, let's." The Doctor turned on his heel and stalked out of the room, not stopping to make sure that everyone was following.

Hanging back for a moment, Rose grabbed Rory's arm. "Sweetheart, what's going on?"

"Mum," Rory said, pulling her into another hug and burying his face in her shoulder. "I wish I could tell you. I really, really wish I could, but it could be devastating to time."

"Okay, I get that, but is everyone okay? I mean, Amy looks like she's going to be sick and you and River look shaken to the core. Is it something back home?" Rose said as she rubbed circles on his back.

Shaking his head, Rory said, "Everyone is fine back home and physically we're all fine here. We just had a bit of a shock and I think we're at the beginning of a circular paradox."

"What do you…?"
Rory cut her off. "I've said as much as I can. I'm sorry."

"I understand, love, really. I just worry when I see all of you so upset." Rose tugged him towards the door. "Come on; let's go see what we can do about this space problem."

By the time mother and son had entered the Doctor's TARDIS, the man in question was running around the controls. "1969, that's an easy one. Funny how some years are easy, now 1482, full of glitches. Now then! Canton Everett Delaware the Third. That was his name, yeah? How many of those can there be? Well... three, I suppose."

Amy gave him a sad smile and walked down the ramp that led down underneath the console. A moment later River and Jack followed behind her.

Looking into Rory's eyes, the Doctor said softly, "Rory. Is everybody cross with me for some reason?"

Rory laid a hand on his arm and said, "I'll find out." Then he trailed after the girls and Jack.

"What did I do?" The Doctor asked Rose as she took his hand.

Standing on tiptoe, she kissed his cheek. "I'm not sure that you did anything, my love. But something happened and Rory said he can't tell me much. If he could he would, I know he would. Guess we're just going to have to see how this plays out."

"Rory, Amy, and River seem almost afraid of me. Why? I hate seeing them like that," the Doctor said, letting his head drop to nuzzle where her shoulder met her neck.

Rose ran her fingers through his hair. "For now we just have to trust them."

"Explain it again," Amy said from her seated position on the floor.

"The Doctor we saw on the beach is a future version, older than the one up there. How much older I'm not sure, a few years maybe," River said with a small smile. "Definitely a version from after he got married."

"Spoilers, River," Jack warned as he leaned back against the railing. "That hasn't happened in their timeline yet."

"But it has happened in yours, yeah?" Rory asked as he walked down the stairs. Jack nodded and Rory continued. "So you're a future version as well? Because you didn't seem all that surprised by what happened today, Jack."

"Yes, Rory, I'm from further along in your timeline and I'm here because you asked me to be. You remembered me from this point in my timeline being here," Jack said in a tone that indicated that this part of the conversation was over.

"But all that's still gonna happen? He's still gonna die?" Amy said, her voice betraying too much emotion as she tried to remind herself that it wasn't really going to happen.

"We're all going to do that, Amy," River said softly.

"We're all not going to arrange our own wake and invite ourselves. So the Doctor, in the future, knowing he's going to die, recruits his younger self and all of us to... to what, exactly?" Rory said, pacing.
"Alright," Jack said, pushing himself off the railing. "Let's cut to the chase. All of us know that what happened on that beach was faked. It was a show. The people who want the Doctor dead needed to think he really was, so all of this was staged. The Doctor's not really dead. I swear."

Feeling her body relaxing at the confirmation of what Rory had told her, Amy stood. "We have to tell him and Mum then. They have to know."

"Not yet," Jack cautioned. "Soon enough they'll figure it out and then you can tell them. But not yet."

"This is why you're here then?" Rory asked. "To make sure we don't let the cat out of the bag?"

"Something like that." Jack smiled and leaned against the railing again. "Look, I have no idea what we're about to face, but I'm here because this me needs to be."

"Being a member of this family is so weird sometimes," Amy said in a huff.

"You have no idea, Red," Jack said with a wink. Catching River's eye, he swept his eyes up and down her body. "You do, though, don't you?"

"Time and a place, Captain," River said, her voice dropping an octave.

"Stop it, you two," Rory said, rolling his eyes. "Let's get back upstairs before the Doctor gets too suspicious."

As if on cue the Doctor's head dipped below the railing. "I am being extremely clever up here and there's only Rose to stand around looking impressed! What's the point in having you all?"

"You just hate not being the center of attention." Rose's voice, full of laughter, carried down from upstairs.

"That's beside the point," the Doctor shot back as he stood up.

"Come on," Rory said, pulling Amy up the stairs behind him. River and Jack followed.

The Doctor was practically bouncing around the room. "Time isn't a straight line. It's all... bumpy-wumpy. There's loads of boring stuff. Like Sundays and Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons. But now and then there are Saturdays. Big temporal tipping points when anything's possible. The TARDIS can't resist them. Like a moth to a flame. She loves a party, so I give her 1969 and NASA 'cause that's space in the 60s. And Canton Everett Delaware the Third. And this is where she's pointing."

Amy peered at the view screen. "Washington D.C. April the 8th, 1969. So why haven't we landed?"

"'Cause that's not where we're going." He skittered around Amy.

"Doctor," Rose said in a warning tone.

"Then where are we going?" Rory asked confused.

"Home. Well, you two are. Off you pop on adventures and to make babies. More grandchildren! Rose, wouldn't that be wonderful? Jack, back to your own time, don't think I don't know. And you, Doctor Song, back to wherever you go in between our adventures. Me and Rose, we're late for a bi-plane lesson in 1911."

"I don't think so, love," Rose said, crossing her arms over her chest.
The Doctor shrugged. "Or it could be knitting. Knitting or bi-planes, one or the other." He threw himself down into a chair and looked up at them with a frown. "What? A mysterious summons? You think I'm just going to go? Who sent those messages? I know you know. I can see it in your faces. Don't play games with me."

"We're going with or without you, Doctor. But things would be easier if you and Mum came with us. You're going to have to trust us this time," Rory said, lifting himself up to his full height. "Please."

"If it's that important, I'm coming with you, without him if need be," Rose said defiantly.

"Dad," Amy said quietly and everyone's attention turned to her. It was the first time she called him Dad. She had expected it to feel strange since he wore a different face than the man she had called by that name for the majority of her life. It didn't, it felt right. Maybe it was easier than she had originally thought because she had always thought of the Doctor as a father figure. In her imagination, in her books. Ironically, she patterned some of his characteristics on James. "Dad, you have to do this. And you can't ask why."

Suddenly the Doctor's mood shifted from cautious to concerned. "Are you being threatened? Is someone making you say that?"

"No," Amy said, shaking her head. Behind her, Rory's posture tightened.

"Are you lying?" His eyes bored deep into hers as if they were seeking the truth.

"I'm not lying," Amy said, staring right back.

"Swear to me. Swear to me on something that matters," he said.

"Dad, I swear to you on the family that I'm not being threatened and no one is making me say anything I don't want to."

The Doctor gave a small smile and he kissed her forehead. "That's my girl." Quickly he swept around the console. "Rory, we need to bring your TARDIS along for the ride. Can't just leave her in Utah, can we? Do you remember the docking sequence I showed you?"

"Of course," Rory said, his stance relaxing a little.

"Great, pop out to your girl and bring her in, park her in the docking room and we can be on our way." The Doctor looked up and gave him a smile.

"What was that about?" Rose's voice said in his head.

Outwardly the Doctor grimaced. "Sorry... I was a bit harsh wasn't I?"

"A bit, yeah." Rose was angry. How dare he not want to help!

"Rose, I had to make sure they weren't being threatened. I was never going to let them go alone. But the thought of someone trying to hurt them to get to me or you..." His thoughts trailed off and she could feel the anger bubbling underneath.

"I know." Rose walked over to join him at the console, their hands instinctively finding each other. "Next time though, just use a softer touch."

"Forgiven?" He gave her a puppy dog pout and Rose rolled her eyes as she nodded. "She called me
Dad. Me, she's never called me that. I remember her calling James that, but never me." His eyes twinkled with happiness.

"That she did. How does that feel?"

"Better than I imagined, better than I hoped." He had a goofy grin on his face.

Laughing, Rose dropped a quick kiss on his lips. "Good, now let's figure out what spooked them all so badly."

"Together?" The Doctor looked at her hopefully.

"Always," Rose thought as Rory emerged from the doorway at the top of the stairs.

"Right then, 1969 here we come." The Doctor smiled as he started to pilot the ship with Rory, Rose, River and Jack helping. "This is how it should be," he thought to no one in particular as he looked around the room.

Rory looked up and smiled. "We don't always have to travel separately, you know. Anytime you want, we can come with you."

"I think I'd like that." The Doctor could barely contain his grin as they landed.

"Alright, America, 1969," the Doctor said, rubbing his hands together before pulling down the view screen. "Who was president?"


The Doctor snorted. "Not enough."

"You're such a hippy," Rose said, bumping his shoulder.

Grinning, the Doctor whispered, "You love it."

"You know I do," Rose purred back.

Rory loudly cleared his throat. "Can we get back to the task at hand please?"

"Right." The Doctor straightened up and moved away from Rose. "Since I don't know what I'm getting into this time, for once I'm being discreet. Putting the engines on silent." He flipped a switch and a loud alarm started blaring. Rose dramatically rolled her eyes and flipped another switch. "Rose? Did you touch something?" he said from the other side of the console.

Sharing a conspiratorial look with River and Rory, Rose shook her head. "No, of course not."

"Putting the outer shell on invisible, haven't done this in a while. Big drain on the power." The Doctor flicked another switch. Bright light filled the room.

"You can turn the TARDIS invisible?" Jack asked.

Throwing the switch in the opposite direction that the Doctor had, Rory said, "If you know what you're doing, yeah."

"Rory, did you do something?" the Doctor said, looking at the switch Rory had just thrown. Jack, River, Amy and Rose bit back their laughter.
Rory simply lifted an eyebrow. "Now why would I need to do anything?"

Placated, the Doctor started bustling towards the door, grabbing Rose's hand. "Can't check the scanner. It doesn't work when we're cloaked. Um... just give us a mo." The other four started for the door. "Woah, woah, woah. You lot, wait a moment. We're in the middle of the most powerful city in the most powerful country on Earth. Let's take it slow." Opening the door, he and Rose stepped out into the Oval Office.
Inside the TARDIS, River took what looked like a jumper cable and attached it to the scanner. A picture of the exterior flickered on.

"I thought the Doctor said that the scanner wouldn't work," Amy asked and both River and Rory snickered.

"Poor Doctor," River said with a smirk. "He just doesn't understand the old girl like the rest of us. Isn't that right, dear?" River's hand caressed the console.

"River, can you talk to her, the TARDIS?" Amy asked and Rory looked over at her, curious to hear the answer.

"We can all talk to her, Amy. The real question is, can I hear her?" River answered enigmatically.

Jack nudged past them and turned up the volume on the scanner. "Watch, listen," he said, pointing at the screen. A child's voice came from the recorder on the President's desk. The poor thing sounded scared of a spaceman. The Doctor had started taking notes.

When the recording was over, Nixon turned around and froze when he noticed the Doctor and Rose. The man sitting closest to them stood up. Canton, presumably.

Rose gave a little wave and a big smile. The Doctor looked slightly panicked. "Oh. Hello," he stuttered. "Bad moment. Oh look, dear, this is the Oval Office. We were looking for the... oblong room, right, dearest?" Rose smiled at him but didn't offer help. He sighed in exasperation. "We'll just be off then, shall we?" He walked slowly backwards towards the TARDIS. Rose calmly and carefully pulled a battered leather wallet out of her pocket.

Nixon hit the panic button on his desk and the Doctor turned and ran straight into the side of his ship. Comically, he fell to the floor. Not so comically, a deluge of Secret Service officers rushed into the room and held the Doctor down. One of them pointed a gun at Rose, and she simply held up her hands, psychic paper still in her palm.

"Rory, make her blue again!" the Doctor yelled from the floor. The beautiful ship blinked into view leaving the Americans stunned. In the confusion, the Doctor moved behind the desk and Rose moved to his side.

"Mr. President." Everyone's attention snapped to the Doctor. "That child just told you everything you need to know, but you weren't listening. Never mind, though, 'cause the answer's yes. I'll take the case. Fellas, the guns? Really? I just walked into the highest security office in the United States, parked a big blue box on the rug. You think you can just shoot me?"

Jack stepped out of the TARDIS, hands up. "Doc, they're Americans!" With hands raised in surrender, River, Rory and Amy stepped out of the ship as well.

Immediately the Doctor threw up his hands. "Don't shoot! Definitely no shooting."
"Don't shoot us either! Very much not in need of getting shot," Rory said, ducking his head a bit.

"Who are they and... what is that box?" Nixon said in disbelief.

"It's a police box. We're your new undercover agents. On loan from Scotland Yard." Rose held up the psychic paper, handing it to Canton. "Code named Bad Wolf. These are my top operatives, The Doctor, the Author, the Roman, the Captain and," Rose gave River a wink, "Sweetie."

"Sometimes I hate you, Rose," River said in mock frustration.

"No, you don't," the blonde said with a laugh.

With a nod, Canton slowly handed the wallet back to Rose. Nixon was still gaping at the new arrivals. "Who are you people?"

"Nah, boring question." The Doctor began his ramble. "Who's phoning you? That's interesting. 'Cause Canton Three is right. That was definitely a girl's voice. Which means there's only one place in America she can be phoning from."

"Where?" Canton asked, suddenly intrigued.

"Do not engage with the intruder, Mr. Delaware," one of the senior agents, Peterson, remarked, his hand still steady on his gun.

The Doctor sighed. Humans could be a bit thick at times. "You heard everything I heard. It's simple enough. Give us five minutes and I'll explain. On the other hand, lay a finger on me or my friends and you'll never ever know."

"How'd you get it in there?" Canton pointed towards the TARDIS. "I mean you didn't carry it in."

"Clever, eh?" The Doctor preened a little.

"Love it," Canton said with a small smile.

His grip tightening on his gun, Peterson all but shouted, "Do not compliment the intruder!"

"Five minutes?" Canton asked.

"Five," the Doctor said with a smile.

Peterson quickly said, "Mr. President, that man is a clear and present dang--"

Canton cut him off. "Mr. President, that man walked in here with a big blue box and five of his friends. And that's the man he walked past. One of them is worth listening to. I say we give him five minutes, see if he delivers."

"Thanks, Canton," the Doctor said, relaxing a bit.

"If he doesn't, I'll shoot him myself."

"Not so thanks," the Doctor mumbled and Rose swatted his arm. "Alright, I'm going to need a SWAT team ready to mobilize, street-level maps covering all of
Florida, a pot of coffee, twelve jammie dodgers and a fez."

"No fez," Rose said with an eye roll.

"Get him his maps," Canton said forcefully, and the agents around the room slowly lowered their weapons.

Rose grinned at him. "Thank you."

"You love my fez," the Doctor said, almost purring.

"Not in public I don't," she shot back.

"Seriously, Mum, too much information," Rory said, sticking his fingers in his ears.

"Wait, you're his mother?" Nixon looked incredulously between the two of them.

Rose was getting used to people's disbelief at the fact that mother and son looked to be about the same age now that she no longer wore her perception filter. "I moisturize," she said flippantly and Amy snorted.

A few minutes later, maps filled every available surface of the Oval office. The Doctor and his family scoured them, looking seemingly important.

"Why Florida?" Canton asked, coming up to the desk where Rose and the Doctor were working.

"That's where NASA is," the Doctor said, perusing one of the maps, his fingers flying over the pages. "She mentioned a spaceman. NASA's where spacemen live. Also, there's another lead I'm following. Now maps, I love maps."

"I'll get you a nice big one for your birthday," Rose teased him.

River and Amy were huddled on the couch when they overheard the Doctor. "Spaceman," Amy said, looking up. "Like the one we saw in the lake?"

"Maybe. Probably," River said, looking a little too calm.

"I know what you're thinking, Amy," Jack said, leaning over the back of the sofa. "And we can't stop that from happening, but we do need to help that little girl."

Before she could retort, Amy's stomach lurched. Maybe she had eaten something bad for lunch. Wait, when was the last time she had eaten? She stood up, needing to find a loo in a hurry.

"Amy?" River questioned, but Jack laid a hand on River's shoulder and shook his head. A look passed between the two, and River sank deeper into the cushions.

Something in the doorway caught Amy's attention. There was a tall creature in a black suit standing there. It was completely out of the ordinary and yet no one reacted. Then she remembered seeing one of these creatures in Utah. "I remember," she said softly.

"Amy." Rory came over and blocked her view. "What do you remember?"

"I don't know, I just--" Amy shook her head clear. "I just don't feel well. Excuse
"I'm sorry, Ma'am, for the duration of these proceedings everyone is to be contained in this room," the agent said as politely as possible.

Over his shoulder, Canton said, "Shut up and take her to the bathroom." The agent turned and escorted Amy out of the room.

"Your five minutes are up," Canton said a minute or two after Amy left.

"Yeah and where's my fez?" the Doctor grumbled.

The phone rang again, and Nixon hesitated before answering.

"Here," the Doctor said, pointing to a place on one of the maps. "The only place in the United States that she could be calling from." Rose looked over his shoulder and smiled.

Obviously impressed, Canton said, "You, sir, are a genius."

Clapping his hands together and trying unsuccessfully to keep his ego in check, the Doctor replied, "A hobby."

"Answer the phone, Mr. President." Canton indicated the still ringing phone.

Nixon pushed the buttons on the tape recorder and put the call on speaker. The same voice of that scared child filled the air. The little girl was pleading for them to help her. To save her from the spaceman who was coming to eat her.

Amy came in at the end of the call looking a little shaken. The Doctor noted her presence and nodded to Rose, who started ushering the group into the TARDIS.

"No time for that SWAT team," the Doctor said, throwing his tweed coat back on. "Tell her we're on our way."

"What?" the President demanded.

Ignoring the question, the Doctor said, "Canton, on no account follow me into this box and close the door behind you."

"What the hell are you doing?!" Canton demanded as he ran into the TARDIS after them.

At the console, the Doctor was starting the dematerialization sequence. "Jefferson isn't a girl's name. It's not her name either. Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton. Rose?"

"Surnames of three of America's Founding Fathers," she replied automatically, turning a knob to stabilize the flight.

"Lovely fellas, two of them fancied me," the Doctor said with flourish.

"And the other one fancied me. Old big ears here was completely jealous."

"Time Lords do not get jealous," the Doctor said, stomping his foot like a petulant child. Rose, Jack, Amy and River all laughed.
“Sure thing, Doc,” Jack said, coming up next them. "Just keep telling yourself that and one day maybe it will be true."

Rory, on the other hand, was still standing by the door with Canton. "You okay? Coping?"

"Now if you lot are done taking the mickey out of me, we have work to do." The Doctor twirled. "The President asked two questions. Where are you and who are you."

"She was answering the first," Rose said, catching him by the lapels.

The Doctor leaned down and bopped her nose with his index finger. "I knew there was a reason I loved you."

"Only one?" she asked, giving him her best smile.

Before he could lean in for a kiss, Amy interrupted them. "Flirt later, you two," Amy said in mock condemnation.

Canton spun around. "It's bigger on the inside."

"Yeah," Rory said with a small smile. "You get used to it. And for now I'll save to the lecture on dimensional transcendence. Though it is a fascinating topic."

"There is only one place where you will find three big names in a row like that?" The Doctor grinned in challenge to the people on the console.

"Where's that?" Jack asked.

"Come on." The Doctor looked giddy as he grabbed Rose's hand and ran down the stairs. He never could resist a mystery.

"It's ah..." Canton stumbled over the words.

"Are you taking care of this?" the Doctor asked Rory.

"Yep, the reaction is always the best part." Rory grinned as everyone else filed out into the abandoned building.

"Where are we?" Jack asked.

"A few miles from Cape Canaveral, 1969, the year of the Moon."

The Doctor flopped down into a chair while River went to check the phone.

Stepping carefully through the debris, Amy asked, "But why would the little girl be here?"

"I don't know. It lost me a bit. The President asked her where she was and she did what any lost little girl would do. She looked out of the window." The Doctor bounded out of the chair and hopped to the window by Amy. He pulled down the blinds and he and Amy peered out.

"Streets," Amy said, trying not to sound impressed. "Of course, street names."

"The only place in Florida, probably the only place in America, where three streets
"What face?" Rose asked, confused.

"The 'He's hot when he's clever' face," the Doctor whispered dangerously close to her ear.

Rose smiled with her tongue in her teeth. "This is my normal face."

"Yes, it is." He brushed a kiss just below her ear.

Rolling her eyes and pushing him away, she shot back, "Oh, shut up."

"Not a chance," the Doctor said in a low husky tone.

"I have always wanted to say this," Jack said conspiratorially to Amy. "Oi, there's a time and place, Doctor!" Rose and the Doctor moved apart but neither looked remorseful.

"They get a bit worse, you know," River said to Amy, and the red-head snorted in disbelief.

Rory and Canton stepped out of the ship. "We've moved. How can we have we moved?"

"You haven't even got to space travel yet?" the Doctor asked as he picked up and then set down the phone. Then he turned and pulled Rose out of the room.

Sticking his tongue out at the retreating form of the Doctor, Rory said, "I was going to cover it with time travel."

Canton froze in place. "Time travel?" Rory nodded and watched the American, almost able to see the cogs turning in his head. After a few moments, Canton spoke again. "So we're in a box that's bigger on the inside and it travels through time and space?"

"Yeah, basically," Rory said with a shrug, leading the way out of the room.

"How long has Scotland Yard had this?" Canton spun in a circle before following.

"We're not actually with Scotland Yard. We're a bit more freelance than that," Rory said over his shoulder.

"You guys do this a lot then?" the agent asked.

"It's just our lives, lots of adventure. Really fun most of the time, even when you're running for your life," Rory replied.

In the other room, the Doctor tightened his grip on Rose's hand. "You realize this is almost certainly a trap, of course."

River nodded. "I noticed the phone, yes."

"What about it?" Amy said, looking back towards the room they had come from.
"It's cut off," Jack said, pulling his gun from its holster. "So how did the child phone from here?"

"Okay, but why would anyone want to trap us?" Amy asked seriously.

River and Jack laughed and Rose raised an eyebrow. "Since when does someone not want to trap us?"

"Let's see if anyone tries to kill us and work backwards," the Doctor said, pulling Rose closer to him.

"Look at this," Jack said, making his way over to what looked to be an examination table.

"It's non-terrestrial, definitely alien. Probably not even from this time zone," River said, trying to adopt a clinical manner.

"What the hell have they been doing to this poor girl?" Rose said mostly to herself. Closing her eyes she felt anger welling up at whomever or whatever had done something to a child. Suddenly she felt it, the brush of another telepathic mind, one that was utterly and completely scared. Trying to black out the conversation around her, Rose focused on that mind, sending comfort to them, telling them that she would be there soon. In the back of her mind, she heard the wolf howl.

"Which is odd, because look at this!" the Doctor continued, not yet noticing what was going on with Rose.

"It's Earth tech. Contemporary," River said while eyeing the spacesuit the Doctor was holding up.

Boyish glee filled his voice as he dug through the box. "It's very contemporary. Cutting edge. This is from the space program."

"Stolen?" River queried.

Amy's eyebrows raised in confusion. "What, by aliens?"

"Apparently," the Doctor countered.

"But why? I mean if you could make it all the way to Earth, why steal technology that could barely make it to the moon?" Jack said, lightly kicking the box. "I mean the Torchwood of this time period has much better tech."

"Maybe 'cause it's cooler! Look at how cool this stuff is." The Doctor was practically jumping up and down now. He slipped the helmet over his head.

"Really, Dad, cool aliens?" Amy asked skeptically.

Pointing to himself, the Doctor asked, "Well, what would you call me?"

Amy and Jack exchanged a look before they said in unison, "An alien."

"Oi!" the Doctor exclaimed, chucking away the helmet and looking over to Rose for support. "Rose," he said softly, noticing that she had her eyes closed and she wasn't moving.
When he touched her shoulder, she shuttered and her eyes flew open. "Did you hear that? Did you feel that?"

Shaking his head, the Doctor took her now clammy hand in his. "I don't know what you mean. Show me." Rose was lifting a hand to his temple to show him when Rory and Canton came back into the room.

"I think he's okay now," Rory said, nodding to the older man.

The Doctor shot Rose a comforting thought and she heard his voice whisper, "in a minute, love," in her mind. She gave him a small grin before he turned back to the newcomers. "Ah! Back with us, Canton?"

"I like your wheels," Canton said, pointing his torch back towards the room containing the TARDIS.

"That a boy," the Doctor said, clapping the man on the back. "So come on, little girl, let's find her."

Rose, River and Amy were left to examine the table. "When I find who did this to a little girl…" Rose said, her fists clenching.

"You will find them, Rose," River said, putting a hand on Rose's shoulder. "They will be punished, and that little girl will be fine. I promise. But for now, we all need to focus. Anger won't help right now."

"You're right." Rose let out a closely held breath. "Thank you."

"What's this?" Amy asked, pointing to a cable on the floor.

River pounced, following it to a manhole cover. She heaved it open and looked down. "Doctor, Rose, look at this."

"What's down there?" The Doctor peered carefully down the hole.

"Looks to be a network of tunnels," River said, looking over the results of her scanner.

"Life signs?" the Doctor asked, suddenly dead serious.

"No. Nothing that's showing up," River said, tucking her scanner back into her belt.

"Those are the worst kind," he said, stepping back as River prepared to descend.

"Be careful!" Jack warned her, coming over by the entrance to the tunnels.

"Careful?" River smiled cheekily. "Tried that once. Ever so dull."

"Shout if you get in trouble," Jack said softly.

"Don't worry. I'm quite the screamer," River said with a wink. "Now there's a spoiler for you."

"Actually, Beautiful, I know that quite well." Jack winked back.

"So what's going on here?" Canton asked, waving a hand around the room.
"I really don't want to know what those two get up to," the Doctor said with a shudder. Jack just winked at him.

"Doctor, I think he's talking about the possible alien incursion," Rory said, rolling his eyes.

"Right," the Doctor said before walking off, ignoring Canton's question.

Canton wandered off towards the table Rose was still examining. "Tell me honestly," he began. "I was having a drink in a bar. Am I still there?"

Rose looked up at him and he would have sworn her brown eyes flashed with just a hint of gold. "Sometimes I think I either died or ended up in a coma after the explosion at my job. But I'm not in a coma and you're not in a bar. It's all real, and when this is over, it's the only story you will ever tell."

A moment later River popped out of the tunnel, breathless. "All clear. Just tunnels, nothing down there I can see. Give me five minutes. I want to take another look around."

"Stupidly dangerous!" Rose called from the other side of the room.

"Yep. I like it, too," River said, heading back down.

"Hold on, River, I'm coming, too," Jack said as he descended the ladder.

When he reached the floor of the tunnel, River turned to face him. "How far in the future are you from?"

"In theirs," Jack's eyes flicked upwards. "About four years, haven't been linear with them for a very long time. In yours, well, spoilers, my love."

"Why are you here?" River asked, taking a few steps towards him, relief filling her eyes.

"I showed up in Utah because Rory sent me and because you need me. And I'm here in this dirty tunnel because I've wanted to do this all day."

Closing the gap between them, Jack wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her into a kiss.

River automatically sank into the sensation of Jack's mouth on hers. It had been far too long since she had been able to kiss him. The last time she had seen him was right after Ianto…

Jack pulled back and rested his forehead on hers. "You know, a boy could get his ego ruffled with your mind wandering like that. Especially when you go there."

"Stop it." She smacked his arm. "I'm sorry. The shields are always tricky when you're out of practice," River said, stepping away and walking down the corridor. "And it's just been far too long since I've had anyone in my head. Especially since I've had you and then there's our… well you know what we were to each other."

She changed subjects. "These tunnels are old, impossibly old. How are tunnels this old here and nobody knows they're here?"

He caught her up. "What we are to each other, River. What we will always be."

They came to an access hatch.
River tried to open it and found it locked. "Why must people always lock things?"
She turned and gave him a flirtatious smile. "What's a girl to do?"

"Is this sensible?" Jack asked, leaning against a wall giving her his best wolfish grin.

"God, I hope not," River said, continuing to pick the lock.

"How are you doing? I mean really. Don't give me that canned 'I'm always alright' crap your family is known for." He studied her as she stiffened.

"It hurts, Jack." She held back the sob. "I know exactly what's wrong with Mum and I can't do a damn thing about it. I shouldn't do anything about it."

"River..."

"And when they look at me, Mum, Dad, Nan, I know they love me. I can even see flickers of it in Granddad's eyes now. But I can't help but think it's echoes from Pops and not his affection for me. It's still love for River, though, not for Melody or even Mels. They have no idea who I am yet, and for me they will never know again."

She sighed. "I know they are only a few months after Mum and Dad's wedding. One day soon Mum will meet me for the first time and I will never see her again. And it will keep happening. Trisha, Sabrina, Dad, Tony, Nan, Pops, Granddad. The day that happens, the day that no one I love knows me, I might as well be dead, because what good is a near immortal life if no one you care about cares about you."

"Melody Rose, don't you dare talk like that." Jack had to hold himself back from taking her in his arms and shaking her. "Your dad and granddad are brilliant men. Then there's your mum and Nan, who are pretty badass themselves. And never ever count out your husband. This will all work out, I promise you."

"That's why you're really here, isn't it?" River gave him a small smile. "To give us all hope that we can get through this."

"Call me Mercury, messenger of the Tylers," he said, making her laugh. "All of you have your own burdens to bear. If I can give any of you hope that even though it gets easier eventually, I will. It's nothing that you, Rose, Rory, Amy and the Doctor haven't done for me at some point."

"I love you, you idiot," River said, opening the door at last.

"Right back at you," Jack said, walking over and smacking her bottom before they walked through the door. The lights in the center of the room started flashing and an alarm went off. "I'll make sure no one's coming." Jack headed back towards the door.

River moved to one of the computer stations. "This is old, centuries old. The Earth's not being invaded, it's occupied. Jack!" she yelled to the man at the door. "We need to get out of here now."

"I love it when we run for our lives," Jack said, taking her hand in his.
Back upstairs. Canton and Amy stood examining some of the equipment. "So,"
Amy started, trying to make conversation with Canton, anything to distract her from
the nauseous feeling in her stomach and the creepy atmosphere around her. "You
were kicked out of the FBI because you had attitude problems."

"No. I just wanted to get married," Canton replied.

"Is that a crime?" Amy asked, genuinely curious.

"Yes," he replied matter-of-factly.

"I'm sorry." She paused. "I'm married to a man who's part human, part that," she
pointed at the Doctor "and part that blue box we travelled here in. I'm sure that's a
crime somewhere."

"Wait, how can someone be part of that blue box?" Canton asked, confused.

"The TARDIS, the ship, she's sentient. She's alive. The ship and Mum kind of
bonded and now they share a genetic code. Rory's her son so…” Amy trailed off.
"Honestly, they can explain it better."

"So Doctor 'who' exactly? And what's Bad Wolf?" Canton pointed to where the
Doctor and Rose were working in tandem.

"Ah. That's classified," Amy said with a wink.

"Classified by whom?"

"God knows," Amy laughed. "Honestly though, they're my mum and dad. It's a bit
of a crazy family." She stopped and looked serious. "I had something I wanted to
tell them. Stuff always gets in the way."

"Stuff does that," he agreed.

"Help me!" the child screamed. Canton pulled out his gun and ran in the direction
of the noise. Rory was right behind him. Rose and the Doctor were about to run
when Amy collapsed, clutching her stomach and letting out a strangled cry.

"Amy!" The Doctor made to turn back.

"Go," Rose said, pushing the Doctor towards the door. "I've got her." He nodded
and reluctantly ran from the room. "Amy, what's wrong?"

"It hurts," Amy said, clutching her stomach. "Mum, I have to tell you something."

Rose brushed her hair out of her face. "You can tell me anything, Sweetheart."

"Mum, I'm…” Amy swallowed and met her mum's eyes. "I'm pregnant."

The corners of Rose's mouth twitched. "Oh Amy, that's great." The little girl's pleas
for help echoed around the room once more. "Not the best timing on the big
announcement, though. Let's get you back to the TARDIS and…” She froze and
her grip on Amy's arm tightened painfully.

Amy looked up and they were surrounded by the same aliens that Amy had seen at
the Lake in Utah and in the Oval Office and in the bathroom. Why hadn't she
remembered them before?

"It's the astronaut," Rory yelled in the next room.

"What do you want?" Rose demanded, standing up and helping Amy to her feet as well.

The creature tilted its head from one side to the other as if it was contemplating her question. "The same thing we have always wanted. The Time Child."

In the back of her mind, Rose could hear the wolf howl again and aloud she screamed, "Rory!"

A moment later, the Doctor and Rory charged back into the room. "What's wrong? Rose? Why did you scream?"

"I didn't scream," Rose said quickly, and then turned to Amy. "Did I?"

"No, I was right here and Mum didn't scream," Amy said, looking confused.

River and Jack emerged from the tunnels. Both of them had quickly drawn their guns. "What's wrong, Rosie?"

Rose looked exasperated. "Nothing is wrong with me. Amy was telling me…" Amy shook her head fervently. "Amy was having stomach pains and then you two came in the room. I don't remember screaming."

Raising his slightly trembling fingers to Rose's temple, the Doctor paused and gave her a look that sought permission before he looked into her memories. Rose nodded and while his fingers made contact with her skin, his mind made contact with hers. She first showed the feelings of the other telepathic mind and the wolf howl. Then she showed him exactly what she remembered about the last few minutes.

The Doctor pulled back. "We heard her scream. From other rooms Rory, Jack, River and I heard Rose scream. But Amy, who was standing right here, didn't, and Rose doesn't remember it."

"Because I didn't scream," Rose said emphatically.

"No, Mum, you did," Rory said. "You yelled my name."

"You just don't remember it. There's about a minute that's been edited out of your memory," the Doctor said, his voice growing cold with anger. "Someone grab Canton, then back to the TARDIS. Now."
Chapter 4

3 Months Later — July 1969

Area 51

The Doctor sat chained to a chair, wearing a straight jacket, alone in a dark cell. Three months growth had left him with a rather impressive beard. He might have liked it if it hadn't been so itchy, or if his hands were free so he could scratch it.

"We've located your little band of misfits, Doctor," Canton Everett Delaware the Third said coldly as several soldiers drug three body bags into the cell. "Rory and Amy Tyler-Pond were caught running through the Arizona desert." He lightly toed two of the body bags. "Mrs. Tyler was apprehended in Glen Canyon. She put up a good fight; pity she didn't make it either. All three of them were covered in strange markings. Know anything about that?"

"You should have asked them yourself," the Doctor replied just as coldly.

Canton ignored him. "Doctor Song and Captain Harkness were a bit more elusive, but we managed to locate them as well."

"Where are they?" The Doctor strained against the chains that bound him to a chair.

"They dove off a building in New York. Swan dived off the fiftieth floor," Canton said in his cool deep voice.

"Is there a reason you're doing this?" the Doctor asked as the man in question entered the newly constructed cell made of zero balance dwarf star alloy, the densest material in the Universe.

"I want you to know where you stand," the reinstated FBI agent smirked.

"In a cell," the Doctor said flatly.

"In a perfect cell. Nothing can penetrate these walls. No sound. Not a radio wave. Not the tiniest particle of anything. In here, you're literally cut off from the rest of the Universe." Canton inserted his fingers into the control matrix and the door shut. "So I guess they can't hear us, right?"

Easily shrugging off the chains, the Doctor grinned. "Good work, Canton. Door sealed?"

The other man couldn't help but smile back. "You bet."

All three people in the body bags shot up. "These things could really do with air holes!" Rory complained as he unzipped his bag.

"Never had a complaint before," Canton shrugged.

"Oh, shut up," Rose said with a smile as she wiggled out of her own. "Some of us don't have respiratory bypass."

The Doctor was at her side in a second. "I missed you. Three months is too long to be apart."

Leaning down, he kissed her and she giggled.

Pushing him back, she said, "You're shaving that first chance you get." She wiggled a finger towards his beard. "Oh, and I missed you, too."
After rounds of hugs and kisses for everyone else, Amy asked Canton, "Isn't it going to look odd that you're standing here with us?"

"Odd, but not alarming. They know there's no way out of this place," Canton said casually.

"Exactly! Whatever they think we might be doing in here, they know we're not going anywhere," the Doctor said as he leaned against the invisible TARDIS. "Shall we?" He snapped his fingers and the doors popped open. The group scrambled on board.

"Hello, you gorgeous thing!" Rose exclaimed. "I missed you, too." She stroked the nearest bit of console and the Doctor grinned at her.

"What about Dr. Song and Captain Harkness? They dove off a rooftop." Canton asked curiously.

"Don't worry, they're out there. Amy! Rory! Open all the doors to the swimming pool," the Doctor said as he and Rose landed the ship on the side of the correct building. When the doors were flung open, River and Jack fell in a blur through the console room and landed with a distant splash in the pool.

A few minutes later Amy and Rory came back into the room followed by River, in dry clothes, and Jack, in nothing but a dressing gown. "Seriously, Jack?" Rose challenged, raising an eyebrow. He just grinned.

Ignoring everyone else, the Doctor continued his rambling explanations. "So, we know they're everywhere. Not just a landing party, an occupying force. And they've been here a very long time. But nobody knows that, because no one can remember them."

"So what are they up to?" Canton queried.

"No idea." He threw the controls that landed the TARDIS. "But the good news is we've got a secret weapon." Heading down the ramp, he threw the doors open. They were in Florida, Kennedy Space Center, and had a remarkable view of the launch platform.

"Apollo Eleven's your secret weapon?" River asked as she stepped outside.

"No, no. It's not Apollo Eleven. That would be silly. It's Neil Armstrong's foot," the Doctor said with a knowing smirk, his arm reaching out and pulling Rose to his side. "Now everyone back inside. We have work to do and Jack, for the love of anything decent, please put on some actual clothes or I will be forced to throw you into a supernova."

Jack grinned. "Come on, Doc, you wouldn't do that."

"Don't bet on it," Rory said. "He's got one picked out especially for situations like this."

"I'd never let him actually do that," Rose said, ushering everyone back inside. "Let's all go and get cleaned up and yes, Doctor, that includes getting rid of that ridiculous thing on your face."

"I don't know, Mum; I think it makes him look older. With that thing, no one would question him having adults call him Dad," Amy said as she brushed past him, laughing all the way down the hall.

The Doctor preened but Rose smacked his arm. "I'm not kissing you again until that beard is gone."

After about thirty minutes everyone reconvened, fully clothed and clean shaven in the console room. "So! Three months. What have we found out?" The Doctor was doing his normal manic movements around the room, only this time he had what looked like a gun in his hand. He shot something into
"Ow," Canton yelped and the Doctor laughed.

"Well, they are everywhere. Every state in America," Rory said before whimpering as the Doctor shot his hand, too.

"Not just America, the entire world," the Doctor said, shooting Jack and River's hands, too.

Jack didn't even flinch. "There's a greater concentration here, though."

Coming over the where Amy and Rose were standing, the Doctor shot Rose's hand, then brought her palm up and placed a kiss where he had hurt her. Next he turned to Amy and shot her, too. "You okay?" he said softly. Rose had told him what Amy had confided in her.

"All better," the red-head said a little sadly.

"Better?" The Doctor raised an eyebrow.

"Turns out I was wrong. I'm not pregnant," Amy replied, not willing to meet his eyes.

Rory came over and grabbed her hand. "We still have plenty of time for kids. We can try again later."

Rose rubbed Amy's back. "I'm sorry; I know what that kind of disappointment feels like."

"Thanks, Mum. Can we just not talk about this right now?" Amy said, wanting to change the subject and wanting the attention off of herself for the moment. From across the room River gave her a sad smile.

Canton spoke, breaking the tension. "So you've seen them, but you don't remember them?"

"You've seen them, too. That night at the warehouse, remember? While you were pretending to hunt us down, we saw hundreds of those things. We still don't know what they look like," River said, adjusting the scanner.

"It's like they edit themselves out of your memory the minute you look away. The exact second you're not looking at them you can't remember anything," Rory added.

"They must be pretty powerful, too, if they can erase themselves from a Time Lord brain." Jack said, leaning on the railing near River.

"Sometimes you get a bit sick but not all the time." Amy brushed a hair out of her face.

"So that's why you marked your skin?" Canton nodded in understanding.

Amy nodded. "Only way we'd know if we had an encounter."

"They're dangerous, too," Rose said, her voice low but full of anger. "Those creatures are responsible for the death of my parents, and they would have killed me, my husband and Rory if they had the chance."

Jack stood up straighter; she had never told him this before. "What do you mean?"

Rose turned to her best friend. "I didn't remember until I saw them again, but whatever they are, I saw one right before Bad Wolf brought us back here. Told me to hand over something," her eyes
flicked in the direction of her son, "someone they wanted over to them or they would destroy it. I caused the crack in Amelia's wall when I brought us back here, a crack in the wall of the Universe."

"Yes, and I fixed that crack in Amelia's wall and that event brought me back to you and kept the rest of you safe," the Doctor said softly to her. "Well worth it in my opinion."

"Except this time I can't just jump Universes to protect my family," Rose retorted bitterly.

"Hold on," Jack said, leaning forward. "You told me that whatever the thing was that made you come back was threatening Rory. That they were after the 'Time Child'. If this is the same memory erasing creature from that Universe, how did you know what they were after?"

"They sent a message to Torchwood. Jake didn't know it pertained to us until it was too late. I don't really remember being thrown back here. It's fuzzy. I remember feeling threatened and then the SUV being filled with that golden light."

"Similar to what Rory did..." Jack trailed off, not wanting to bring up James' death.

"What?!" the Doctor said, astonished, his eyes flicking between mother and son. "What did Rory do exactly?"

The young man in question finally spoke up, his voice tense. "I 'went Bad Wolf' when Dad died. I could hear that howling in the back of my head and felt like I had the power to... well, it doesn't matter because I didn't do anything with that power."

"You never said. Any of you. How can Rory have the powers of the Bad Wolf?" the Doctor said, looking accusingly at all of them.

"Don't look at me, Sweetie, I wasn't there." River held her hands up in defense. No one bothered to correct her that she hadn't been there yet.

"It's not like we were intentionally keeping it from you," Rose said, putting a hand on the Doctor's arm. "It's just not a day that any of us like thinking about, let alone talking about. I would have told you about it eventually. No secrets between us."

He nodded his head. "Of course you would have. No secrets. I'm sorry, but this could have been important."

Rose gave him a small smile. "We think that whatever Rory and I are able to do is genetic. It must be linked to the part of our genetic makeup that is directly related to the TARDIS, not to absorbing the Vortex."

"We don't know that they after me, Mum. I've lived on Earth for years and they haven't come after me yet," Rory said, trying to emphasize the point. "And I haven't let Amy out of my sight for months. I know you're worried, but she's not even pregnant." Next to him, Amy tensed momentarily. "They could be after something completely different in this Universe."

"Or they could be after the same thing," Rose almost yelled, her fear obvious in her words.

"Amy's not pregnant. So if they're after a Time Child, it's not mine," Rory said with more anger than he meant to. "Is it yours? Are you pregnant?" He regretted the words as soon as they were out of his mouth. It was a valid question but not one that needed to be yelled out during an argument.

The room was silent for a moment, all eyes on Rose. She shook her head almost imperceptibly. "No, no I'm not." Walking over to Rory, she put a hand on his arm. "I'm sorry, it's just, I'm scared. The
parallel version of these creatures tried to kill you. I won't let them hurt our family."

"I know, but they can't be after me. I ran into hundreds of those things in the last few months and I'm fine. And as far as we know there isn't another Time Child on the way," Rory said, pulling his mum into a hug.

"How long have they been here?" Canton asked suddenly, breaking the family out of their internal struggle and bringing them back to the current situation.

Thankful for the change in the line of discussion, Amy said, "That's what we've spent the last three months trying to find out."

Rory nodded, letting go of his mum. "Yeah, not easy if you can't remember anything you discover."

"How long do you think?" Canton probed.

"As long as there's been something in the corner of your eye, or creaking in your house or breathing under your bed or voices through a wall," the Doctor said dramatically, trying to turn attention back to him and away from the discussion that Rory and Rose had just had. "They've been running your lives for a very long time now, so keep this straight in your head. We are not fighting an alien invasion. We're leading a revolution. And today the battle begins."

"How?" Canton asked.

He held up a small tube. "Nano recorder." He loaded it into his gun and shot himself in the hand.

"Ow! It fuses itself to the cartilage in your hand, and it tunes itself to the telepathic centers of your brain. The moment you see one of the creatures, you activate it," he touched his palm, "and describe aloud exactly what you see."

Touching his palm again, the Doctor's voice repeated his previous words from the Nano recorder. "Because the second you look away you forget. A flashing light indicates that you left yourself a message. Keep checking your hand."

Canton turned to look at something over his shoulder, turned back and straightened the Doctor's bow tie. Everyone was staring at him. "What are you staring at?"

The Doctor's gaze flicked down. "Look at your hand."

The light from the device in Canton's hand was flashing. "Why's it doing that?"

"What does it mean if the light's flashing? What did I just tell you?" the Doctor asked.

Shaking his head slightly, Canton said. "I haven't--"

"Play it."

Looking down once more, Canton pressed his palm and the recording played.

"Oh my God, how did it get in here?"

"Keep eye contact and when I say, turn back and when you do, straighten my bow tie," the Doctor said.

"What are you staring at?"

"Look at your hand."
Canton once again turned around and saw one of the creatures standing by the door to the ship.

"It's a hologram extrapolated from the picture on Amy's phone," the Doctor explained.

Rose continued. "She ran into one of them when she went to the restroom back at the White House. These things are everywhere."

"Take a good long look," the Doctor said before Canton blinked and turned back around. "You just saw an image of one of the creatures we're fighting. Describe it."

"I can't," Canton said blankly.

"No. Neither can I," the Doctor said, moving back around the console. "You straightened my bow tie because I planted the idea in your head while you were looking at it."

"So you could be doing all sorts of things without really knowing why you were doing it," Amy said thoughtfully.

"Like post-hypnotic suggestion," Rory said in agreement.

"Ruling the world with post-hypnotic suggestion." Amy shivered.

"Now then, a little girl in a spacesuit. They got the suit from NASA, but where did they get the girl?" the Doctor said, adjusting a few more controls.

"Could be anywhere," Canton added.

The Doctor and Rose shared a look that no one else understood. Rose shook her head and the Doctor said, "Except they'd probably stay close to that warehouse because why bother doing anything else. And they'd take her from somewhere that would cause the least amount of tension. But you'll have to find her. I'm off to NASA."

"Find her where?" Canton asked.

"Children's homes." The Doctor swung the view screen around to show them several places that he had narrowed it down to. "Amy, Jack, you're with Canton on this. River, Rory, I need you two to head to the White House to get Mr. Nixon up to speed on our progress. Rose, you're with me."
Jack stood several steps back from Amy and Canton as the agent knocked on the door. This place gave him the creeps. An old decaying building set against a dark and stormy night. He hoped more than anything that this wasn't the place that they were looking for. Imagining Melody spending her early years here instead of with family, the people that love her, was making him physically ill.

River had never told him the details of her first incarnation, well, mostly because she had zero memories of what happened before she regenerated the first time. Jack had a suspicion as to why that was, but it still didn't make any sense. If Melody was found before she regenerated or soon thereafter, why was she still raised by a foster family instead of by Rory and Amy?

Unless she escaped on her own and found her family the only way she could. He shook that thought out of his head. Neither Rory nor Amy, nor Rose for that matter, would be born for almost twenty years in linear time.

The door creaked open. "Hello." A small man peeked his head out.

"FBI." Canton flashed a badge. "You must be Dr. Renfrew."

"The children are asleep," Dr. Renfrew said, studying the three people standing on his front step.

"This is about a missing child," Canton said in an all-business manner.

Amy smiled at the man, trying to put him at ease. "We'll be very quiet."

Waffling, Dr. Renfrew sputtered a few words before agreeing to let them inside.

The inside was more depressing than the outside, and Jack hadn't thought that possible. It was dark, musty and carried a heavy air of neglect.

"Please excuse the writing. It keeps happening. I try to clean it up," Dr. Renfrew said, indicating the various warnings of 'Get out' written in red on every wall.

Amy swallowed and tried to keep Renfrew at ease. "It's the kids, yeah? They do that."

Dr. Renfrew looked blankly at her. "Yes. The children. It must be. Yes." His sleeve rode up and they saw 'GET OUT' written on his arm. Jack's skin crawled, and his fingers twitched towards his blaster.

Canton's keen eye took in his surroundings and he knew that something was very off here. "We nearly didn't come to this place. I understood Graystark Hall was closed in 1967."

"You misunderstood me, sir," Jack said his body tightening even more. "It's 1969 now."

"The plan?" Amy asked

"Not long now, yes." Dr. Renfrew absentmindedly climbed the stairs.

"It's 1969." Jack spoke for the first time.

Shaking his head, Dr. Renfrew looked confused. "No, no, we close in '67. That's the plan, yes."

"You misunderstood me, sir," Jack said his body tightening even more. "It's 1969 now."
"Why are you saying that? Of course it isn't." The caretaker's voice rose slightly.

"July," Canton explained, looking to Jack and Amy. His gaze flicked up the stairs, encouraging them to head up to investigate.

Renfrew turned and pointed. "My office is this way." Canton followed him, leaving Amy and Jack to investigate.

Pushing open a door to one room, Jack and Amy stepped cautiously into a deserted room. It was sad, really, Jack thought, swallowing down the lump in his throat, knowing what had happened here. He hoped that they found the little girl soon. Although he wasn't sure that finding her before she was born would be the best of ideas.

"I'll keep watch out here." Jack stepped back into the corridor, weapon drawn.

Nodding, she stepped further into the room and pulled out her phone and hit the speed dial to call the Doctor.

"Hello, Amy," he said in quiet voice.

"Dad, I think we found the place where the little girl was taken from."

"How do you know?"

"It's weird. It's all deserted. There's only one guy here and he's lost it." Amy kept her voice low.

"Repeated memory wipes eventually take toll. Find out what you can, but don't hang around."

"Where are you?"

"Gotta go, I've got company."

The door swung shut, and Amy jumped. "Jack? Everything okay out there?"

"Yeah, nothing out here. You okay?" Jack's voice came through the door.

At least she wasn't alone. Amy took comfort in that. Time to go, though; there wasn't anything else to be learned in this room. She stepped forward to leave, but as her hand approached the knob, she noticed a red pulsing light coming from her palm. A message. That hadn't been there a moment ago. Tentatively she touched the Nano recorder.

"I can see them. I think they're asleep. Get out! Just get out!" Her terrified voice came from the recorder. Amy reached again for the door. It didn't budge. "Jack! The door won't open!" Her palms collided with the door, suddenly frantic to get out.

"Stand back. I'm going to kick the door open," the Captain yelled from the other side of the door.

Amy turned away from the door and screamed. The creatures were hanging from the ceiling. The door pounded open behind her, and Jack's arms wrapped around her and pulled her from the room.

"They're here," Jack said, holding up her arm and examining the tally marks she didn't remember making. She nodded. They must be, otherwise she wouldn't have marked herself.

"Come on," Amy said, trying to regain her composure. "We're close. I can feel it." She took Jack's free hand and they walked cautiously down the hallway.
Mr. Gardner, the head of security, stood over the handcuffed Doctor. "Now, one more time, sir. How the hell did you get into the command module?"

The Doctor sighed in exasperation. "I told you! I'm on a top secret mission for the President." He tried to bite through the handcuffs thinking that somehow, maybe, that would be an effective escape plan. It wasn't, and now his teeth hurt.

Scoffing, Mr. Gardner said, "Well, maybe if you just get President Nixon to assure us of that, sir. That would be swell."

"I sent him a message," the Doctor said casually.

The side door opened and Rose stepped into the room wearing a light pink pencil skirt and matching blouse. A pair of period glasses sat perched on her nose and her hair was swept up into a tight bun. The Doctor couldn't help but think about just how beautiful she looked and how long it had been since they had had quality alone time together.

"Doctor, what have you gotten yourself into now?" she said in a perfect American accent. Apparently she had been working on perfecting them since Scotland and Queen Victoria.

"Excuse me, ma'am, who are you and how did you get in here?" Gardner asked, standing up straight, his demeanor changing in the presence of a lady.

"Oh, I'm sorry." She batted her eyes. "We haven't been introduced. Rose Tyler, CIA." She produced the wallet containing psychic paper and handed it to Gardner.

"Ah yes," he stuttered, handing it back to her. "Do you know who this man is?"

Rose held out a hand to take back her 'credentials'. "Of course, I'm his handler. We're here on a mission for the President. Top secret, you know how that goes." Her voice was full of casual authority.

"He was inside the Apollo 11 command module," the security chief said urgently. "I have no idea to what extent he could have done damage."

To her credit, Rose reacted by doing no more than raising an eyebrow. "Did you get the memo? I know that it was sent. The letter from President Nixon? Your secretary assured me that you received it." She opened a file that the Doctor hadn't even noticed that she was holding until that moment. "Let me see if I have a copy."

"It still doesn't negate the fact that this man was left unsupervised tinkering with extremely sophisticated equipment."

The Doctor held back a laugh. Rose scrunched her face and held a finger to her left ear. "Don't worry, Mr. Gardner; this will all be sorted out momentarily. He's here." She took a large step back, and the double doors at the end of the room opened.

President Nixon entered, followed closely by Rory and River, both dressed appropriately for the period. The Doctor barely registered the President's placating words to the NASA men. Ah Tricky Dickey was very smooth with words; at least that was working to their favor. Very soon he was being released, and after shaking everyone's hands, he was heading back towards the TARDIS with Rose's arm tucked in his.

"My handler?" he whispered in Rose's ear as River and Rory piloted the TARDIS back to the White House.
"Well, I thought that it was an appropriate job description," she laughed, straightening his bow tie. "You know I think this is one of the few time periods where this outfit works."

Still treading lightly, Jack and Amy made their way down the dilapidated corridor, both of them wielding their weapons, hers a torch and his, a sonic blaster. As much as the Doctor hated weapons, he seemed to have no problem Jack and River carrying them.

Suddenly a panel in one of the doors slid open. "No. I think she's only dreaming," a severe woman with a metallic eye patch said before the panel shut.

Amy's pace quickened as she approached the door. It was solid metal, very unlike every other door in this place. "Hello," she called. "I saw you through the…" Amy's voice trailed off as her hands brushed a solid door with no evidence of a panel anywhere. Pushing the door open, she stepped inside.

"What did you see?" Jack asked before following her into the room. He stopped short. "I think we found where the little girl lives."

"Yeah," Amy said, looking around. It would have been a sweet little room if it hadn't also doubled as a prison. Dolls, books and other toys were all neatly put away. The photos on the bureau caught Amy's eye. "Look at these." She held one out to Jack.

"Poor kid," he said, his fingers brushing the photo reverently. Once again, Amy got the feeling that he knew more than he was saying. Did he know the identity of the little girl? She was about to turn and ask him when another photo caught her eye.

It was a picture of herself posing with a baby. "How is this me?" she asked before the words were out of her mouth. "Jack, look."

He took the picture away from her and studied it, a grim expression on his face.

"Tell me what you know, Jack," she demanded, and he had just opened his mouth to speak when the astronaut entered the room.

"Who are you?" Amy asked, trying to keep her voice level. "I don't understand so just tell me who you are! I'm sorry. You killed the Doctor. Or you're gonna kill him. But who are you? Just please, tell me, because I don't understand."

The astronaut raised the helmet's visor to reveal the little girl from the photos. "I didn't mean to hurt him. I didn't ever want to hurt him. Just please help me. Help me, please. I'm so scared."

"We're here, Sweetheart. We're here." Jack said, trying to calm her down. He stepped forward but stopped when two of the creatures entered the room.

"Dispose of the man," one of them said in that gravelly voice. "And the girl, her usefulness is complete. Bring the woman."

Jack stepped in front of Amy, using himself as a shield. The creature opened his mouth, and Jack was ripped apart. The creature approached her, and Amy screamed.

Downstairs in Renfrew's office, Canton rifled through the files. "This place, it's been closed for years. What have you been doing?"
Automatically and almost without knowing what he said, Renfrew replied, "Oh, the child, she must be cared for. It's important. That's what they said."

"That's what who said?" Canton asked.

"I'm sorry, what?" Renfrew looked confused. Apparently whatever these things were, they had damaged him permanently.

There was a light rapping on the door and Dr. Renfrew answered it. There was a soft conversation between him and whoever was on the other side. Canton could make out the words. "Just a few questions. Yes, I see."

"Who was that?" he asked the caretaker once he sat back down.

"Who was who?"

The door creaked open, and one of the creatures stepped inside.

Canton pressed the recorder in his palm. "What are you? You can tell me. 'Cause I won't remember. You invaded us. You're everywhere." Upstairs, Amy screamed for help and Canton tensed. "Are you armed?" he asked, keeping his voice calm.

The unearthly voice spoke. "This world is ours. We have ruled it since the wheel and the fire. We have no need of weapons."

This made Canton grin. "Yeah." He pulled out his weapon and fired three shots straight into the thing. "Welcome to America." Lowering his weapon, Canton ran from the room heading upstairs. "Amy! Jack!"

The Doctor circled the desk in the Oval office. "Now you have to record everything that happens in this office. Otherwise we won't know if you're under the influence."

"Doctor, you have to give me more than this. What were you doing to Apollo Eleven?" Nixon was a man used to getting his questions answered and the Doctor, as helpful as he was being, was beginning to make him angry.

"A thing. A clever thing. Now." The Doctor leaned over the desk. "No more questions. You have to trust me. And nobody else."

River poked her head out of the TARDIS doors. "Doctor! It's Canton. He needs us."

Without a look back, the Doctor ran back inside and had barely shut the door when Rose started the dematerialization sequence.

The ship landed with the smallest of thumps and the four of them piled out. Speeding down the hall, they heard Canton say something about shooting the door open.

"No!" the Doctor called out, not wanting anyone shooting near Amy. "I've got it. I've got it." He pulled out his sonic screwdriver and started working on the door. After what felt like a lifetime but was in actuality only a few seconds the lock clicked open and Rory pushed past him into the room.

Despite Amy's pleas still filling their ears, she wasn't there. Jack was sprawled naked on the floor, no breath of life in him, just a fine mist reforming his body. River was at Jack's side instantly. The Doctor shuddered; it must have been a particularly painful death.
"Where is she, Doctor?" Rory asked helplessly, unable to find his wife.

Holding back her own tears, Rose examined the space suit on the floor. "It's empty," she said dully.

Amy voice filled the room again. "Dark. So dark. I don't know where I am. Please, can anybody hear me?"

Frantic, Rory searched again for the source of his beloved's voice. He held up the small blinking Nano recorder. "They took this out of her. How did they do that, Doctor? Why can I still hear her?"

"Is it a recording?" River asked softly as she gently rubbed Jack's still lifeless brow.

Once again pulling out his sonic, the Doctor scanned the device. "Um, it defaults to live. This is current. Wherever she is right now, this is what she's saying."

Cradling the device as if it was the most precious thing in the Universe, Rory said, "Amy. Can you hear me? We're coming for you. Wherever you are we're coming, I swear."

The Doctor reached a hand out and placed it on Rory's shoulder. "She can't hear you. I'm so sorry. It's one-way."

Shrugging off the older man's hand, Rory looked defiant. "She can always hear me, Doctor. Always. Our bond may not be as strong as what Dad and Mum shared or even what you and Mum share, but she can hear me, wherever she is. And she always knows that I am coming for her, do you understand me? Always." The Doctor simply nodded.

"Rory, Mum, Dad? Can you hear me? Oh God. Please. Please just get me out of this?" Amy's voice begged from some distant place.

"We're coming, Amy. I promise you that we're coming," Rory said, barely containing his sob.

Rose pushed the Doctor out of the way and wrapped her son in a tight hug. At that moment, Jack sat up with his customary inhalation. "Amy!"

"They took her," River said sadly as she brushed the hair from his face. "Come on, let's get you back to the ship, and get some clothes on you." Pulling him to his feet, River backed up to the bureau and inconspicuously slipped one of the photos into her belt.

Jack was unsteady on his feet as River led him away. At one point he stumbled and looked over his shoulder. There she was, the little girl, Melody. She wasn't alone though; a familiar blonde woman, with a distinctive haircut, was holding her hand. Jack gave a smirk and nodded as the blonde raised a finger to her lips before giving him a wink and activating the vortex manipulator on her arm. In a flash, both of them were gone.

At least he knew that young Melody Rose was safe now. Although by the looks of her rescue it would be awhile before she was found.

"Why is he naked?" Canton asked after Jack and River left.

"He was atomized by the creatures." Rose said after pulling out of the hug but keeping an arm wrapped around her son's waist. "It's how these things kill. They rip you apart piece by piece."

"But he's alive," Canton said lamely, pointing at the door that River and Jack went through.

"Jack can't die. He is a fixed point in time, a fact. His clothing, unfortunately, is not," the Doctor
explained before turning to Rory and kissing his forehead. "We will find Amy. I promise we will find her."

"Of course we will." Rory said, his tone not quite as convincing as the words themselves. How could they be? He was panicked listening to Amy's strangled cries came from the recorder.

A knock came from the door, and Dr. Renfrew slowly stepped forward. "Hello, hello, is anyone there? I think somebody's been shot. I think we should help." The man blinked. "I can't remember."

The Doctor and Canton followed Renfrew back downstairs to his office. The creature that Canton had shot was struggling to get up.

Slowly the Doctor lowered himself to the floor, trying not to spook it. "Who and what are you?" His voice still commanded authority.

"The Silence, Doctor." The creature wheezed. "We are the Silence. And Silence will fall!"

"Canton, help me take him to the TARDIS. We have work to do," the Doctor said as he stood.

Back in Area 51, Canton Everett Delaware III stepped outside the perfect cell coming face to face several armed soldiers. "Hello again," he said casually.

One of the men kept his firearm steady and said, "Sir, you've been in there for days. What the hell have you been doing?"

"It doesn't matter," Canton said casually. "I need Dr. Shepard now."

"I beg to differ. I need to get Colonel Jefferson."

"That really won't be necessary," Canton countered and held back a smirk as Nixon stepped out into the room.

"Hello, I'm President Nixon," the Commander-in-Chief said and the soldiers lowered their weapons.

Inside the warehouse, the Doctor, River and Jack examined the spacesuit.

"It's an exoskeleton, basically life support. There are about twenty different kinds of alien tech in here," River said as she pulled at some of the cables out.

"Who was she? Why put her in here?" the Doctor demanded, as he studied the different components.

"Put this on, you don't even need to eat," River said and Jack came up to put a hand on her shoulder. She gave him a sad smile before she continued. "The suit processes sun directly. It's got built-in weaponry and a communications system that can hack into anything."

"Including the telephone network?" The Doctor spoke to River but his gaze was on where Rose and Rory were sitting close together on the floor, a mother comforting her son while trying to keep her own fear in check.

"Easily," River answered.

"But why phone the President?" Jack said, using Rose's borrowed sonic screwdriver to examine a piece of the helmet.

"It defaults to the highest authority it can find. The little girl gets frightened; the most powerful man
on Earth gets a phone call." River sighed before removing a glove to rub the bridge of her nose. "Night terrors with a hotline to the White House."

In the meantime, the Doctor had pulled out the invitation from the depths of his pocket. Cautiously he licked it.

"You won't learn anything from that envelope, you know." River sighed.

The Doctor flipped it over and over in his hands. "Purchased on Earth, perfectly ordinary stationery. TARDIS blue. Summoned by a stranger who won't even show his face, that's a first for me. How about you?"

"Our lives are back-to-front. Your future's my past. Your firsts are my lasts." River gave futile 'let it go' look.

"That's not really what I asked." The Doctor glared at her.

"Doc..." Jack started.

River shook her head again. "Ask something else, then."

"Alright, why pull us in Jack from a different point in time. One from my future, for sure, but apparently one from yours as well, Dr. Song. Why is that, Jack?"

"Can't tell you that, Doc," Jack said, crossing his arms.

"Can't or won't?" the Time Lord questioned.

"Both," the Captain said with finality.

"Enough!" Rose shouted as she stood and faced them. "This childish squabbling isn't getting us any closer to finding the little girl or Amy. Now what else do we know? What are the Silence doing? Bringing up a child?"

"Keeping her safe, even giving her a little bit of independence," River said coolly. She, like Jack and the Doctor, looked suitably chastised for their earlier argument.

Rory stood up and came to stand by his mother.

"The only way to save Amy is to find out what the Silence is up to," the Doctor said, coming over and laying a hand on the worried young man's shoulder.

"I know," Rory said blandly.

"Every single thing we learn is important. Brings us a step closer." The Doctor started pacing.

"I know," Rory said much more forcefully. "I get it, Doctor. I know."

The Doctor stopped pacing and looked at Rose. "It's possible she's not just any little girl."

River poked at the suit a bit more. "Well, I'd say she's human by the life support software."

"But?" Rose asked.

"She climbed out of this suit. She forced her way out. She must be incredibly strong," River replied, indicating the support structure of the suit.
The Doctor gave a half grin. "Incredibly strong and running away. I like her."

"We should be trying to find her," Rose said, coming over to examine the suit.

"Yes, but how?" the Doctor questioned.

Jack handed Rose back her sonic and sighed. "You won't find her until you know exactly who she is."

Everyone including River looked shocked at this revelation. The Doctor was going to say something but Rose cut him off. "So we should just stop looking for her?"

"I didn't say that. She's still the key," Jack said cryptically. "She will be saved, just not yet in your timeline."

Rory quickly changed the subject before the Doctor and Jack got into another argument. "Why does it look like a NASA spacesuit?"

The Doctor looked like he wanted to start another argument with Jack but Rose kept glaring at him. "Because that's what the Silence do. Think about it." He turned to Rory. "They don't make anything themselves. They don't have to. They get other life forms to do it for them."

"So they're parasites, then," River said, still pretending to study the suit while she was really just trying not to be sick at the thought of what had been done to her as a child. Jack came over and squeezed her hand.

The Doctor nodded. "Super-parasites. Standing in the shadows of human history since the very beginning. We know they can influence human behavior any way they want, if they've been doing that on a global scale for thousands of years."

"Then what?" Rory asked, trying to understand but his brain was moving so much slower than normal.

"Then why did the human race suddenly decide to go to the moon?" the Doctor asked. "Because the Silence needed a spacesuit."

"Doctor, a unit like this, would it ever be able to move without an occupant?" River asked.

"Why?" The Doctor came in for a closer look.

Rose picked up on River's train of thought. "Well, the little girl said the spaceman was coming to eat her. Maybe that's exactly what happened."

"Could be," the Doctor agreed and turned away from the group.

Rose moved to follow him. "What are you thinking?"

"Mostly that Jack and River know more than they're telling us and I am beginning to get annoyed," he hissed.

She placed a hand on his arm. "Look, there is no point in getting upset." He opened his mouth but Rose put her hand over it. "Obviously Jack and River know something we don't and I know how that makes you feel. But if they aren't telling us then there has to be a damn good reason. I trust both of them with my life and, more importantly, with Amy's life. Eventually we will know what they know and if you think about it, it was probably me or you or Rory who swore them to secrecy in the
first place because if they tell us an entire causal nexus could implode."

The Doctor gave her a wolfish grin. "I love it when you talk about time like that."

Rose waggled her eyebrows. "Don't I know it? Now I need to go check on Rory. Play nice."

As she turned to leave, the Doctor caught her arm. "Let me." She nodded and stepped back, allowing him a clear path to where her son sat on the floor, desperately clutching the Nano recorder. Amy's voice was still audible.

"Rory, I love you so much. Please find me. I know you will. I know you're coming, just please hurry. I'm so scared. My life was so boring before you dropped out of the sky."

"She'll be safe for now. No point in a dead hostage," the Doctor said, sitting down next to him.

"Why haven't we gone to save her yet? It would be easy to trace the source of the signal and go right to her," Rory said, closing his fist over Amy's pleas, his eyes prickling with tears.

"We will save her, I promise. I know how scared you must be." The Doctor's eyes flicked over to Rose. "I know what it feels like when the woman you love is somewhere that you can't get to her. Please just trust me that I know what I'm doing and very, very soon you and Amy will be back together."

Rory swallowed. "Of course I trust you, Doctor. I know that you would never let anything happen to her if you can help it."

"Thank you," the Doctor said, wrapping an arm around the young man's shoulders and kissing his forehead. "I would never let anything happen to my family if I could stop it. Never."

Across the room, out of the range of everyone else's hearing, River hissed at Jack. "Why would you tell them they won't find me until they know who I am? And how are you certain?"

"Look, right now they need to focus on defeating the Silence and rescuing Amy." He let out a long slow breath. "When we were back at the orphanage, when you were taking me back to the TARDIS for clothes, I saw something."

"What?" she pressed.

Jack looked around to make sure no one was looking. "I saw you, as a little girl being rescued by your aunt."

"So what? Sabrina or Trisha could save me at any time." River was confused.

"Not them, the aunt that hasn't found them yet." Jack gestured to his head. "And she had that haircut, the one she got just before Demon's Run."

Realization filled River's face. "Oh."

"Yeah, oh."
Canton stared down at the creature on the floor as Dr. Shepard left the cell. When he was once again alone with the thing, he raised the electronic device he had been given. Time to initiate the final steps to ignite a revolution, he thought, as he pushed the sequence of buttons the Doctor had shown him.

The Silence hissed. "You tend to my wounds. You are foolish."

"Why? What would you do in my place?" Canton baited.

"We have ruled your lives since your lives began," the Silence gloated. "You should kill us all on sight. But you will never remember. We weren't even here. Your will is ours!"

"Well. Sorry to disappoint you," Canton said, ending the recording and uploading the footage. "But thanks, that's exactly what I needed to hear. This is a video phone, whatever a video phone is."

Amy was strapped to a chair, struggling against her bonds and wishing that Rory would hurry up and save her. "Where am I? Where is this?" She said pulling harder at the restraints on her wrists.

Across the room, one of the creatures turned to her. "You are Amelia Pond."

"Tyler-Pond," she corrected automatically. "Has anyone mentioned to you how ugly you are?"

"We do you honor," the Silence jeered. "You will bring the Silence. But your part will soon be over, just as the girl's part is over." If the thing could smile, Amy was sure it would have been smiling.

"Well, whatever that means, you've made a big mistake bringing me here 'cause wait 'til you see what's coming for you now. And if you hurt that little girl, so help me I will tear you limb from limb myself."

"The girl has disappeared and is no longer our concern. You have been here many days." The creature spoke again.

"No, I just got here," Amy protested.

"You have been here many days," the Silence replied.

"No. No," Amy protested.

The creature leaned in closer to her. "You will sleep now." She struggled harder, panic creeping into her mind. Then she heard one of the most beautiful sounds in the Universe, the mechanical grinding sound of the TARDIS.

"Rory, I knew you'd come," she whispered to herself, a solitary tear sliding down her cheek.

The doors to the TARDIS burst open, and the Doctor, Rose, Rory, Jack and River stepped out. The Doctor was carrying a small television set. "Sorry, are you in middle of something?" the Doctor said as he unabashedly cut through the Silence and set the telly down on the console. "Just had to say though, have you seen what's on the telly? Oh 'allo, Amy. Are you all right? Wanna watch some television?"

Rose and Rory rushed to Amy's side, making quick work of her restraints with a quick flick of Rory's sonic. He immediately wrapped his wife in his arms, and the three of them started to back
away towards the TARDIS.

The Silence started to encroach on the group. Jack and River kept their blasters trained on them.

"Ah, no, stay where you are!" the Doctor shouted. "'Cause look at me, I'm confident." He pulled on the lapels of his jacket to straighten it. "You wanna watch that, me when I'm confident. Oh, and these are my friends, Jack and River." He pointed to each one in turn. "Clever, the pair of them, though a bit too flirty if you ask me."

"You're not one to talk, Doctor," Jack said with a little laugh. "Have you seen you and Rose together?"

"A discussion for another time." The Doctor gave him a cocky grin and addressed the Silence again. "See, they both have their own guns and, unlike me, neither of them mind shooting people. That should bother me but you hurt my family and that is inexcusable. So I think just this once I may give them carte blanche." His expression hardened into his 'Oncoming Storm' face. "If you don't cooperate."

"Don't worry, Doc, I can definitely take out the first seven of them before they even realize I've started shooting." Jack gave a small wink.

"Oh, you think you're so impressive, Sweetie," River said with relish in her voice. "I can take eight before you drop your first three."

"I love it when you talk dirty to me like that," Jack panted.

River purred in response. "Just wait until I get you alone, Captain. I'll show you dirty then."

"Can't wait." Jack flicked his gaze in her direction for just a moment.

"Is this really important, flirting? Because I feel like defeating the baddies should be higher on the list right now," Amy called from her position near the TARDIS door.

"Sorry," Jack and River said simultaneously.

"As I was saying," The Doctor continued. "I could just let my two friends here loose on you. Or maybe you could just listen a minute. Because all I really want to do is accept your total surrender and then I'll let you go in peace. Yes, you've been interfering in human history for thousands of years. Yes, people have suffered and died. But what's the point in two hearts if you can't be a bit forgiving now and then." Unabashedly, the Doctor stared down the nearest creature. It neither flinched nor spoke.

"Oh. The Silence. You guys take that seriously, don't you? Okay, you got me. I'm lying. I'm not really going to let you go that easily. Nice thought, but it's not Christmas. First. You tell me about the girl. Who is she, why is she important? What's she for?"

"The girl is no longer of consequence, her job is done," the Silence hissed.

"No longer of consequence!" Rose screamed with anger. "She's a child, a scared child. And if you no longer need her then give her to us now!" The slightest hint of gold shone from her eyes.

The Silence flinched. "She is gone and of no concern of yours."

The Doctor's stance hardened as he held Rose back from attacking the creature. "Then I guess we're out of options. Guys. Sorry. But you're way out of time." Gently he pulled Rose back to where Rory
and Amy were standing. "They will pay for this," he said in a harsh whisper.

Turning back to the group, the Doctor clapped his hands and looked at first glance to be cheerful. But underneath you could see the searing anger. "Now, come on. A bit of history for you. Aren't you proud, 'cause you helped. Now. Do you know how many people are watching this live on the telly?" His fingers drummed on top of the box.

"Half a billion. And that's nothing, because the human race will spread out among the stars—you just watch them fly. Billions and billions of them, for billions and billions of years. And every single one of them at some point in their lives will look back at this man taking that very first step and they will never ever forget it."

Neil Armstrong's voice came from the television. "That's one small step for man…" The video changed and the injured Silence filled the screen. "You should kill us all on sight. You should kill us all on sight."

"You've given the order for your own execution. And the whole planet just heard you," the Doctor sneered.

"One giant leap for mankind." Armstrong completed his most famous words.

"And one whacking great kick up the backside for the Silence. You just raised an army against yourself. And now, for a thousand generations, you're going to be ordering them to destroy you every day. How fast can you run? 'Cause today's the day the human race throws you off their planet. They won't even know they're doing it." The Doctor moved backwards. "Normally I'd at least say sorry, but I gave you a chance and you didn't take it. Besides, no one kidnaps my daughter and gets away with it."

None of the family moved, waiting for the Doctor to finish. The creature in front of him opened his mouth in the silent scream that signaled it was about to kill.

The Doctor backed away. "Now family, let's run. Jack, River, have you got this?"

"Oh yes, and it will be ever so much fun," River said as the Doctor, Rose, Amy and Rory stepped inside the TARDIS and closed the door. "Finally a little payback, and I think it's about time. Don't you, my love?"

"Yeah, I think it's past time these uglies pay for what they've done," Jack said, pulling the trigger on his blaster, taking down the first of their combatants.

It was like a choreographed dance between River and Jack as they took aim at the creatures in the room. It was fluid and comfortable, like something they had done a thousand times before. Probably because they had. Coming to face each other, both smirked as they shot the last of their opponents over the others shoulder.

"Was that as good for you as it was for me?" River panted as she holstered her weapon.

"Oh yeah," he said, holstering his own before pulling her in for a fierce kiss. It was all lips and tongues and teeth, without the slightest bit of finesse. Just as Jack pushed River back to the console in the center of the room and was about to lift her onto it, someone cleared their voice from across the room.

"If you two are quiet finished," Rory said, blushing, "I think it's time we left." Without a backwards glance the young man turned and walked quickly back in the TARDIS.
River laughed. "You realize that he might actually kill you for that later."

Jack tucked her hand in his as they started back across the room. "It was worth it."

---

Hours later after saying goodbye to President Nixon and Canton, the TARDIS floated through the Vortex. The Doctor and Rose had retired to their room, leaving Rory, Amy, River and Jack in the lounge.

"I've never seen him so angry," Amy said, holding her mug with both hands. "Even when we were on the Space Ship UK with the Starwhale, he wasn't this angry." Rory wrapped a comforting arm around her. He had refused to leave her side since they had returned to the ship.

"I've seen it. Hell, I've been on the receiving end of it before. Back two regenerations ago," Jack said, sipping his own tea. "It's easy to forget sometimes what he's capable of."

"Should we..." Rory started. "Should we do anything for him now?"

"Nah," Jack said, settling back into the sofa next to River. "Rose'll sort him out. She's always been able to bring out the best in him. Able to get him to calm down."

"It must have been so hard on him," Amy said quietly. "Losing her. What was he like when you first met him?"

Jack smiled; he and Amy had had this conversation before, in his past, her future. "Rough around the edges, quick to anger, moodier. Always calling humans stupid apes but completely wrapped around her little finger, even then. The three of us were quite the team, but it was obvious the two of them were just meant to be. Beauty and the Beast, at least until he regenerated into the pretty boy."

Sighing, Jack leaned into River a bit more. "I didn't meet him again until after he'd lost her to the parallel world."

"So we should try and find the little girl, yeah?" Amy asked, deciding to change the subject. "Get her home to where she belongs."

"What did they mean 'her job is done'? Do you think that she was already in Utah? Do these things have time travel, too?" Rory asked curiously.

River stiffened before speaking. "I'm sure they rushed the time line of their plan when they figured out we were onto them. And I'm fairly certain that they would be capable of time travel."

Letting out a slow breath, Rory surmised, "Nothing we can do to stop it happening then?"

Jack shook his head. "Fraid not, the only thing you can do now is figure out the clues the future Doctor left you to stop him from actually dying."

"So where is the girl?" Amy asked curiously, reiterating her earlier train of thought.

"Somewhere safe, I'm guessing. You'll find her when the timing's right," Jack said, swigging his tea. "Not before."

"Textbook enigmatic there, Jack," Rory said with a small laugh.

"He practices that in front of a mirror," River said with a laugh.

Amy gave River a knowing smirk. "I'm pretty sure that's not all he does in front of a mirror."
"And on that note, I think it's time we took out leave." Jack placed his mug on a side table, stood and held a hand out for River. "Care to pilot me home, m' lady? I have plans for you tonight."

"Do I get to keep you for a bit this time?" River said, taking his hand.

"Yeah," Jack said, giving her a tug. "I've got some time to spare."

Rory and Amy trailed behind the other couple on their way to the console room. The newlyweds rolling their eyes at the innuendo laced conversation the other two were having.

"You two can stay a while longer if you'd like." Rory said as he watched River dial in her destination. "At least until Mum and the Doctor emerge. Maybe even travel with us a bit."

River's hand stalled for a fraction of a second. "I wish we could, but Jack needs to get back to his timeline and me to mine."

"Just don't stay away too long," Amy said sternly.

"Don't worry, Ms. Amelia. You'll be seeing me again soon, and I'll be heading back to a future version of the two of you soon." Jack pulled her into a tight hug and then kissed her cheek. He repeated the hug with Rory. "Just remember the next time you see me, none of this will have happened yet. So don't mention this," he waved a hand between himself and River, "to me."

"You'd think I'd never met someone who wasn't traveling linearly with me before." Rory looked affronted.

"Either way," River said as she landed the TARDIS and came to join the threesome. "I'm sure I'll be seeing the two of you again soon. Take care of yourselves and each other." River gave both Rory and Amy lingering hugs.

"Take care of yourself, too," Amy said, kissing her cheek.

River pulled back and grabbed Jack's hand. "Always."

"Tell the Doctor and Rose we said goodbye." Jack said, tugging on River's hand and pulling her out the door.

Amy shut the door behind them and followed Rory up to the console. "It's funny, I thought Jack and Ianto were serious."

Rory threw them back into the Vortex before collapsing into one of the chairs. "We have no way of knowing how far in his personal future that Jack is from. I mean, he's immortal and over a thousand years old as it is."

"At least they're both happy, yeah?" Amy said as she sat down in his lap.

"I can see it, though." Rory smiled. "Jack Harkness and River Song, co-captains of the Innuendo Squad."

Amy let out a deep snort of laughter. "Come on, husband." She stood and pulled on his hand. "Time for bed. Well, maybe a nice long shower and then bed."

"We could shower together and save water," Rory said as he allowed her to pull them towards their room.

"Sounds fun," Amy said, letting go of his hand. "Race you there." And the two of them took off
down the corridor.

Rose sat cross-legged in the middle of their bed as she watched the Doctor pace the length of their room. Her mouth quirked into a small smile as she studied the way this incarnation stomped, shoulders sagging, head tilted to the side and feet pointed slightly out. A bit of a duck walk, not that she would ever tell him that. She, however, found his gait completely adorable.

This pacing about the room bit was nothing new. It helped him think through things, the constant movement of his body helping the constant movement of his thoughts.

"What are you thinking about?" she questioned after he had been at it for about fifteen minutes.

He stopped and turned on his heel to face her. "I manipulated them into ordering all humans to kill them." His voice was soft and full of pain. "Was there another way?" The look on his face told her that he needed to know that there wasn't another option.

She held out a hand to him; slowly he crawled into the bed and matched her position. Sitting directly in front of her, his crossed legs touching hers, hands folded in his lap.

"You gave them a chance to leave peacefully." Her voice was barely above a whisper. "They took Amy and could have hurt her, and you still gave them a chance. They chose not to take it."

He nodded almost imperceptibly, knowing that he had done what he had to but still taking the weight of it onto himself. "What about the little girl? Should we try and find her?"

"Jack said we wouldn't until we knew exactly who she was," Rose said, brushing a stray hair out of his eye. "He must have seen something or know something that we don't. But at least that means we will find her."

"True." He grabbed her hand and pulled it to his lips, pressing a kiss into her palm. "I guess we need to find out who she is then. Could be anybody, though, billions upon billions of people in this galaxy alone. It's near impossible." A small sigh escaped his lips and his whole body sagged.

"It's what we do, though, isn't it, the impossible?" Rose leaned forward until their foreheads touched. They sat there for several minutes in silence before he pulled back.

"Do you want more to have more children?" he asked suddenly.

"What?" Her brow scrunched in confusion. Sometimes following his train of thought was like trying to catch the wind.

"When Rory asked you if you were pregnant, you sounded sad when you said that you weren't. So I've been wondering if you wanted to have more children." A small blush crept up his cheeks. "With me, of course."

Sighing, Rose leaned back on her elbows, unable to say anything. Did she want more children? It wasn't a subject that she had though much about in the past decade. She had five children (if you included Trisha and Amy, and of course she always would) and two grandchildren as is. She was in her sixties, maybe. God, Rory was right; she had no idea how old she was anymore. Regardless, she was way past the age for a normal 21st century human female to give birth.

Then again, she wasn't a normal 21st century human.

She looked up, about to express her hesitancy, until she met his eyes. There was more than just
simple curiosity there. More than him just wanting to know her opinion on something. He wanted
her to want this. He wanted more children, biological children. More part Time Lords.

And she was suddenly certain in her answer. "Yeah, someday. Someday I want us to have children.
Together."

His grin lit up the room. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." She gave him a tongue in teeth smile. "After figuring out what's wrong with Amy, that is.
And don't pretend that you didn't notice that something's off."

"I noticed." His grin faltered a bit. "Tomorrow, I'm going to pull the scan logs from Rory's TARDIS
and see what I find."

"Great and I'm guessing we don't want Rory to know anything yet?"

The Doctor shook his head. "I'm not sure what's wrong, and I don't want to worry either of them
before we're certain."

Leaning forward, Rose kissed him softly on the lips. "Alright, we won't burden them until we have
to. In the meantime, I've spent far too long away from those grandbabies. Fancy a visit to London?"

"Sounds nice." He leaned over and kissed her, their lips lingering for several long moments. "Right
now, though, we've spent far too much time apart, my precious Rose. I missed you and I think we
should start making up for the last three months apart."

Rose giggled as his lips trailed down her neck. "Now that sounds like a lovely idea."
Chapter 7

It had only been a month for Tony, Trisha, Sabrina and the kids. Three months for Amy, Rory, Rose and the Doctor, but only one in linear time. Mickey and Martha's son, Gareth, was just over a month old now.

The ones who hadn't been on the adventure had been quickly filled in on the details of their adventure, well, except for the future relationship between River and Jack. As well as being told that Jack himself couldn't know what had happened.

After hearing of their adventures in 1969, Martha had recounted her own. She had said that she would have preferred chasing aliens across America during the Summer of Love rather than working in a shop in London.

As a new mother, Martha had yet to be apart from her son. At least until today, Rose thought with a smile. She had dragged Martha, Trisha, Amy and Sabrina out on the town for a spa day. They had already had massages, had their nails done, enjoyed a light lunch and were currently clothes shopping. It was good to have a little pampering.

EJ, Jamie and Gareth had been left in the care of Tony, Mickey, Rory and the Doctor. Rose had been sure that, despite the Doctor's newfound desire for more children, he would have protested spending a day on babysitting duties. Sure that he would have insisted on going over both Amy's old and new scans, instead he had seemed very eager to spend time with both the children and the boys.

In the five days since they had returned to London, the Doctor had spent many hours of his free time pouring over the information he had collected and he was still no closer to an answer. Amy had, in fact, been pregnant at one point then the suddenly it was as if she never was. No sign of miscarriage, just gone. The Doctor had a hundred ideas about what was going on, all of them were just as implausible as they were horrifying.

The sound of Sabrina's voice effectively snapped Rose out of her train of thought. "You're not thinking about buying that, are you?" her youngest asked, pointing at the shirt Rose held in her hands. "Besides the fact that the color's all wrong for you it's just ghastly."

Hastily Rose put the top back on the rack. "No, I won't be getting that one." She picked up another, much cuter one. "What about this one?"

"It's better. Not many grandmums could pull it off, but I think you could," Sabrina said with a shrug. "Don't know why you bother with the shopping, though. You have the whole of that wardrobe room to choose from."

Rose laughed. "You sound like your dad. I like to shop, something therapeutic about it. Especially after an adventure."

Sabrina gave her a small smile and turned back to the racks of clothes. Something was clearly bothering her. "Sweetheart, what's wrong?" Rose said softly.

"It's nothing, Mum, really," the younger girl tried to reassure her.

"I'm not buying that, so spill." Rose said, crossing her arms. "Is it school? Or that boy you've been seeing? 'Cause if he hurt you…"

In a huff, Sabrina grabbed her mother's arm and pulled her away from other people's range of
"It's not 'that boy' as you call him," Sabrina snapped. "I'm just, ughh, I don't know. I just feel trapped."

"Trapped?" Rose grew concerned.

"On Earth," Sabrina expounded. "I feel like I'm trapped here on one planet in one time period. I miss the excitement, the traveling, the adventure, everything we used to do. But I just feel like I'm expected to be here. To go to University and to make a proper life here."

Rose fought hard to keep her lips from forming a smile. She lost. "Why on any planet would you feel like that's what we expected of you?"

"I just thought that because that's what Tony did..." Sabrina said lamely. "I thought it's what I wanted."

"Oh love, I'm sorry. I should have noticed something was off," Rose said, pulling her into a hug.

"It's not your fault, Mum. I'm not a little kid anymore." Pulling out of the hug, Brina wiped unshed tears from her eyes on her sleeve. She hated being outwardly emotional like this.

"Why didn't you say something sooner? The only thing I want is for you to be happy," Rose rubbed her daughter's back.

"I really thought that this is what I wanted. I love books and literature, always have. It's just I miss the adventure of traveling through time and space." Sabrina looked up at her mum, probably expecting some lecture about personal responsibility. Saying all the things that she had feared her mum would say when she finally admitted that Uni wasn't for her. Honestly, she should have known better.

Rose gave her a sympathetic smile. "Then take a break or quit school and travel. You could call up Mels. She's off backpacking somewhere. Join up with her while she's trying to figure out who she is, like you want to. You could take River up on her offer and try University in another century. Or you could take your pick of either TARDIS to travel in. Don't stay where you're not happy, love."

"You're not mad?"

"Why would I be? When I was your age, I dropped everything and ran away to the stars. I learned so much in that time. I learned a better way of living, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

"That was Dad, right?" Sabrina smiled.

"Nah, it was a completely different mad man with a blue box," Rose said with an eye roll. "Of course it was Dad, and it was the best decision I ever made."

"That's because in the end you got me. And where would your life be without yours truly?" The younger woman tried to look haughty.

"Cheeky," Rose smiled before becoming more serious. "It doesn't matter to me which path you choose, Sabrina. Or even if you choose to jump to several different paths. I won't even be mad if you choose to travel with Rory and Amy rather than your poor old Mum. I know I would just cramp your style," Rose said with a laugh, looping one of her arms through Sabrina's and pulling her back towards the group. "Come on, you're going to need some new clothes if you're going on a journey of self-discovery."

"Thanks for understanding, Mum," Sabrina said, laying her head on Rose's shoulder.
"That's what I'm here for."

"Want to talk about it?" Tony asked as he slid a cup of tea in front of his younger brother. The Doctor was playing with EJ and Jamie upstairs. Mickey had gone to feed and change the baby before putting him down for a nap.

"Talk about what?" Rory asked, feigning nonchalance as he sipped his tea.


Heaving a sigh, Rory simply said, "We told you what happened in 1969. Met Nixon and a little girl in a space suit, ran reconnaissance for three months, had a row with Mum, Amy got kidnapped, saved Amy, saved human history. You know, normal stuff."

"God, sometimes you are just like Dad, avoiding talking about uncomfortable things." Tony leaned forward. "Tell me what you really don't want to tell anyone else. I know you, little brother; you need to talk about it. I promise to keep it just between us, won't even tell Trisha."

This is what they did. If there was ever anything Rory felt he couldn't take to Mum or Dad or even Amy, he came to his Tony. Rory closed his eyes for a minute, and Tony began to think that he wasn't going to say anything. Then Rory started to speak. "We're in a circular paradox. A pretty long one, too, if I'm calculating it correctly."

"Does this have something to do with why you lot were in Utah?"

"Yeah, Utah is where it started. Something happens there. It's a fixed point, but not really. Not like when Dad died. Everything about that moment had to happen, and I couldn't change a single detail.

"But with this, I think the appearance of what happened was what was fixed. So I have to figure out how to manipulate what happened because I already did." Rory trailed off and looked over at his brother. "I'm not making any sense, am I?"

Tony smiled. "Actually, I think I understood that. Not sure what it says about my sanity, mind. So, something that you can't tell me about happened in Utah and now you have to figure out how to manipulate a fixed point so what appeared to have happened doesn't actually happen."

"Got it in one." Rory looked impressed. Not many full humans could understand time. He should have known that Tony above most people would not only understand but not press to get details that Rory couldn't provide.

Dropping his voice and looking over his shoulder, Tony asked, "Is this similar to what you're planning to do to save River?" Satisfied that the Doctor was nowhere near them, Tony raised the volume of his voice a fraction. "Because you're already not sure that she can survive the assault the Library matrix will have on her once. You can't be thinking about doing something like that."

"No," Rory said, shaking his head. "I won't have to use her to fix this thing in Utah. Not sure what it is I have to use for this but I think I'll know it when see it."

"I'm sure you'll think of something, little bro." Tony paused for a moment before speaking again. "Have you talked to the Doctor about your plans for the Library? Maybe he has some suggestions. Or maybe you could use his..."

Rory cut him off. "No. I haven't talked to him or Mum about it yet. He's Dad, and he won't want us to interfere. So I'm waiting until I have everything ready to go before I make my move. You're the
only one who knows that I promised River I would save her. I just can't let her die like that."

"Of course you can't." Tony laid a hand on Rory's shoulder. "But that's not all that's bothering you, is it?"

"It's Amy," Rory said softly. "There's something off. I just can't put my finger on it, and I don't just mean the whole pregnant/not pregnant thing."

Tony nodded. Rory had already told him that Amy had thought that she was pregnant and it turned out that she wasn't. "What do you think…?"

"Daddy!" An energetic, sandy haired three year old ran full stop into the room. "Daddy, can we have a tea party in the garden? Granddad said I had to ask you before we took my tea set outside. The sun's out. Please, pretty please?"

The Doctor walked into the room behind her, carrying Jamie. "Sorry, I'm not sure of the rule about toys outside. And Rose was very specific that I had to follow the house rules. I'm usually rubbish at rules."

Tony laughed, not entirely sure if his mum had meant rules for the children or for the Doctor himself. "Yes, pet, you can have tea party in the garden."

"Come on, EJ," Rory said, pushing back his chair from the table. "I'll help you carry everything outside."

After the two of them left the room, Tony stood and held out his arms. "Do you want me to take Jamie? It's almost nap time and I'm sure that you'll want to attend Miss EJ's tea party. Trisha saves the best biscuits for our princess to use."

"Yes, thank you." The Doctor handed Jamie off to his dad. "How are things? For you, I mean."

"Good, busy at work. And this one is just getting big so fast. He'll be walking soon." Tony let Jamie stand on the table, while holding him up to demonstrate the point.

"Thank you for letting me be a part of their lives. For letting me be a Grandfather to them." The Doctor shifted uncomfortably from one foot to another.

Tony shifted Jamie and leaned over to give him a hug. "You are their Granddad, and they adore you, especially EJ." Releasing the hug, Tony said, "Come on Dad, let's get those biscuits and make the tea."

The Doctor couldn't hold back his smile as he set the electric kettle to boil.

"We're home," Trisha called as the women piled into the house. "We brought takeaways." She, Amy and Sabrina set the hefty bags on the dining room table.

"Hello, love," Tony said, coming around a corner and kissing his wife's cheek. "Have fun shopping?" He hugged everyone else in turn.

"Yep, spent all your hard earned money on stuff I don't need," Trisha teased. "Where are the kids?"

"I thought they went with you lot," Tony teased back. "Just teasing," he relented when Martha looked slightly panicked. "Gareth, Jamie and Mickey are all down for their afternoon naps."

"Ah, glad to see some things never change with Micks," Rose laughed, bumping Martha's shoulder.
"Truer words..." Martha agreed.

"As for the rest of them, follow me," Tony said, waving a hand at them before leading them out of the room. "Don't worry. I took plenty of pictures and made a video." He almost wasn't able to get the words out because he was trying to stop himself from laughing.

"What are you talking about?" Rose asked, almost skipping in anticipation of seeing what was so funny.

"Just wait." Tony put his finger to his lips and stopped by the windows to the back garden.

Outside, EJ, Rory, the Doctor and a collection of stuffed animals were sitting around a circular table. EJ stood on a chair pouring tea into everyone's cups from the tea set that had been a birthday present. She was wearing her pink tutu, leotard, ballet flats and tiara. Rory was wearing a dinner jacket with a fedora perched on his head. The Doctor was dressed in his customary tweed jacket while sporting a fetching top hat and monocle.

Amy's hand stole to her stomach as she stifled a giggle. "Rory's going to be such a great dad one day." Her voice was barely above a whisper. Trisha was standing next to her and squeezed her hand in support.

"Did you send the video to Uncle Jack?" Sabrina asked her eldest brother. "This would be perfect for the funniest Doctor moments thing he's working on."

"The what?" Rose asked, not taking her eyes off the scene in the garden.

"Just Jack being Jack," Martha explained with an eye roll, since no one else looked like they wanted to chime in. "He's compiling a video of the silly, embarrassing things the Doctor does. Keeps saying it's for the kids, but I doubt it."

Rose snorted and Trisha moved towards the back door. "Tony, be a dear, wake Mickey up and bring dinner to the garden." Trisha blew a kiss at her beloved. "It's time we crash a tea party. Fish fingers and custard for everyone."

"I just hope EJ has enough hats," Amy said with a smile. "I want a big feathery one."

Sabrina grinned. "If she doesn't, I'm sure the Doctor does."

Later that night, after dinner, baths for the children, and bedtime stories, after laughter, stories and the Smiths heading home, after everyone else had gone to bed, it was just Rose and the Doctor. They sat curled together on the couch in front of the fireplace, the fingers of one of his hands trailing lightly up her arm.

"Is it always like this? Domestics, I mean," he asked softly.

Her lips curled into a small smile. "Is it all lazy Saturdays, tea parties and laughter? I wish it was, but no. There are lots of days like this. Lots of lovely moments, but there's also some not so great times. Heartbreak, arguments, school work, disappointments… You have the memories of all those days too, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. I know what James experienced and how he felt over almost all of those years." He shifted and pulled her closer to his side. "There's just a part of me wondering why I ran from this for so long. If these last few months of visits are anything to go by, maybe…"

Unable to help it, Rose gave a small chuckle. "You would have been bored in a month if you had to
live a life day to day. I know a part of you wants it, but this isn't you."

"It was James, though?" He tried to keep the small resentment out of his voice. He may have had most of James's memories but he hadn't lived them. Amy had been wrong. It wasn't the same thing as the metacrisis only in reverse. James had lived every single one of the Doctor's memories but the opposite wasn't true.

"Love..." Rose turned so they were face to face. "It was the part of him that was human, the part he got from Donna. That was the only reason he could. Plus, I think that if not for Amelia and Mels, we would have left Earth as soon as our TARDIS could leave. Raised the boy amongst the stars, but then we would have missed out on our girls."

The Doctor nodded curtly. It was a silly thing to bring up, he knew that. He loved the life they had now. He loved Rose and their family.

"He was jealous of you, too, you know," she said, kissing his cheek. "When we realized we wouldn't grow old together. When we found out that he and I couldn't have more children together but that you and I could. James tried to hide it, but I knew him so well."

"I'm sorry," the Doctor mumbled against her hair.

"I think one of the only comforts he had was the knowledge that the kids and I would be loved and taken care of, by you."

"And he was right. Of course he was right," the Doctor replied. Deciding to change subjects, he asked, "Have you spoken to Mels lately?"

"She called yesterday, currently backpacking across Italy. Guess she had no real ties to Leadworth once we left. I asked again if she wanted to come with us. She turned me down, said the timing wasn't right."

"As long as she knows the invitation stands." The Doctor leaned in and kissed Rose softly on the lips.

"Speaking of traveling, Sabrina is going to take a bit of a break from school, have some adventures of her own."

The Doctor smiled. "Excellent, 21st century schools are a bit rubbish. Plenty she can learn through experience rather than books. Is she coming with us, then?"

"No, she wants to go with Rory and Amy for a bit," Rose replied softly.

"I see." He couldn't help the hurt that crept into his voice.

"None of that, my love." Rose playfully slapped his arm. "She's a growing girl that in no way wants to spend all of her time stuck with her parents. Even if we are very, very cool. I'm sure she'll travel with us for a bit, too. She just needs time to spread her wings. I know at that age I didn't want to travel with my mum."

The Doctor didn't say anything; he just held her and ran his fingers through the long strands of her hair. "Besides," Rose said softly as she laid her head against his chest. "It gives us time to figure out what exactly is going on without having to explain it to everyone."

"I love you, Rose Tyler," the Doctor whispered against the top of her head. "We'll figure out what's wrong and fix it. I promise."
"Of course we will. It's what we do." Rose smiled up at him. "And I love you, too."
Chapter 8

Sabrina relished the feel of the alien sun on her skin and the sand between her toes. A book was open in her lap, a class assignment. Might as well enjoy it at a great location. Not that she had made a decision about staying in school or not, it's just that if she did go back she didn't want to be behind.

It had been two weeks since she had restarted her adventures. Mostly it had been quiet, really fun. Lots of festivals and exploring other cultures but sadly no revolutions, as Dad had once said 'Trouble is just the bits in between'. They had been on a real life pirate ship recently. That had been really fun, but it just felt like something exciting was bound to happen.

Digging her toes deeper into the powdery light grey sand, Sabrina let go of some of the tension she'd been holding onto these last few months. Looking around, she couldn't remember the name of the planet. It was the wrong one anyway, the TARDIS taking them where they needed to go rather than where they wanted to go. Rory had assured her it was safe as houses here, and it was always a thrill to not know what was going to happen. As long as you never completely let your guard down.

Amy and Rory were a little ways down the beach, doing whatever it was that newlyweds did. It seemed like everyone in the family was happily coupled. She'd been dating this one bloke David. He was nice, funny and handsome, but it wasn't serious. Their relationship was missing that spark that the others seemed to have. What Tony and Trisha and Rory and Amy and Mum and the Doctor seemed to have.

Heaving a sigh, Sabrina flopped on her back. The Doctor was the single most contentious part of her life. It wasn't that she didn't like the Doctor; maybe it would have been easier if she hated him. But she loved him very much in fact, loved him like a favorite uncle or a father. Yes, she definitely loved him like a father. And that was the root of the problem. It still felt like a betrayal. And she knew that her dad wouldn't want her to think of it that way.

Logically, she understood that her dad and the Doctor were at one time the exact same man. Logically, she knew that the Doctor having a different face than her dad was due to a regeneration, a normal process for his species. And logically, she knew that one day the Doctor would have a new face; whether or not that was in her lifetime was not something she wanted to think about.

Amy had come back from their adventures in 1969 calling him Dad. Part of Sabrina was so jealous that she could either blur the line between the Doctor and Dad so easily or that she could think see him as that in his own right.

Sabrina pulled out a battered old photo from her book. It was of her and Dad. She was seven and they were on some planet at an intergalactic zoo. Dad was crouching so that he was at her level, and they both had these huge grins on their faces. They had been so happy.

Dad would have known exactly what to say to guide her. He would have known which direction she should take. Not that Mum hadn't been completely supportive since they had talked a week ago, it was just, damn it, she missed her daddy.

It was all still so confusing, emotionally. The Doctor would more than likely remember this trip and remember this photo. He was both Dad and not Dad at the same time. She pushed it back into her book, tears stinging in her eyes.

More than anything right now, Sabrina wished she had someone that she could talk to objectively about this. Sure, she could call Martha or Sarah Jane, but they just seemed too close to the Doctor.
Maybe Jack or River could be her sounding board.

No, she really wanted to talk to Mels, but face to face or even phone time seemed to be out of the question.

About a month after Rory and Amy's wedding, Mels sent Sabrina an email saying that she was going to travel the world. No real goodbye and very little real contact since then. All she seemed to get was the random email or a short phone call letting Sabrina know she was still alive.

Mels had only called Amy, Rory and Mum a handful of times. It was odd but not completely out of character for her. One day Mels would probably just show up outside her flat, likely pick the lock if Sabrina wasn't home and have one hell of a story to tell.

Setting down the book, Sabrina stood, picked up her trainers (just in case there was running to be done) and walked barefoot down to the water's edge. The water here seemed denser than Earth water, and it was green. Her feet slipped into the water, and it felt like walking into slightly watery lime green Jell-O. Sabrina giggled and splashed the water a bit. This is just what she needed, a nice distraction from everything in her life.

Rory and Amy had moved back down the beach, closer to Sabrina when a bright light flashed in the sky. An object was falling through the atmosphere, a bright orange plume of smoke in its wake. Sabrina hurried over to her brother as he and Amy stood up.

"I though you said this was a primitive planet?" Amy said, brushing the sand off of her.

"It is, but that doesn't mean that someone can't crash land and scare the locals," Rory said as he tracked the path of the object. "Come on, you two. Back to the TARDIS. We need to get to the crash site before anyone else does. People might be hurt."

Sabrina slipped her trainers on and hurried to grab her bag. No need to leave a copy of Rebecca lying around. The trio quickly made their way up the beach and back to ship. Once inside, Rory headed to the scanner and began reading the swirly circular Gallifreyan text.

"So what is it?" Amy asked, leaning over his shoulder.

Rory's finger trailed down the screen as he read through the information. "It's a human ship, not sure what century. Humans built those things out of kits. I'm showing one life form on board." He tapped the screen. "Now that's interesting."

"What?" Sabrina said as her brother flipped switches and turned dials, no doubt setting a course for the crash site.

"It's a human ship, but those are not human life signs," Rory said as he gently landed the ship. "Come on, they may be hurt." He ran out the door with the girls trailing behind.

Smoke filled their lungs as they stepped outside. The tail end of the ship seemed to be on fire. The familiar buzzing of Rory's sonic screwdriver filled the air. "Whoever this is, they're still alive, barely. Something's interfering with my scans. I can't pinpoint their location. There's a hatch, we can split up and search for them quickly but we'll have to get in and out fast."

Amy and Sabrina quickly agreed. Once inside, the three of them went in opposite directions. Rory headed towards the more dangerous section in the rear. Thankfully, it was a small ship and they could yell to someone else for help easily. Sabrina covered her mouth and nose with her arm as she headed towards the forward compartment of the ship.
On the other side of the door in front of her, she heard a loud moan. Quickly, Sabrina used her shoulder to push the door open. "Hello!" she called. "Hello, is anyone there? My name is Sabrina, and I'm here to help."

"Hello," a small, female voice said from under some debris.

"Amy, Rory, I found her!" Sabrina yelled over her shoulder as she pushed further into the damaged room. "Forward compartment," she yelled again.

A blonde head was poking out, and Sabrina quickly knelt down and started to move the bigger pieces off the young woman. "Can you tell me your name?" Sabrina prodded, trying to check her mental functions.

"Jenny, my name's Jenny," she said. The pain she was in was evident in her voice.

"Nice name. I had a sister named Jenny, never got to meet her," Sabrina said as she heaved the last piece off and the girl turned over, giving Sabrina the first look at her face. "Oh my God," Sabrina whispered.

"My head," Jenny moaned, and her eyes rolled back in her head as she passed out.

"Rory," Sabrina screamed, "Rory, get here quick." Movement behind her made her turn her head. "We need to get her out of here fast."

Pulling out his sonic screwdriver, Rory did a quick scan. "I think we're safe to move her. Amy, Brina, get yourselves out. We'll be right behind." With that, Amy grabbed the younger Tyler's hand, Rory scooped up Jenny and they all quickly made their way out of the smoke filled, burning ship.

They had all barely cleared the outer hull when there was an explosion. Rory, with Jenny in his arms, pressed forward. Sabrina turned around and saw the now crumpled mass that was her sister's ship. Her sister Jenny, the Doctor's daughter.

So many questions ran through Sabrina's head as she reluctantly turned and stepped inside the ship. How was she here? Dad said that she died. Was it really their Jenny? This Jenny looked exactly like the picture that the TARDIS had given her. What would have happened if she Rory and Amy hadn't been on that planet today? Or if they had been just a few minutes later?

Sabrina's feet had led her to the med bay without any conscious though of her own. Amy was cleaning Jenny's arms, and Rory was conducting a number of scans. A familiar device sat on the counter. A Vortex Manipulator, similar to the one that both River and Jack carried. Amy must have removed it from her arm. "How is she?" Sabrina asked quietly.

"Stable, but still unconscious. She'll be okay though, no major damage done," Rory said as he set down one of the instruments. "More than likely she has put herself into a healing coma. Maybe, I'm still not sure what species she is, but it's not human. Two hearts…"

"Is it… Is she…" Sabrina stumbled over the words. "She said her name was Jenny. Could she be our Jenny?"

Rory stopped dead in his tracks and rushed back to the visitor's bed. "It would explain a lot of these readings." He brushed her hair away from her face.

"Wait, like Jenny Jenny? Dad's progenated daughter Jenny?" Amy asked, curiously scrutinizing the young, blonde woman. "She looks more like Mum than Dad."
"Dad said she died on Messaline. He waited hours, and she never regenerated. This is impossible. How can she be Jenny?" Sabrina said as she watched Rory move to a computer terminal.

"I have no idea how she could be here, but impossible seems par for the course in this family." He punched a few keys into the keyboard and closed his eyes. Motioning for his wife and sister to join him, Rory said, "It's her. Come look at this. This is Dad's TNA and this is Jenny's." Pressing a few of the buttons, the two images superimposed itself over the other. The matching portions changed color. "See? A more than 50% match."

"We should call Mum and the Doctor, let them know," Sabrina said as she turned away from the screen and walked back down to Jenny. "They need to know she's here and she's alive."

"Yeah, I'll give them a call. We can't leave just yet though. I have to take care of the wreckage. That ship's too advanced for the planet. I'll see what information I can salvage from the computers," Rory said, following Sabrina to Jenny's bedside.

"I'll sit with her," Sabrina said softly. "She shouldn't be alone when she wakes up, and someone needs to explain the whole regeneration thing before she sees the Doctor."

Rory pushed a strand of hair out of Jenny's face and nodded. Amy squeezed his hand and he pulled her from the room.

An hour later, Rory and Amy were still out dealing with the cleanup. Sabrina held Jenny's hand in hers as she told her the story of the family. It was a complicated family.

"So your dad is both the Doctor and my dad. Don't think about it too hard it'll give you a headache," Sabrina was saying when Rory came back in the room.

"Any change?" he asked softly from the door.

"No, no change on the monitors. I think she's just sleeping," Sabrina said, squeezing Jenny's hand. "Where's Amy?"

"Well, we're back at Tony's place, so she's explaining everything to them. I called Mum and the Doctor, they're on their way. Hopefully Mum drives or who knows when they'll be here."

"Did you tell them? About Jenny?"

"Not yet." Rory rubbed a hand down his face. "He thinks she's dead. Thinks that she died in his arms but she's right here, unconscious but alive. How do we explain this?"

"We tell them exactly what happened," Sabrina said as if it was so simple.

"What if he doesn't accept her? Doesn't believe it's really her?"

"Who else can she be? Two hearts, similar genetic structure and she looks exactly like Jenny. Rory, what's really bothering you?" She may not have his big brain, but she was better at reading people than most people.

With a long look at the blonde laying on the table, Rory pulled his little sister out into the hallway and shut the door. "What if she can't accept the fact that the Doctor has regenerated? I mean, it's not something that most people have to deal with."

Without warning, Sabrina hit her brother hard in the arm.
"Ow! What was that for?" Rory hissed, rubbing his injured arm.

"She's our sister, a Time Lord or Time Lady, whichever, and the Doctor's daughter. Give her more credit than that," Sabrina said boldly.

"If she doesn't know about regeneration, though, and she sees the Doctor but doesn't recognize him, doesn't accept him, it will devastate him," Rory said softly but forcefully.

"It may not be easy for her at first, but she'll get there. We all will." Sabrina laid a hand on his arm. A small moan from the room behind them, made them aware that the patient was waking up. Sabrina turned on her heel and was at her sister's side in an instant.

"Where am I?" Jenny said, her voice scratchy, probably from the smoke she inhaled.

Sabrina picked up a glass of water she'd been keeping on the side table and put the straw to Jenny's lips. "Here, drink this." Jenny did as she was told. "You're safe on the TARDIS."

"TARDIS! That's his ship." Jenny tried to sit up but was hampered by the monitoring devices Rory had attached to her. "Do you know the Doctor?"

"Yes, Jenny, we do," Rory said gently as he began to disconnect her from the machines. "He's on his way."

"All these years." Tears pricked Jenny's eyes. "All these years I've been looking for him and now I've found him."

Sabrina reached over and took her hand, giving it a comforting squeeze. "Jenny… There's something you should know before he gets here."

Turning towards Sabrina, Jenny studied her face. "Sabrina, you're my sister, right? Your dad is the Doctor, too. I heard you while I was recovering, bits of it came through." Jenny turned to Rory. "And you must be Rory. How is it possible? Dad said that his other children died in the Time War. How long has it been for him?"

"Depends on how you look at it." Sabrina started. "In one sense it's been over twenty five years, in another it's been about two."

"What?" Jenny asked, looking thoroughly confused.

"How much do you know about the Time Lords?" Rory asked, sitting down by Jenny's side, opposite Sabrina.

"Mostly legends and rumors, honestly. People say they are one of the most ancient races, powerful and that when they die, they don't really die, they just change their faces. Their entire bodies even," Jenny said wide eyed as if it was in awe of what she had heard.

"Well, at least she's heard of regeneration." Sabrina gave her brother a small smile. "And that's as good a place as any to start. When Dad regenerated into his 10th form…"

Together, Sabrina and Rory told Jenny the truncated version of Dad's regeneration ability, the metacrisis that had created their father and had shown her pictures of what the Doctor looked like now. Jenny seemed to be taking it well, asking questions when she didn't understand something.

"So, I have a family?" Jenny had asked when Rory finished explaining that his mum and the Doctor would be here any minute. "Will he like me? Will your mum like me?"
"Of course they will. Mum will be thrilled and so will the Doctor. I promise," Rory said, leaning over to give her a hug. "I've always wanted to meet you. So has Sabrina and Tony and everybody else. In fact, the only reason they haven't all come rushing in here is because we haven't wanted to overwhelm you before the Doctor gets here."

"We can be a bit much at times," Sabrina said with an encouraging smile. "Martha will be glad to see you again."

"I'd like that," Jenny said enthusiastically. "Will Donna be here too?"

Rory shook his head. "No, Donna…"

The door to the med-bay flew open, and Amy rushed in. "Mum and Dad just arrived."

"Jenny, this is my wife, Amy," Rory said as he helped Jenny to her feet.

"Nice to meet you." Jenny beamed back. "Does that make you my sister as well?"

Amy winked. "Absolutely."

"Alright, you ready?" Rory asked, giving his newly found sister's hand a squeeze.

"I've been ready for years," Jenny said, steadying herself on wobbly legs.

"Perfect. Give me a few minutes to explain and then follow me into the control room," Rory said, heading for the door.

"Brother," Sabrina said cheekily. "Make sure you break the news about Jenny a tad bit gentler than you did about Mum."

"Brat." Rory grinned back before leaving to find Mum and the Doctor.
Chapter 9

It would be a lie to say that he wasn't nervous. It seemed that every phone call that beckoned them somewhere lately pulled him tauter than a bow string. Being without a family for so long, not having to worry about anyone other than whatever companion he had at that time, had led him to forget that along with the joy of family came the worry. Though given a choice between loneliness and this worry, he would take the worry.

Ever since Rory had called and said they needed to meet them back at Tony's, the Doctor had had an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach. Of course Rory had been quick to assure the Doctor and Rose that everyone was fine but beyond that had not said anything as to the nature of this impromptu call back to London. Rose was feeling the same way; he could feel her uneasiness rolling off of her in waves.

Somehow he and Rose managed to set the TARDIS down in its customary parking spot in Tony's spare room. Grabbing Rose's hand, he pulled her wordlessly out the door. Tony was waiting for them.

"In here," the younger Tyler said, motioning towards the other TARDIS. "Everyone's fine," he said preemptively. "This is just something you needed to hear in person. It's good news. I promise."

Some of the Doctor's tension dissipated, but he could still feel that muscle in his jaw twitch. Tony had pushed the door open, and they found Rory entering from one of the corridors. Rose immediately let go of the Doctor's hand and ran to hug her youngest son.

"Everything alright?" she whispered, not letting him go. "We've been so worried."

Rory pulled back and beamed. "Everything is brilliant. I'm sorry you've been upset. I told you everything was fine."

The Doctor had moved closer to Rose's side. "So, what's the emergency, then?" He was finally able to breath properly again.

"Someone who is very eager to see you again. She's been searching for years. Don't worry, we checked, and I'm sure it's really her," Rory said in a manic, rambling manner.

"Who are you talking about?" The Doctor was confused and was so focused on Rory he missed the woman who entered the room.

"Hello, Dad," Jenny beamed, and the Doctor's mouth gaped open. She looked very much like he remembered, petite, long blonde hair and a big smile. Her clothes were different, though, and they currently looked singed, torn and stained with soot.

His daughter. She was standing, impossibly, a few feet from him. Jenny, his Jenny, was here.

In the back of his mind he could feel her. Amongst the others, Rose, Rory and both TARDIS', she was there. A place once so empty it had felt like a gaping chasm was now filled with people he loved.

But how was she here? This was impossible, another impossible event. He made a mental note to have the TARDIS remove the definition of impossible from every dictionary on the ship.

Finally his mouth and legs seemed to work again. He bounded across the room to her in less than
four steps. Scooping her into a tight hug, he spun her around in his excitement. "Jenny! How are you here? You died on Messaline. You died. I waited for hours and there was no sign of regeneration. I missed you."

"Might be a good idea to set her down, Doctor," Sabrina said from her position near where Jenny had entered the room. "Not a good idea to shake someone who's had recent head trauma. Even if they are a Time Lady."

"Head trauma?!" he exclaimed, setting Jenny gingerly back to the ground. "Are you alright? What happened?"

"Her ship crashed onto the planet we were on," Rory explained. "We were lucky that we got to her when we did. The ship was a total loss. I did manage to save a few things off the computer, though. I'm sorry, Jenny."

"It's alright," Jenny said, gingerly making her way to the jump seat. "I liked that ship but I'm lucky you lot found me when you did. I don't fancy finding out if I can come back from the dead again."

"How did it happen the first time?" the Doctor asked, trailing after her. His face was still twisted in an expression of almost comical disbelief.

"Not sure exactly." Jenny gave him a smile. "I was about to be prepared for burial when I saw this golden light and heard this beautiful song. Something was pulling me back. Then I just woke up, hightailed it out of there and I've been looking for you ever since. I can hear that song now, too. First time since Messaline."

Jenny looked around for the source of the music. "It's a bit different, though."

"It's the song of the TARDIS," Rose said, slowly stepping forward, not wanting to intrude. "This TARDIS is the daughter of the Doctor's ship. So her song is a bit different."

Turning around, the Doctor grabbed her hand and pulled her forward. "Rose, this is my daughter Jenny. Jenny, this is my… well, my Rose Tyler."

"I'm so happy to meet you," Rose said, sitting down next to the girl and pulling her into a tight hug. "I've heard so much about you and I can't wait to hear about your adventures. How long has it been for you, Sweetheart?"

"About four years."

"That's a long time to be on your own," Tony said from behind them.

"Sorry, guess I'm a bit rude myself," Rory said to his brother. "Jenny, this is our brother Tony. We'll introduce you to Trisha, EJ and Jamie later."

"Glad to meet you," Tony said, coming up himself to give her a brief hug. "I'm sure you and Dad have a lot to catch up on. How about I make everyone some tea?"

Jenny's face scrunched at the mention of tea. "What's tea?"

"A hot beverage, made from brewing leaves, very popular in Great Britain and in the Tyler family especially," Tony replied, patting her arm. "Try some. I'm sure you'll like it." He looked up past her. "Brina, Amy, would you mind lending Rory and me a hand?"

"Sure thing," Sabrina agreed before she and Amy headed out behind the brothers.
Rose shifted towards the door. "I'll just give you two some time to catch up."

"No," both the Doctor and his daughter chorused.

"Please stay," Jenny smiled sweetly. "I'd like it if you stayed."

"Of course I'll stay. If you want me to." Rose gave a small smile. "Why don't we go somewhere more comfortable?"

The three of them walked the short distance to back to the Library. The TARDIS had changed the layout to give Jenny a shorter walk. Mentally the Doctor sent his thanks and was rewarded with a satisfied hum and a wave of happiness from the ship.

Once settled comfortably onto couches, the Doctor and Jenny on one, Rose on another facing them, Jenny began to tell her story. The Doctor listened intently as his daughter told them the basics of what she had been up to for the past four years.

She had stolen the ship on Messaline and had searched far and wide for any trace of her father. Finding none, she decided to try a different approach and had relieved a Time Agent of his Vortex Manipulator.

Earth had seemed to be a popular place to find the Doctor, so Jenny had spent well over a year hopping from one time period to another trying to find him. She showed up at historical events that he may have attended, but she still didn't have any luck. So she'd decided to do her research before trying again and had gone to The Library.

"You weren't saved by the computer core, were you?" the Doctor asked in shock, wondering if he had been that close to finding her only to have her slip past.

Jenny tilted her head slightly to one side, confused. "What?" Briefly the Doctor explained the events that led to C.A.L. saving everyone in The Library. And with reluctance, he told her the story of how River Song had freed everyone from it. Rose leaned over and squeezed his hand, though her eyes looked tortured at the thought of what happened to their friend.

"Oh no," Jenny assured him. "I must have been there well before that happened. Glad I missed that, though it would have been nice to see Donna again."

Noticeably, the Doctor winced.

"Did I say something wrong?" Jenny asked.

"I'll explain later, Sweetheart." Rose said softly, laying a hand on Jenny's shoulder. "Right now, I'm sure you're ready to get cleaned up properly and changed out of those clothes. Come on, I'll show you to your room. Well, your room on this TARDIS, I'm sure the other one has a room ready for you as well."

"Thank you, Rose," Jenny said as she stood up and threw her arms around the older woman. Letting go and turning to the Doctor, she hugged him tightly as well. "I'm so glad I found you." Tears glistened in her eyes.

"Me too." He was holding back tears of his own, and he was reluctant to let her out of his arms.

"She won't disappear if she's out of your sight for a few minutes, love," Rose thought to him. "She's been through a lot today and the family can be overwhelming at first. Give her a bit to process everything."
"Thank you," he thought back to her.

Rose smiled and slid her arm through one of Jenny's. "Beauty here has told me that she picked out a couple clean outfits for you and put them in your room. Tomorrow, if you feel up to it you can peruse the wardrobe. I'm sure you will feel better soon, superior biology and all."

The door clicked shut, and the Doctor found himself alone in the room. His knees buckled and he collapsed against the couch. Several tears dripped down his cheeks. How could he have just left her there? Jenny, his Jenny, had apparently died in his arms and instead of taking her body and treating it with the respect she deserved as a Time Lady, he left her there.

If he had taken her along, she could have awoken safe on the TARDIS with him. They wouldn't have lost so much time and she wouldn't have nearly died today crashing her ship. Mentally he tried to trace the possible time lines that would have been created. They were incredibly fuzzy and he was unable to follow them.

A creak alerted him that the door was opening. Quickly he wiped his face and sprang to his feet, wondering if it was Jenny or Rose reentering. It was neither.

Sabrina came in carrying a tea tray. Quickly she looked around and saw the Doctor was alone. "Oh, I'm sorry. Didn't mean to disturb you. I just wanted to check on you lot. Wanted to make sure you were doing alright. It's a bit of a shock having a daughter you thought was dead suddenly reappear in your life."

She nodded to the tray in her hands. "Had a bit of a tussle with the boys over who got to carry the tea tray. I won."

"No doubt." He said with a smile. Jumping forward he took the tray from her. "Here, let me."

"Thanks," Brina said, handing him the tray. "Where'd Mum and Jenny go?"

"Oh, Jenny wanted to clean up and change clothes. Rose went with her. Nothing like meeting your new family in singed trousers." The Doctor forced himself to laugh.

"Doctor, are you okay?"

"Oh yes, I'm always alright."

"Riiight." Sabrina crossed her arms over her chest and rolled her eye. "In Doctor speak that means something is really bothering you. Spill."

Despite himself, the Doctor smiled. "You are so much like your mother."

"And you say that like it's a bad thing." She grinned at him. "Are you worried that we won't accept Jenny? Because if you are, you shouldn't be. We love her already."

"It's not that."

"Well you shouldn't worry about Mum accepting her either. Mum loves expanding the family. She'd adopt half of London if we gave her the chance." Sabrina smirked.

The Doctor shook his head. "It's not that either. It's just…"

"Ah, there's something you're blaming yourself for, isn't there?"

That was twice today the Doctor had been rendered speechless. "How did you know that?"
Shrugging, Sabrina replied, "You raised me. Well, you know what I mean. Weight of the Universe on your shoulders. Tell me about it."

The Doctor stared at her for a minute. It was easy to forget that the young woman before him was not Rose's biological daughter. They were alike in so many ways. "I just wonder what would have happened if I hadn't left her on Messaline. What would her life have been like if I would have known that she was still alive? If I'd gone back to get her?"

Sabrina pulled him into a tight hug. She held him there for a few minutes before letting go. "If I've learned one thing from my being the adopted daughter of a Time Lord, it's that we can't change our personal histories or of those closest to us. Once you knew what happened to her, it was a fact. You can't change Jenny's past. Just focus on changing her future. That's something we can help her and others change."

The Doctor bumped her shoulder. "Look at you. All brilliant and having a concept of time like that. You know, Sabrina Tyler, if I wasn't already stuck with you," he gave her a goofy grin. "I would have asked you to come with me. Like a proper companion. There were times when I could have used a friend like you to keep me in line." His tone was teasing but he was completely serious.

A blush crept up her cheeks. "Well, I guess I am pretty magnificent. Come on, Doc... Come on, Dad, let's have our tea before it gets cold."

"You don't have to call me that if you don't want to. Just because other people are calling me that, don't feel obligated. Although I don't think you'd be one to succumb to peer pressure." The Doctor pulled her into a hug. "I know that it must be difficult and that you must miss him terribly."

"I do miss him very much. But I have thought long and hard about what you mean to me, so don't think I call you Dad lightly." She dug her chin into his shoulder. "One too many screw ups and it's back to Doctor. Got it?"

The Doctor pulled back and gave her a salute. "Yes, ma'am."

"So, here you go. This is yours," Rose said as she pushed the door open. "If you need anything just let the TARDIS know. She's telepathic. So you just need to think about whatever it is you need and she'll get it for you. Within reason, that is. It should be easy enough for you."

"Why's that?" Jenny asked, stepping over the threshold to the luxurious room. It was nothing like the cramped quarters she was used. The room was large but not overly so. It was decorated in hues of soft blue and purple, with a large bed, a bureau and small sitting area.

"Oh, for a couple reasons. She likes you. In fact, she's already very fond of you, and it helps that you're telepathic as well. I'm sure that your Dad will want to work with you on controlling that particular skill." Rose stepped towards another door in the room. "This is your bathroom and the wardrobe's here." She pointed it out.

"Is it... I mean, is it okay that I'm here, Rose?" Jenny asked, keeping her eyes averted from the other woman.

"Of course it's okay. It's more than okay." Rose came over and rubbed her hands comfortably over the younger woman's arms. "I know that all this isn't what you were expecting to find when you found him again. We're a large, loud, and rather complicated family, but you will always have a place here. You belong here, and you will always be welcome."

Once again, Jenny smiled. "So, you and my Dad? Are you married?"
"That's a much more complicated question than you might think. Soon enough we'll tell you the whole family history. As for me and the Doctor..." Rose smiled fondly. "The short, sweet and confusing answer is that I was married to a version of your Dad for twenty years. And now the Doctor and I are just... together. We don't really have a label for what we are."

"So, does that make you my mum?" There was a look of hope on her face. "I mean your Rory and Sabrina called me their sister and they're your children..."

"Sweetheart, you can call me Mum if you want. Because I see you as just as much my daughter as any of the others." Rose cupped her cheek. "Alright?"

"Oh yes, please," Jenny squealed in delight, throwing herself into another hug with her mum. She thought that she could get very used to the hugging.

After a minute, Rose gently extricated herself. "Now, time to get yourself all cleaned up, relax a bit. Dad and I will be in the Library when you're ready. And I'm sure your brothers, sisters, niece and nephew will be waiting, too." Rose squeezed Jenny's hand before leaving the room.

Once the door shut, Jenny yelled with delight. Not only had she found her Dad again, she had found an entire family. A place for her to belong. That was something that a child of the machine on Messaline could never hope for and yet all of it was real. Never in all her life had she been as happy as she was now.
Chapter 10

The fire crackled and spit in the fireplace. Heat from it warmed the Doctor's face as the light played across his hardened features. He was brooding, and he knew it. This body hadn't felt the need to brood, unlike his Ninth form. Hell, it hadn't even felt the need to be as sulky as his Tenth. All in all his Eleventh form had been incredibly happy. But today had been upsetting; he was in the midst of trying to figure out what was going on with Amelia and then today had happened.

Jenny had been back for a week and she had wanted to travel again, this time with her mum and dad. Sabrina had opted to join them with the idea of getting to know her sister better. Tony and Trisha still had lives in London and Amy and Rory had set off on yet another honeymoon trip. The TARDIS had been traveling through deep space when there had been a knock on the door.

Tentatively the Doctor made his way to the door. Opening it, a small white box flew inside.

"What's that?" Rose asked.

"Time Lord emergency messaging system," he giddily explained it to his girls. "In an emergency, we wrap up our thoughts in psychic containers and send them through time and space. Anyway. There's a living Time Lord still out there! And it's one of the good ones."

Rose shook her head. "Love, there aren't any Time Lords left except you, Jenny and Rory. This isn't from Rory, is it?"

He felt her momentary panic. "No, it's not from Rory, and you're right. No Time Lords left anywhere in the Universe. But the Universe isn't where we're going." He then tossed the cube to Sabrina. "See that snake? The mark of The Corsair. Fantastic bloke. He had that snake as a tattoo in every regeneration. Didn't feel like himself unless he had that tattoo. Or herself a couple of times. Oo, hoo! She was a bad girl!"

He filled with a sudden joy and excitement. His children were going to meet more of his people. Jenny and Rory would have the opportunity to meet more of their own kind.

"Doctor, travel between Universes isn't possible without causing major damage," Rose said, bracing herself as the TARDIS rocked. "And the old girl has a bad feeling about this."

For a moment, he had felt utter betrayal emanating from Rose. "Oh, no! Rose, it's not like that, not at all. We can't travel across the Void between Universes. This is different, very, very different. Think of it like this. Traveling between here and Pete's World was like trying to knock down a very sturdy wall. Here all we're doing is going down the drain plug of the Universe. We just need to jettison some rooms for thrust."

After they had landed, the console room darkened and Rose screamed.

"What's happening?" Sabrina yelled, flying to her mum's side.

The Doctor came to stand next to Rose too. "The power, it's draining. Everything's draining. But it can't, that's... that's impossible."

"What is that?" Jenny asked.

"Her soul, the soul of the TARDIS–has just vanished. Where would it go?" Rose said, her voice barely audible as she rubbed her head. "We have to find her. To help her."
"Rose, are you alright?" The Doctor wrapped a protective arm around her waist.

"Just a headache and it's already starting to fade. I'll be fine, we need to go." Rose half dragged him to the door. "Before we meet the same fate as your friend."

The four of them stepped out onto the stinking, craggy, debris strewn surface. "So, Dad, what kind of trouble is your friend in?" Jenny asked, nudging a bit of metal with her foot.

"He was in a bind," the Doctor said, keeping hold of Rose and taking readings of their surroundings. "A bit of a pickle. Sort of... distressed."

"It's alright if you don't know," Rose said, pulling away slightly and surveying everything for herself. "Why would there be Time Lords here? Look at this place."

"Take a whiff of this place," Sabrina said, pulling a face and plugging her nose. "It smells like armpits."

Jenny ran her fingers across the paneling of the TARDIS. "She's been drained of energy. What could do that?"

Rose shivered, and the Doctor looked between her and the TARDIS. "This place is full of rift energy. She'll probably refuel just by being here."

"Not if her soul is missing," Rose muttered to herself.

"Now, this place. What do we think? Gravity's almost Earth normal." The Doctor threw a handful of dirt into the air. "Air's breathable. But, like Sabrina said, it smells like armpits."

"So all this stuff." Jenny gestured around her. "Did it fall down the plug hole too? Are we at the bottom of some Universal drainage trap?"

"Exactly!" The Doctor beamed at his daughter. His next thoughts were interrupted by yelling.

A tall woman with curly brown hair came bounding towards them. "Hey! Hey! You're my Thief! And my Wolf!"

Another woman slowly walked up behind her. "She's dangerous! Guard yourselves!"

A tall woman with curly brown hair came bounding towards them. "Hey! Hey! You're my Thief! And my Wolf!"

"Look at the two of you!" the first woman exclaimed, throwing her arms around the Doctor. "Goodbye! No. Not goodbye. What's the other one?" She kissed the Doctor full on the lips before pushing him away and doing the same to Rose. The Doctor wiped his mouth on his sleeve.

Rose laughed, her earlier trepidation gone. "Hello, the word you're looking for is hello," she said calmly, laying a hand on the other woman's arm.

"Thank you, my Wolf. You are always, were always, will always be so good with words," the curly-haired woman said back with a smile.

The man, dressed in what looked to be an American Civil War uniform, stepped forward. "Welcome, strangers. Lovely. Sorry about the mad person."

The Doctor stared at the woman that his Rose now seemed to be incredibly fond of. "Why am I a thief? What have I stolen? And why do you keep calling Rose Wolf?"

"Me." She beamed. "You are going to steal me. You have stolen me. You are stealing me. Oh! Tenses are difficult, aren't they? And she is my Wolf, there is little more to it than that. Together we
"You bet we do." Rose's smile split her face, and she made a soft howling noise. Sabrina and Jenny continued to stare at all the newcomers in confusion, neither of them sure what was going on.

The older woman stepped forward again. "Oh. Oh, we are sorry, my dove. She's off her head. They call me Auntie. That's Idris." She pointed to Rose's new friend.

"I'm Uncle," the retro soldier added. "I'm everybody's uncle. Just keep back from this one. She bites!"

"Do I? Excellent!" Idris swiftly bit the Doctor on the neck. "Biting's excellent! It's like kissing. Only there's a winner."

"Oww!" the Doctor protested, pushing Idris off of him. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I'm mmmm. I'm mmm... It's on the tip of my tongue. Wolf, help me." Idris looked back and forth between Rose and the Doctor. "I've just had a new idea about kissing. Come here, you!"

She dove at the Doctor but he batted her away. Auntie had yelled at her to stop. "All right," Idris huffed, turning to kiss Rose again.

"Best not, Old Girl, he's not much for sharing." Rose pulled her in for a hug instead.

"Oh, I like hugging. I never knew what he saw in it until now. Hugging is excellent." Idris turned to the Doctor. "Oh, but now you're angry. No, you're not. You will be angry. The little boxes will make you angry."

The Doctor had never been so confused in his life. And that was saying a lot. "Sorry? Little what? Boxes? Rose, is this making sense to you?"

"Not really," Rose said, moving closer to him. "Have you figured out who she is yet?"

Opening his mouth to speak, Idris cut him off. "Your chin is hilarious!" She grabbed his chin and moved his head side to side.

"Not quite as big as the ears, or the hair." Rose gently removed Idris' hand from the Doctor's face. "And I like his face just the way it is. Always have, always will."

"You're a bit shorter than I thought you'd be." Idris yanked Rose to her side in order to compare their heights. Squatting to eye level, Idris said, "Such a big presence in such a small package."

"Thanks," Rose laughed.

Suddenly Idris turned to Jenny. "It means 'the smell of dust after rain.'"

"What does?" Jenny said, leaning forward to examine the woman who seemed to know her parents.

"Petrichor."

Shaking her head, Jenny said, "But I didn't ask."

"Not yet, my sweet little Time Lord. But you will." Idris patted her cheek and turned to Sabrina. "Stalwart; marked by outstanding strength and vigor of body, mind, or spirit. My other Thief and my Wolf chose you well, little Stalwart one. You and your sister."
"What is she talking about?" Jenny asked.

"Stalwart was Sabrina's last name before the adoption. Trisha's maiden name," Rose explained.

"But how did she know that?" the Doctor demanded of Rose. "And why do you act like you know her?"

"Because I do and so do you. You've known her for centuries." Rose said lightly. "Don't worry. You'll figure it out eventually."

"Idris," Auntie interrupted before the Doctor could speak again. "I think you should have a rest."

"Rest! Yes, yes. Good idea. I'll just... see if there's an off switch," Idris said just before collapsing. Rose was at her side in a flash.

"Is that it?" Uncle said, not looking the least bit upset. "She's dead now. So sad."

"No, she's still breathing," Rose was cradling her head. "We just need to get her home. Hold on, Old Girl, we're here."

Uncle looked annoyed. "Nephew, take Idris somewhere she cannot bite people, hm?"

"She's not going anywhere," Rose protested before looking up to see this nephew that Uncle was referring to. An Ood, well wasn't that just Ood.

The Doctor looked up to see the newest arrival walking towards them. He greeted Nephew and briefly explained the Ood to Jenny. Sabrina had grown up with Ood stories. Nephew's communication device had been damaged and Auntie explained that House had repaired him. House had repaired them all but apparently not the communicator. Not a problem though. The Doctor made quick work of fixing it.

The communicator lit up and voices filled the air. "If you are receiving this message, please help me. Send a signal to the High Council of the Time Lords of Gallifrey. Tell them that I am still alive! I don't know where I am, I'm–"

"Was that him? The Corsair?" Sabrina asked softly.

The Doctor shook his head. "No, no. It's picking up something else. But that's, that's not possible. That's, that's– Who else is here? Tell me! Show me! Show me!" He had rounded on the older woman.

"Just what you see. Just the four of us. And the House," Auntie finished lamely.

"The House. What's the House?" the Doctor pressed her.

"The House is all around you, my sweets. You are standing on him. This is the House. This world. Would you like to meet him?" Auntie asked.

The Doctor readily agreed and began to follow Auntie, Uncle and Nephew. Sabrina was stuck to his side. Rose and Jenny hung back to help Idris.

"Dad, what was the thing with the voices about?" Sabrina's voice was full of concern as she threaded her arm through his.

"Time Lords." He bit back a grin. "It's not just the Corsair. Somewhere close by there are lots and lots of Time Lords. Ones that survived."
Turning her head quickly, Sabrina shot her mother a concerned look. Rose smiled back sadly.

"I'm– I'm–." Idris began. "Big word. Sad word. Why is that word so sad? No. Will be sad. Will be sad. He will be sad when he finds them."

"It's a trap isn't it?" Rose asked softly and Jenny's eyes widened. "They used the message to lure us here. But what do they want?"

"They don't look all that threatening, Mum. There are only three of them. We could take them out if we needed to," Jenny added, keeping her voice low.

"Three of them and the House," Rose corrected. "I think it wants the TARDIS. It's why they took Idris out of it and put her in that body."

"My beautiful Wolf, you are brilliant," Idris beamed. "Now to get my Thief to believe who I am."

"Who are you?" Jenny asked.

"Time and Relative Dimension in Space, stuffed into a human form," Rose whispered back.

"What?"

"Shh, my young one." Idris brought her finger to her lips, silencing Jenny. "When he asks, go back to the ship with the Stalwart one and await my instructions."

Ahead of them, the Doctor was talking about sentient asteroids and Auntie was explaining the House provided for them. The deep voice of the House began to speak.

"And do my will. You are most welcome, travelers."

"So you're like a... sea urchin. Hard on the surface—that's the planet we're walking on. Big squashy ugly thing inside. That's you."

"That is correct, Time Lord," the voice boomed.

"Ah! So you've met Time Lords before." He was starting to tense, ever so slightly.

"Many travelers come through the rift. Like Auntie and Uncle and Nephew. I repair them when they break."

"So there are Time Lords here, then." His voice seemed to lack a bit of that enthusiasm he'd been bubbling with earlier.

"Not anymore. But there have been many TARDIS' on my back in days gone by." It was hard to get a reading on is a faceless lump of rock was something to fear. But it projected an aura of fear.

"Ah," the Doctor replied. "Well, there won't be any more after us. Last Time Lord. Last TARDIS."

"What?" Sabrina hissed but he just motioned for her to keep quiet. If this asteroid was looking for another Time Lord or another TARDIS, the Doctor wasn't just going to hand Rory and his ship over.

"A pity. Your people were so kind. Be here in safety, Doctor. Rest. Feed, if you will," House responded lamely.

"We're not actually gonna stay here, are we?" Sabrina asked.
"Well, it seems like a friendly planet. Literally." He gave her a pleasant but forced smile. "We have to save the Time Lords that are here."

"Yeah, I get it. What can I do?" Sabrina cast another glance to where her mum, Jenny and Idris were standing. "What can we do?"

Following her gaze, the Doctor turned to look at the Rose. She nodded and then jerked her head in the direction they had come. It still amazed him that they could communicate without words. Even without telepathy. "Take your sister and go back to the TARDIS." He dropped his voice to a barely audible whisper. "Please don't argue. I have a bad feeling about this."

Very rarely had her mum or dad ever asked her to stay behind because they felt it too dangerous, so when they did she reluctantly complied. "Jenny, I need your help with something. Dad forgot his screwdriver in the TARDIS. Let's go get it for him, yeah."

"Sure thing," Jenny said, moving away from her mum and Idris. "See you soon." Together she and Sabrina left.

Moving forward, the Doctor began to investigate. Pulling open a cabinet, he discovered it lined with boxes. Time Lord distress signal boxes. Gingerly, he picked one up in his hand. "Just admiring your Time Lord distress signal collection. Nice job. Brilliant job," he said off handedly to Auntie and Uncle. "Really thought I had some friends here. But this is what the Ood translator picked up. Cries for help from the long dead."

"Doctor," Rose said with a soft plea in her voice. She knew he would be angry, that he had every right to be angry. Hell, she was angry for him.

"How many Time Lords have you lured here the way you lured me? And what happened to them all?" His voice had hardened to steel as the two patchwork people tried to make their appeal. 'House repairs us when we break. House is kind." Anger bubbled in the pit of his stomach when he saw the tattoo on Auntie's arm. The Corsair, his friend, was merely used for spare parts. A storm was brewing in the depths of his soul and right now he wanted vengeance.

"You gave me hope and then you took it away." The Doctor's voice was raw. "That's enough to make anyone dangerous. God knows what it'll do to me. Basically, run!"

Not needing to be told twice, the pair ran away as fast as their mismatched body parts would take them. Still angry, the Doctor turned on Idris. "How did you know about the boxes? You said they'd make me angry. How did you know?"

"Ah, Thief, I see everything, all of time and space."

"Who are you?" He stepped forward in anger. Rose stepped between them, giving him a warning look.

"Hm. It's about time," Idris teased with a twinkle in her eye.

The Doctor's gaze traveled between the two women. "I don't understand. Who are you?"

Cocking her head to one side, Idris regarded him thoughtfully. "Do you really not know me? Just because they put me in here?"

"On the asteroid?" he asked lamely, and Rose giggled.

"Not on the asteroid, stupid. In here." Idris squished her face. "They put me in here. I'm the... Oh,
"What do you call me? We travel. I go…" Opening her mouth she made the keening, grinding metal sound of the TARDIS.

"The TARDIS?" He looked at Rose to see if this was some elaborate prank. Rose simply nodded.

"Time and Relative Dimension in Space. Yes that's it." Idris smiled. "Names are funny. It's me. I'm the TARDIS."

"No, you're not!" the Doctor protested again. "You're a bitey mad lady. The TARDIS is up-and-downy stuff in a big blue box."

"Yes, that's me. A type 40 TARDIS. I was already a museum piece when you were young. And the first time you touched my console, you said—"

"I said you were the most beautiful thing I'd ever known." His eyes softened at the memory. Honestly, the TARDIS in human form shouldn't even register on his weirdness scale.

Reaching over, Idris grabbed his hand. "Then you stole me. And I stole you." Now she took Rose's hand. "And together we stole her."

"I came willingly," Rose said at the same time the Doctor spoke. "I borrowed you."

"Borrowing implies the eventual intention to return the thing that was taken. What makes you think I would ever give either of you back?"

"You're the TARDIS." The Doctor finally relented and he turned excitedly to Rose. "She's the TARDIS."

"Yes, she is," Rose agreed, squeezing his hand.

"My TARDIS?" the Doctor queried.

"My Doctor and my Rose." She hugged them both tightly. "I wish we could hug all the time. Hugging is fun. Although what the two of you get up to alone in your room looks…"

"You knew the entire time that she was the TARDIS?" The Doctor asked Rose, cutting off Idris.

"Course I knew," Rose said with a shrug. "She's a part of me, and I'm a part of her. Regardless of what form she's in. I could just feel that it was her."

"Plus, you would have figured it out but you kept getting distracted," Idris added. "All the time, distracted by the shiny stuff. Attention span of a child, you have."

Rose could almost hear the gears turning in his mind. "But why? Why pull the living soul from a TARDIS and pop it in a tiny human head? What does it want you for?"

Shaking her head, Idris said, "Oh, it doesn't want me."

"Are you sure?" Rose questioned.

Idris' gaze went out of focus for a moment. "House eats TARDIS.'"

For a minute Idris and the Doctor talked back and forth about what was going on. Together they figured out that House had removed the TARDIS matrix from the ship and put it in Idris so as to not blow up the Universe. Then with the matrix gone he could feed on the remaining artron energy.
A smile crept onto Rose's lips. How long before he realized that he was doing what he'd dreamed about for so long? Talking to his magnificent ship and having her talk back. His ship in a human's form...because a sentient asteroid wanted her dead.

Suddenly her heart skipped a beat and she ran toward the empty blue box. "We sent the girls to the ship," she yelled over her shoulder. "And House is about to eat them."

He was by her side in an instant, pulling at her hand as they sprinted to where they had sent Jenny and Sabrina. But it was too late. The blue police box was gone. Their daughters, along with the body of their beloved ship, were gone.
The lock clicked almost immediately after Jenny and Sabrina entered the TARDIS. "Did you do that?" Sabrina asked tentatively.

"Nope, not me," Jenny said, striding up to the console. "Dad didn't really forget his screwdriver, did he?"

"No way," Sabrina said, shaking her head. "And even if he did, Mum has hers. He just told us to come in here. So what do we do now?"

"We wait. Idris told me that we needed to be here." Jenny poked a few buttons noncommittally.

"Who is she? Mum seemed to know her, Dad not so much."

"She is the soul of the TARDIS that House put into a human body," the blonde said casually.

The room began to glow a dark green. "Very good, young one." House's deep drone filled the air. "You may be just amusing enough to keep around."

Standing up straight, Jenny looked around the room. "What are you doing in here?" she demanded.

"What I should have done half a million years ago, stretch my legs." The voice took on a more sinister tone. "Now tell me why I shouldn't kill you both right now."

It was Sabrina that stepped forward this time. "Because there wouldn't be any sport in that. You keep people around as pets as entertainment. Someone that you could make suffer. Kill us now and the entertainment is gone." While she was speaking, Sabrina had inched closer to Jenny. Now they were side by side.

"I'm game if you are," House said darkly. "Now run."

Sabrina grabbed Jenny's hand and the two of them took off down the corridor. "Now we just need to stay alive long enough for the parents to sort this out," Jenny laughed.

"Running for your life is a past time for us Tylers," Sabrina giggled and pulled her sister down the nearest passage.

"It's gone," Rose said, her voice flat, not wanting to show her fear.

Swallowing hard, Idris asked, "Eaten?"

"No, it left." The Doctor reached out a comforting hand to both women. "Not eaten, hijacked. But why?"

Auntie trudged past them. "It's time for us both to go, Uncle, together." She sat down on a pile of rubbish and unfolded a blanket.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Go?" the Doctor exclaimed. "What do you mean 'go'? Where are you going?"

"Well, we're dying, my love. It's time for Auntie and Uncle to pop off." She helped Uncle with his blanket.
"I'm against it," Uncle added dejectedly.

"It's your fault, isn't it, Sweets?" Auntie said to the Doctor. "'Cause you told House it was the last TARDIS. House can't feed on them if there's none more coming, can he?" She pulled her blanket over herself.

Uncle mimicked Auntie's actions. "So now he's off to your universe to find more TARDISES."

Rose's hand twitched in the Doctor's. "It won't." He said it more for Rose's benefit than the patchwork people's.

"Oh, it'll think of something," Auntie assured them before she collapsed. Uncle cheerfully said that he felt fine before he collapsed in death as well.

"We need to go this way, Doctor. Quickly," Idris said, pointing to a ridge in the distance.

"Why?" His words questioned her but his feet had already began to move in the direction that she indicated.

"'Cause we are there in three minutes. We need to go now!" Idris tried to run but quickly tripped, bracing her side. "Roughly how long do these bodies last?"

"Not as long as you'd hope," Rose said as she helped her upright. "Especially with you in there."

"You're dying." The Doctor's voice was fearful.

"Yes, of course I'm dying. I don't belong in a flesh body. I could blow the casing in no time. No. Stop. Don't get emotional," Idris said, continuing to walk towards their destination. Although if she was leaning on Rose a bit, no one dared to say anything. "You're the Doctor. Focus."

"On what?! How? I'm a mad man with a box without a box." His voice raised an octave. "I'm stuck down the Plughole at the End of the Universe in a stupid old junkyard! Oh."

"Oh what?" Idris asked.

"I think he just came up with a brilliant but utterly mad plan." Rose beamed.

"Course I did, because I'm both brilliant and mad. Along with many other things." He straightened his bowtie. "Because it's not a junkyard. Don't you see it's not a junkyard?"

"What is it, then?" Idris asked.

"It's a TARDIS junkyard. Come on!" He quickened his pace for a moment before stopping and turning to face his two favorite women in the Universe. "Oo. Sorry. Do you have a name?"

"Seven hundred years, finally he asks," Idris said in an aside to Rose.

"I'm sure that rudeness is one personality trait that transcends every regeneration," Rose said with a giggle. "Although there is always hope for the next one."

The Doctor rolled his eyes. The girls, two of his daughters, were quite possibly in danger and these two were gossiping. "What do I call you? What would you like me to call you?"

"I think you call me... Sexy," Idris said with a wink, causing Rose to laugh harder.

He shuffled from one foot to another. "Only when we're alone. And I'm sure that you noticed that
"Oh no, don't let me stop you," Rose said quickly. "I learned a long time ago not to get in between
the two of you."

"Oh. Come on then, Sexy." The Doctor strode off in the direction that they had originally been
heading. A minute later the three of them stood on a ridge overlooking the remains of hundreds of
once beautiful ships. "Valley of half-eaten TARDISES. You thinking what I'm thinking?"

Sadly, Idris surveyed her surroundings and sagged slightly. "I'm thinking all of my sisters are dead.
That they were devoured. And that we are looking at their corpses." She tilted her head towards
Rose, who mirrored her actions. The two women stood, foreheads touching somberly mourning the
dead.

"Ah. Sorry, no. I wasn't thinking that." His voice showed genuine remorse for not sharing her
thoughts.

"No. You were thinking you could build a working TARDIS console out of broken remnants of a
hundred different models." Idris smiled. "And you don't care that it's impossible?"

"It's not impossible as long as we're alive. Especially with the three of us here and you know that
Rose Tyler doesn't do impossible. Sabrina and Jenny need me, need us. So yeah, we're gonna build a
TARDIS." The Doctor looked positively giddy as he and Rose helped Idris down the hill. In fact, he
was bouncing with unrestrained energy as he began to assemble the necessary pieces together.

His mood didn't last long, though. It became clear that Idris and the Doctor had different ideas about
how the complex machinery should fit together. It shouldn't have come as any big surprise, not with
as many burns and electric shocks he'd received from her over the past several centuries.

"Rose, can you help me move this?" He indicated the heavy piece of flooring that he'd already
attached a rope to.

"You okay?" Rose asked, walking over to help him drag the item over to its needed destination.

"Just peachy," he said a little harsher than he intended. There will still so many things that he wanted
to ask his TARDIS while he had the chance. Things that he didn't want Rose or Rory to interpret her
answers on, most of them about exactly what Bad Wolf meant. And right now a surge of jealousy at
their ability hit him, hard.

"Bond the tube directly into the tacking diverter," Idris said as they reached her.

"Yes. Yes, I have actually rebuilt a TARDIS before, you know. I know what I'm doing." Again his
words had more of a bite than he meant them to. He could feel that need to lash out grow.

"You're like a nine-year-old trying to rebuild a motorbike in his bedroom," Idris tutted. "And you
never read the instructions."

"I always read the instructions," he immediately shot back.

"You don't even have my instructions anymore. You threw them into a supernova," Idris tritely
replied.

Rose rubbed her head. "And it had been going so well. Guess it was bound to happen, wasn't it?
Especially with two such headstrong aliens." Her voice was barely audible to the other two.
"I threw it into a supernova when it said there was no way I could go and get Rose from Pete's World," he huffed as he dropped the rope he was holding, leaving Rose to finish hauling the heavy thing the rest of the way.

"And now you know why that was. She was in that other world to protect her, to start things in motion. The two of you had to be separated and I knew best in that regard." Idris refused to acquiesce to him on this. "And speaking of instructions. There's a sign on my front door. You have been walking past it for seven hundred years. What does it say?"

"That's not instructions!" the Doctor roared, not noticing Rose giggling behind them.

"There's an instruction at the bottom. What does it say?"

"Pull to open," he spat out.

"Yes, and what do you do?"

"I push!"

"Every single time." Idris rolled her eyes and gave Rose a long suffering look. "Seven hundred years. Police box doors open out the way."

"I think I have earned the right to open my front doors anyway I want," he said stamping his foot.

"Your front doors? Have you any idea how childish that sounds?" she scolded him.

"Oh. You are not my mother," the Doctor replied flippantly.

"And you," she stood up taller, "are not my child."

"You know, since we're talking with mouths–not really an opportunity that comes along very often. Unlike some people I know." He shot a look to Rose, who crossed her arms over her chest and scowled. Obviously Rose wasn't happy with the way their conversation was progressing. Still he pressed on. "I just want to say, you know you have never been very reliable."

"And you have?" Idris shot back.

"You didn't always take me where I wanted to go." There was just a hint of hurt underneath his words.

"No, but I always took you where you needed to go," Idris replied calmly.

Realization hit him. "You did. Rose, she's right, she always takes me where I need to go." The Doctor grinned ridiculously. "Look at us! Talking! Wouldn't it be amazing if we could always talk, even when you're stuck inside the box?"

"But you know I'm not constructed that way." Her voice was a little sad. "I exist across all space and time and anyway I can always hear you. Rory or Rose can tell you what I'm saying. And besides, you talk enough for the both of us. And you run around and bring home strays!"

"You love us strays," Rose said with a smile. Idris started to turn towards her and nearly collapsed. Skillfully, the Doctor caught her. "You okay?"

"One of the kidneys has already failed. It doesn't matter; we need to finish assembling the console," Idris said, uprighting herself only a moment before Rose got to her side.
"Using a console without a proper shell. Whew. It's not going to be safe." There was bit of fear but also excitement in his voice.

"This body has about eighteen minutes left to live. The universe we're in will reach absolute zero in three hours. Safe is relative." Idris smiled and took a step back. "Wolf," She turned to Rose and patted the human, well, mostly human, woman's cheek. "There are several critical pieces that I am in need of. Can you get them for me?"

"Sure," Rose said as she brushed off her hands. "What do they look like?"

Blinking rapidly, Idris looked up at her and smiled. "I just sent you the images, dear. Now please hurry."

With a nod, Rose took off to another part of the TARDIS graveyard. Idris turned back to the Doctor. "Our Rose will be gone for 4 minutes 53 seconds. So whatever you want to ask, ask."

"How did you do that?" the Doctor asked quickly. "I mean, how did you tell her what we need? How are you able to communicate with her and Rory all the time? TARDISES aren't built for that type of communication."

"Rose and I share a unique connection. She is now a part of me and I of her. So many things happened when we were the Bad Wolf. It changed us, for the better, I think. And no, I am not meant to communicate with anyone but another TARDIS."

"Did that connection pass to Rory then? Is that how he can communicate with you and his TARDIS?" The Doctor seemed keen to get as many of his questions answered as possible.

Idris gave a small smile. "The power is only passed to the first born child. From Rose to Rory and from Rory to his first child. All of my Wolf's and my Cub's subsequent children will not possess the power. They will still be a part of me but will not hear my voice."

"Is that why the Silence were after Rory? The power of the Bad Wolf? Is that why they are after Amy now?" His voice was demanding now. This was his family's safety that lay in the balance here.

"My Doctor, I cannot reveal your future. You above all should know that." She turned around and began to work on a section of his cobbled console.

"What does it mean, though? Bad Wolf. I know the part about destroying the Daleks. But Rose harnessed it to pull her, James and Tony across the Void and back to this Universe. That shouldn't have been possible." He swallowed hard. "What does it mean?"

Idris stopped what she was doing and turned thoughtfully to him. "It is a great power, one always born out of love. The power to give and take life, to heal and to be so much more than they could ever thought possible." There was a faint golden glow behind her eyes as she said it.

"Do they know? Rose and Rory?" Do they know what being Bad Wolf means?" Momentary panic filled the Doctor. What if somehow Rose or Rory knew what kind of power they possessed and what if they decided to use it? That kind of power was dangerous.

"You know what, Doctor? They never thought to ask." Idris walked over and patted his arm. "Out of all the people in the Universe that I could have given this to, I chose the ones who would least want the power. So much so that they barely think of it at all." She gave a brief laugh and the Doctor sagged with relief.

Of course Rose wouldn't want to use the power of the Bad Wolf for anything more than protection
for her family. And Rory was his mother's son. Now he only needed to worry about what was to be
done to Rory's first born child.

"I think I've got them," Rose said as she appeared from behind a pile of debris. In her hand she held
several crucial pieces of machinery.

The Doctor took them and hurried to the console to attach them along with the time rotor.

"Do you ever wonder why I chose you all those years ago?" Idris asked him as she picked up a
clothes hanger to examine.

"I chose you. You were unlocked," he said as he passed Rose his sonic screwdriver to hold while he
connected a pair of wires.

"Of course I was," Idris replied, picking up another broken bit of something. "I wanted to see the
Universe so I stole a Time Lord and I ran away. And you were the only one mad enough. I chose
Rose because she was the only one mad enough to love us both. At least in the way we deserved."

"And I always will," Rose assured her. The women's eyes met and they smiled as if sharing a secret.
Which they probably were.

The Doctor took back his screwdriver, grabbed Rose's hand and bounced to the spot where Idris was
standing. Together they took in the sight of the cobbled together, junkyard-made TARDIS console.

"Right." The Doctor rubbed his hands together. "Perfect. Look at that. What could possibly go
wrong?" Something sprung loose and Rose raised an eyebrow. "That's fine. That always happens." He
tried helplessly to sound reassuring.

"Time to go," Idris said, making her way towards their only way to make it off this rock and save the
girls. She spent a few minutes examining her face in a small shaving mirror while the Doctor readied
the controls.

"You're gorgeous," Rose leaned over and whispered to her. "Inside the box or out." Idris said
nothing but simply smiled.

"It's not working." The Doctor angrily hit random buttons. "This place is full of rift; this should
work. I've got nothing."

"Oh, my beautiful idiot." Idris took hold of Rose's hand. Placing two fingers to her lips and both she
and Rose began to emanate a golden glow. "You have what you've always had. You've got me."

"And me," Rose added softly. As Idris brought her fingers up to the time rotor, it flared to life. The
familiar TARDIS sound filled the air and the Doctor practically jumped for joy. Soon they were
spinning through space chasing the blue box.

"Can you get a message to Jenny? The telepathic circuits are online," Rose practically yelled over the
loud noises rushing past them.

"Yes, I will send the girls to one of the old control rooms. They can lower the shields from there,"
Idris said, adjusting a slider.

The Doctor goggled at her. "There aren't any old control rooms. They were all deleted or
remodeled."

"I archived them. For neatness. I've got about thirty now," Idris preened.
"I've only changed the desktop what, a dozen times?"

"So far, yes," she agreed.

"You can't archive something that hasn't happened yet," he protested.

"You can't!"

"You two fight like an old married couple," Rose laughed.

"Jealous?" the Doctor asked cheekily.

"Of you, the two of you?" Rose laughed. "Never."

"Hush now," Idris chastised as she readjusted the mirror. "Hello, Jenny!"

"Hello, Idris," Jenny beamed. "Sabrina and I have been running for our lives. What have you three been up to?"

"Making something impossible," Rose said, leaning into the frame of the telepathic messaging. "So typical day all around."

"You have to go to the old control room. I'm putting the route in your head. When you get there, use the purple slider on the nearest panel to lower the shields," Idris explained. "I'll send you the passcode when you get there. Good luck."

"What was that?" Sabrina called from below Jenny. They had been climbing a ladder in an attempt to shake off Nephew.

"Instructions," Jenny said back over her shoulder. "Basically now it's our turn to save the day. You up for it?"

"It's what I live for." They had reached the opening on the next level. Jenny slid through the opening and reached down to give Sabrina a hand up.

"So what's the plan?" Sabrina asked as she stood.

"First we have to find an old control room. Idris said that she would send the passcode once we got there." Jenny grabbed her hand. "Don't let go. We can't let House split us up now. And run."

The girls took off down the corridor, quickly winding their way through the maze of passages that Idris had sent. "Hurry up," Sabrina said, trying to stop herself from panting. "Nephew's right behind us. That is one fast Ood."

"We're here," Jenny said, skidding to a halt.


A crimson flag flying in the sky.

Eleven family members. Mum, Dad, Tony, Trisha, EJ, Jamie, Rory, Amy, Sabrina, herself, and James. Her other Dad, and even though she would never get the chance to meet him, he was still very much a part of her family.
Delight in being told that she had found her family, her home, after so many years of searching.

Petrichor, a single drop of rain falling into the dust.

The door slid open and Sabrina yanked her inside. It was the Doctor's last control room, very similar to the one that Sabrina had grown up in, just missing the seatbelts and other restraints for the children of the family.

"Where did you find place? It's not on my internal schematic." House's voice boomed through the room.

"Guess we just know this place better than you." Sabrina shrugged and Jenny closed her eyes as Idris sent her final instructions.

The door slid open and Nephew entered. "I had hoped you two could join Nephew as my servants." House sounded almost bored now. "But you two are nothing but trouble. Nephew. Kill them."

The Ood stepped forward. Jenny slid the purple slider, then she pulled Sabrina back behind one of the coral pillars. The makeshift TARDIS control room materialized right on top of Nephew.

"Oh, that smarts," Idris said as Rose helped her out into the old control room.

"Mum! Dad!" Sabrina and Jenny called and ran over to their parents, hugging each of them in turn.

"Sabrina, Jenny, this is the TARDIS." The Doctor introduced his daughters to his beloved ship. "She's a woman. And she's the TARDIS."

Trying very hard to stop herself giggling, Sabrina asked, "Did you wish really hard?"

"Shut up!" The Doctor blushed. "Not like that."

"Hello," Idris said brightly. "I'm Sexy."

"And how does Mum feel about that?" Sabrina sassed. Rose swatted her arm and the Doctor blushed deeper.

"Oh! Still shut up."

"Doctor. I did not expect you." House's voice filled the air once more.

"Well, that's me all over, isn't it?" The Doctor crossed his arms over his chest, "The lovely old unexpected me."

"Tell me why I shouldn't just kill you now?" House asked.

"Check your engines; you don't have the power needed to get us back to the proper Universe." the Doctor explained as calmly as he could. "I can help."

"And why would you do that?" House probed.

"Because," the Doctor crossed his arms over his chest, "we would all like to get back to my Universe and mine's the one with the food in it. Look, I just need you to promise me that you'll keep us safe once we get there and I'll help you."

"Doctor, she's burning up," Rose said, gently stroking Idris' face.
The Doctor knelt in front of her. "Hey. Hang in there, Old Girl. Not long now. It'll be over soon."

"I always liked it when you called me Old Girl." Idris smiled.

"You want my word?" House mused. "Alright, I promise."

"Good." The Doctor brushed a bit of hair out of Idris' face, before he stood up. Jenny and Sabrina immediately took his place by her side. "Just delete 30% of the rooms and you can get the thrust you need."

"Thank you, Doctor. And I can rid myself of vermin by deleting this room. Goodbye, Time Lords. Goodbye, tiny humans. Goodbye, Idris." The last word came out with a bite as House began to delete the room around them. The old console room started to disappear and the current one shifted into view.

"Yes. I mean you could do that but it just won't work." His voice carried that smugness that he got when he managed to manipulate someone into doing exactly what he wanted them to. "Hardwired fail safe. Living things from rooms that are deleted are automatically deposited in the main control room. But thanks for the lift."

"Fear me. I've killed hundreds of Time Lords," House spat.

"Fear me," the Doctor said coldly. "I've killed all of them." Walking over to Rose, he pulled her to her feet. Immediately, he wrapped an arm around her, needing her strength.

Idris was whispering something to Jenny. "I don't understand. There isn't a forest in here," Jenny said, brushing Idris' forehead. But the woman offered no explanation, turning to Sabrina instead. The youngest Tyler leaned over and nodded as another message was passed to her.

"Yep, you've defeated us. Me, my lovely family here. And last–but definitely not least–the TARDIS matrix herself. A living consciousness you ripped out of this very control room and locked up into a human body. And look at her." His gaze fell upon the woman lying prone on the floor.

"Dad," Sabrina said quietly. "She's stopped breathing."

"Enough. That is enough," House said menacingly.

"No. It's never enough. You've forced the TARDIS into a body so she'd burn out safely, a very long way away from this control room. A flesh body can't hold the TARDIS matrix and live. Look at her body, House," the Doctor said darkly. Time to let House know that he'd already been defeated.

"And you think I should mourn her?" House continued to sound unimpressed.

"No. I think you should be very, very careful about what you let back into this control room. You took her from her home. And now she's back in her box again. And she's free."

Golden tendrils of light began to emanate from Idris' now lifeless body. It curled around the console, slid into the time rotor and the room began to light up.

"No! Doctor! Stop this! Stop this now!" House protested.

"Look at my girl." The Doctor beamed and tightened his grip on Rose's waist. "Look at her go. Bigger on the inside! See, House. That's your problem. Size of a planet but inside you are just so small." House protested again, begging the Doctor to stop this. He didn't. Instead, he encouraged his Old Girl to finish him off.
House was defeated. The TARDIS back where she belonged, and his family was safe, but for some reason all the Doctor wanted to do was cry. Dropping his head to Rose's shoulder, he pulled her into a hug, inhaling her scent and letting the warmth of her body begin to heal the wounds of today.

"Doctor. Are you there?" Idris' voice filled the air. "It's so very dark in here."

The Doctor turned and faced the holographic image that had taken shape. "I'm here. Hey."

"I've been looking for a word. A big, complicated word, but so sad. I found it now."

"What word?" His voice broke.

"Alive. I'm alive," Idris said softly.

The Doctor shook his head. "Alive isn't sad."

"It's sad when it's over. I'll always be here." She gave him a smile. "But this is when we talked. And now even that has come to an end. But I'm always here for you, my Doctor. There's something I didn't get to say to you."

"Goodbye." He held back his tears.

"I will never say goodbye. Not to you." Idris' avatar took in a ragged breath. "I love you. Have always, will always love you. Take care of our family." The image faded from view and there was not a dry eye in the room.

Idris' human form had died hours ago. Rose had piloted them to a lovely deserted planet and they had buried the flesh body of his beloved ship. When they had come back on board, Rose had started recreating deleted rooms, and he had gone to the Library to brood. Very rarely did he let himself fall apart but right now he was on the verge.

The TARDIS was still very much alive. It was just the human body that she had been forced into that had died. Alive, she was alive, not dead. He wasn't sure why he was letting this affect him so much. She hummed reassuringly in his head.

"She's your oldest companion. Just the two of you for the better part of 700 years. A man and his box, off to see the Universe," Rose said from the doorway, holding a tea tray in her hands. Swiftly she came towards him and set the tray on the table in front of him. "Remember Krop Tor when you thought we lost her. You said she was the only thing you had left, literally the only thing."

"Rose..." He started to explain that he hadn't meant to negate her presence in his life then, but Rose cut him off.

"This magnificent Time and Space ship is the only thing that you have left from before the war. The only thing that reminds you of when you didn't carry the weight of the Universe on your shoulders, she reminds you of lost companions, of a lost family. For a while she was the only family that you had and today you almost lost her permanently." Rose sat down on his lap. "It's okay for you to feel shaken."

"When did you get to be so wise?" the Doctor asked, bringing his forehead to hers.

"Probably sometime after I met this magnificently, daft alien who showed me what life could really be like." She briefly brushed her lips on his.
"Where are the girls?" he asked, wrapping his arms around her to pull her in closer.

"After I sorted out their rooms, Sabrina went to bed and Jenny said that that she was going to do some reading. Temporal mechanics." Rose smirked. "She also said that Idris kept repeating something. 'The only water in the forest is the river.' Any idea what that could mean?"

"Oh, I'm sure I could come up with hundreds of things that could possibly mean. And inevitably they would all be wrong."

"Did you hit your head today? Because normally you would never admit that you might get something wrong," she teased.

He gave a small shrug. "Must be having an off day."

"Sabrina said that Idris told her something, too." Rose picked at his bow tie absentmindedly. "A message for Rory. Only she won't tell me what it is. She said that she'd know when it was right to tell him. Could it… Do you think it has something to do with Amy?"

"More than likely," he said thoughtfully. "I'm close; we're close to figuring out who took her. And I think I know why. I think it has to do with Bad Wolf and not just that the baby is part Time Lord." His hand absentely stroked her back.

"What does Bad Wolf have to do with this?" Rose asked.

"I asked her, when you left to get those parts. I asked her what Bad Wolf meant. She was vague, of course, but she told me that it was only passed to the firstborn child. The Silence wants the power of the Bad Wolf and a Time Lord. If you have someone from infancy you can mold them into almost anything."

Rose shuddered. "We have to find where they have her, have them."

"I think we'd be able to track them if we knew how they were able to have the real Amy with them and this Amy with us." He gently pushed her up and he stood, beginning to pace. "I have an idea. There's this planet. Relatively peaceful, unassuming really, but they developed an advanced cloning process in the 78th century."

"So do you want to check it out? We can go there now if you'd like," Rose suggested as she tried to tamp down her anger. The Silence had taken Amy, her daughter. And Amy was pregnant. They had Rory's child. Her grandchild, James' grandchild, the Doctor's grandchild and Rose hated this waiting game. She knew it was important, knew they had to have all their ducks in a row before they acted. They couldn't go in without a plan this time and just hope that everything worked out. Not with two precious lives at stake.

"No, not now. I think we need to have Rory and this Amy close to us when the final piece fits into place. Things will get hairy very quickly."

Rose pulled out her mobile. "I'll just give Rory a ring." Her phone buzzed and rang in her hand. "That's weird." She checked the screen before answering. "Hello, Trisha… Wait, hold on, what happened?" Rose went ashen as there was a long pause while she listened to Trisha. "Right, call Rory, have him meet us there. We're on our way." Rose grabbed the Doctor's hand and pulled him from the room.

"What's going on?" The Doctor was running beside her now.

"There's something taking over the children, all over the planet. Making them say things. And
someone blew up Torchwood Three. Not sure who was there at the time but Trisha said the explosion was massive. We have to go."

They quickly reached the control room and before either of them could touch a single control, the time rotor sprang to life. The dematerialization sequence began with their destination already preset.

Reaching out a hand to caress the console, the Doctor said, "Alright, Old Girl, take us where we need to go."
Chapter 12

God, Trisha hated paperwork. An endless drone of monotony all bound together in plain manila folders. Signing her name a few more times, Captain Tyler set down her pen and checked the clock. 8:37 in the morning. Things had been quiet lately, almost too quiet. Part of her was hoping for something exciting to happen. An alien invasion or maybe just a trip in the TARDIS, nothing too drastic, just enough to get her adrenaline pumping. She should have been careful what she wished for.

A few minutes later, in Cardiff, Gwen Cooper was making a withdrawal from a cash point when she heard yelling over her shoulder.

"Come on, Tyler. I don't have time for this. We have to go." A mother was prodding her son, trying to make him move, but the boy simply stood there, completely motionless.

Curious, Gwen made her way over to the pair. "Is there something wrong?" she asked politely, not wanting to frighten the woman.

"No, he's just playing," the mother replied, ignoring Gwen.

Slowly turning around, Gwen surveyed the area. Every child that she could see had stopped moving. They all seemed to be frozen in place, eyes glazed over, no response to parents desperately trying to get their attention. And then it was over, the children picked up exactly where they had left off, none of them the wiser. Gwen hung around just a moment longer before she turned on her heel and headed back to the Hub.

It was a quick walk and in no time she was logging onto her computer. A few strokes later the Torchwood programs were running, analyzing patterns. Police reports, camera footage. Anything, everything that might clue her into what was going on.

"Captain Tyler," her secretary called from the doorway. "Your nanny's on the phone. She said it was urgent, ma'am. Line One."

Trisha felt the hairs on the back of her arm pickle and a deep lump form in her throat. She reached over and answered the phone. "Hello, Miss Trumble." Her voice was lighter than she actually felt. "What's wrong?"

"Mrs. Tyler, it's the children. Both EJ and Jamie went catatonic for a minute or two. Nothing I did seemed to get their attention. It was almost like they were having one of those seizures that I've read about. The ones where they stop moving instead of shaking, but it happened to both of them at the same moment. I called Dr. Tyler and it keeps going to voice mail."

Normally, Leah Trumble was completely level headed. She was older, experienced, had been a nanny for years. Thoroughly vetted because of Trisha's position and the family's connection to the Doctor. For her to be in such a panicky state, something must be very wrong.

"I'll be right there," Trisha said calmly. "Keep a close eye on them and let me know if anything changes and if it happens again, take them straight to Dr. Tyler's office."

She'd hung up the phone before the other woman could reply and was halfway down the hall before turning back and telling her secretary where she was going.

"You can't leave now. We have a situation," her mother, Lt Colonel Hannah Stalwart, said from the
other side of the hallway.

"Mother, I don't have time for a situation. Something's wrong with EJ and Jaime…"

"Both of them stopped around 8:40 this morning. Went into a catatonic state," Hannah stated as fact, before softening. "Or was it something else? Are they alright?"

For a long moment Trisha stared at her mother. "No, it's the catatonic thing. And they seem fine now. How did you know?"

"Because it happened to every child. Reports are pouring in from all over the world." Hannah pulled her into an open office and dropped her voice. "I know you're worried about your children. I am too. But right now, you can't go and I'm sure that Anthony is swamped at the hospital. Can you call Rose or Rory to pick them up? Might be useful to have them handy anyway."

That last sentence made no sense, but Trisha nodded. If this was happening everywhere she could be of more help here than at home. At least until Mum, Dad and Rory got here. "Yeah, just give me a mo."

Hannah nodded and stepped out into the hall. Immediately, Trisha pulled out her enhanced phone and tried to call Rose, Sabrina, Jenny and even the phone in the Doctor's TARDIS all to no avail. With a sigh she punched up Rory's number. He answered on the second ring.

"Hello Trisha! How is my absolute favorite sister-in-law today?"

She smiled despite the situation. "Aw, Cub, that compliment would mean more if I wasn't your only sister-in-law."

"Doesn't make it any less true." She could hear the grin in his voice as he spoke. "So what's going on?"

Trisha sucked in a deep breath. "There's a situation. Something caused children all over the world to go catatonic at exactly the same time. Every child, including Jamie and EJ. The nanny is freaking out. I need to be here to keep an eye on the situation, Tony's going to have his hands full at work and I can't get in touch with Mum and Dad. Can you and Amy swing by the house and pick up the kids? Maybe run a couple of scans to see if you can find anything."

"Yeah, not a problem. We'll be right there and I'll let you know what I find." The playfulness had gone from his voice.

Trisha quickly gave him the date and time she needed him along with a reminder to come in through the front door so as not to scare Miss Trumble. Once they had rung off, she typed a quick message to Tony letting him know that Rory was on his way to get the kids, and to call her if he found out anything at the hospital. Straightening her uniform, Captain Tyler stepped back into the hall to join her mother. Time to save the world.

Back in Cardiff, Jack and Ianto had made their way back from picking up the Hitchhiker (a parasitic alien) from the hospital. They were flirting, teasing each other as they came into the main room of the Hub.

"Oi! Chuckle Brothers. I found something," Gwen said as Jack passed her.

In true Jack fashion, he seemingly glossed over what she said and started in on his own line of thought. "Yeah, well I want you to do a check on St. Helen's Hospital, specifically the morgue."
Gwen pointed to the machine nearest him. "Well, there's a computer, do it yourself." Ianto laughed. "Meanwhile, I've been getting reports this morning of seventeen road traffic accidents happening right across the country. All the way from Glasgow to St. Ives."

Jack shrugged and began his own search. "Sounds about average."

"Well, they all occurred between 8:40 and 8:41. Seventeen road traffic accidents happening in exactly the same minute and every single one of them involving children." She turned the screen so that the boys could see.

"That'll be the school run," Ianto thought aloud as he began digging further into accident reports.


"Have we heard from UNIT yet?" Jack asked as he pulled out his phone to check for messages.

"I'm sure Trisha has her hands full and will be calling shortly," Ianto said reassuringly.

"Plus she has kids of her own. So far all reports seem to be school-aged children but who knows. This could be affecting kids as young as hers," Gwen said, coming to look over Ianto's shoulder.

"Same report from France. Fifteen road traffic accidents. All timed around 9:40. They're an hour ahead, so it was simultaneous." Ianto scanned the incoming reports.

"All of them with children?" Gwen asked.

"Yep," Ianto agreed. "Hold on. Still cross-referencing. Here we go. Reports coming in of RTAs in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg..."

Behind them Jack flipped his phone open and dialed Trisha mobile number. Her super-phone the line he knew she would answer.

"Captain Tyler." Her voice was clipped.

"Is that anyway to say hello to your favorite Torchwood agent?" Jack put a fair amount of charm into his voice.

"Jack, you know I like Gwen better than you," she teased him. "I take it you're calling about the thing with the kids?"

"Exactly, and I'm sure that you have plenty to tell me, but first, how are your kids?"

"It happened to them, too. Freaked the nanny out more than a bit. Cub is with them now, no signs of any type of permanent damage. Thank God. I tried to reach M.D. and B.W. unsuccessfully. I'll try again later." When Trisha was at work they used code to refer to Rory (Cub), the Doctor (M.D.) and Rose (B.W.). Trisha preferred that people not know that she had a close familial connection to the Doctor.

"Good. I'm relieved that they're alright." Jack paused and let go of the breath he wasn't even aware he was holding. "So what do you know?" He turned the phone on speaker so Gwen could listen in. Ianto had stepped out of the room.

And like flipping a switch, Trisha was back to being the consummate professional. "As far as we can tell at 8:40 GMT all of the children of Earth simply stopped everything but basic functions. It was as
if all of their higher brain functions turned off. A minute later it was as if it never happened. No brain damage present in any of the children examined so far. We are still awaiting blood tests."

"Do you believe it's extraterrestrial in origin?" Ianto asked.

"Not sure yet." She paused. "Reliable third party scans are showing nothing in the immediate vicinity of Earth that could have caused this. Everything currently hanging out in the solar system is known friendlies. Mostly tourist ships."

Jack smiled; Earth had become a more tempting place for aliens since the demise of Torchwood One. And honestly, as long as they were peaceful they were welcome.

"Colonel Oduya is currently briefing John Frobisher at the Home Office. I wish we knew more but it's still early."

"He's back," Ianto said, poking his head back into the room.

"Who's back?" Gwen and Trisha said at the same time.

Jack grabbed the phone followed Ianto with Gwen on his heels. "What's he doing?"

"Waiting, just like you said. He's been there 20 minutes." Ianto pointed at the screen.

"Persistent," Jack said with the smallest hint of a smile

Ianto nodded in agreement. "Good sign."

"Dogmatic." Jack grinned.

"Always a plus." Ianto one upped.

"Oh, Christ" Gwen mumbled. "Never work with a couple, you two talk like twins! So who is he?"

"Rupesh Patanjali," Ianto answered. "He's the bodies-going-missing guy."

"Dr. Rupesh Patanjali." Jack shrugged. "We need a doctor and someone won't help me convince a certain Dr. Tyler to join our ranks."

On the phone, Trisha sighed in exasperation. "I've said it once I'll say it a thousand times more. I'm not moving to Cardiff Jack. And I'm ringing off now, too much to do on my end. Call Cub see if he's found anything. Let me know if you find anything."

"I will. Talk to you soon." Jack hung up.

"You bastards," Gwen said with a grin. "This is exactly what you did to me." Neither man could properly hide their guilty smiles. "Guess it's time I played recruitment officer." Turning on her heel she strode out of the room and across the plaza to talk to the new recruit.

Chucking, Jack turned his attention back to the phone and dialed Rory's number.

"Hello, Jack." Rory's voice sounded tight as he answered the phone.

"Not having a good day, are we?" Jack teased, trying to lighten the mood.

"Just in the middle of analyzing EJ's latest brain scans. I'm not finding anything. Whatever this was, it either wasn't in there long enough to leave a trace or we are dealing with a highly advanced
species. I also found nothing in her or Jaime's blood work. I've run full body scans, still nothing."

Rory let out a sigh. "I wish Dad were here, or that we could get in touch with Mum and the Doctor."

It hadn't failed to escape Jack's notice that Rory was the only one of Rose's brood that wasn't calling the Doctor 'Dad'. "Don't worry, kid, we'll figure this out. But at least we know that there hasn't been any permanent damage. Have you seen anything on your scanners? Are you any closer to knowing what's there?"

"I ran a couple preliminary scans. Nothing so far. Whatever this is has me stumped."

"Never thought I'd live to see the day a Time Lord voluntarily admitted he didn't know something." Behind him, Ianto's phone started ringing and Gwen was running across the screen.

"It's happening again," Ianto yelled before running to the lift. Tersely, Jack told Rory he'd call him back and Ianto and Jack made it outside in record time. They reached Gwen just as the children around them started screaming. Well, it wasn't so much screaming as it was a high pitch screech. Then they started to speak.

"We… We… We… We are… We are… We are coming. We are coming." Over and over again every child all over the world repeated those chilling words. Who's coming? How were they doing this to the children?

And then it was over. The children snapped back to normal. Confused by why people were staring or why their parents were hugging them and crying. The children showed no outward signs of damage by what had just happened.

"We need to get back to the Hub and call the Home Office. This thing just went public and they're going to need our help," Jack said as he turned and ran. Ianto, Gwen and Rupesh followed him. Once they had reached the door, Jack turned to the newcomer. "Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm a doctor, I could help," Rupesh said as his phone rang.

"The world just turned upside down. They're going to need you at A&E." With that, Jack turned and left the man standing outside. Running up the stairs, he was greeted by the purplish TARDIS materialized in clear spot a few feet away from the main bank of computers.

"Anyone in need of some help here?" Rory asked, poking his head out of the Police Box doors.

Jack grinned. "Took you long enough to get here."

Rory stepped fully into the room. "Come on, Jack, one isolated incident on a world wide scale Torchwood could handle that on its own. But for it to happen twice," He shook his head. "That kind of problem requires an expert."

"Where's Amy?" Ianto asked.

"Calling Trisha and Tony to let them know we have the kids here. And she's trying to get in touch with the other TARDIS's crew. If they don't answer this time, I'll set up an alert with my ship to let us know when we can reach them."

Ianto and Gwen had moved to begin analyzing the data coming in. "It has to be some kind of broadcast. Something that could cause all the children to talk in unison," Jack mused as he turned on his phone again, this time to call Frobisher in the Home Office.

"What do you mean talking in unison? What did they say?" Rory questioned, moving to a monitor.
"Wait, Jamie and EJ… they weren't affected?" Gwen looked confused.

"No, I heard Ianto yelling that it was happening again. The TARDIS's scanners went off line for a minute. I assumed that she was strengthening her telepathic field to protect the kids." Rory gently prodded Gwen away from the keyboard as they pulled up the CCTV footage. "I need audio," he moaned.

"Here." Ianto started to play the footage that he had recorded out in the Plas.

"What this, then?" Amy asked, coming up and digging her chin into the top of Rory's shoulder so she could see what was going on.

The foreboding voices filled the air. "We are coming. We are coming." Their menace only lessened by the slight warble from the recording.

"Oh, that's creepy." Amy shivered. "And that happened all over the world?"

"As far as we can tell." Ianto shrugged. The gesture seemed outwardly casual but underneath he was filled with that excited tension that came with solving a crisis.

"Where are the kids?" Gwen asked.

Holding up her wrist, Amy showed her a small monitor. "Taking a nap. This thing here gives us audio, visual and will alert us if there is a significant change in their vital signs. Nifty bit of tech this is."

"Frobisher apparently doesn't have time for us. Worldwide crisis, millions of parents in blind panic and he doesn't need our help." Jack said, trying to keep himself from throwing his phone against the wall. The arrogance of that man.

Videos had started coming in from all over the world. Amy, Gwen and Ianto started analyzing the footage while Jack and Rory looked over whatever the Torchwood scanners, since the ones on the TARDIS hadn't been able to pick anything up. She had just used too much of her power to shield the kids from whatever had affected everyone else.

"Look at this," Amy said, pointing at the screen. There was another little girl repeating those words over and over.

Ianto shook his head. "We've seen this before."

"But this video is from Taiwan," Amy said as if it was obvious.

"Oh my God!" Gwen exclaimed. "She's speaking English."

"Exactly," Amy said with a nod.

Rory and Jack had come over and Rory's gaze flitted between the two women, trying to figure out what they were on about. Apparently, Amy had thought that she had come across something vastly important.

Jack spoke up. "Ok, I'm not getting it."

"This was taken in Taiwan," Amy explained again. "And she's speaking English. I've seen videos from France, Italy, China, Japan and all the kids are speaking English, only English. Never anything else."
"I guess if you scan the Earth from the outside, you would register English as the dominate language," Jack said, trying to work it out.

"Actually, that would be Chinese, specifically Mandarin," Ianto corrected. "At least a billion people speak Mandarin. That's three times as many as speak English."

Gwen grabbed their attention again. "So all the children are speaking in unison."

"Yes," Rory agreed.

"Every child, and one man." Gwen brought up a video of an elderly man chanting the phrase. She explained that the man was named Timothy White and he was in psychiatric ward at the Duke of York Hospital in Greenstead. Quickly it was decided that she would head out to interview the man, see if there was anything she could tell them.

Half an hour later Rory felt like they were getting nowhere. "Tony's using some of the tech I gave him a few months back on the kids in the hospital. But I'd love to be able to run a few of my own tests," Rory said, looking over some of the information that was being downloaded to his computer.

"Why can't you just use EJ or Jaime?" Gwen asked.

"Wellll," Rory started drawing out the word. "They weren't affected by the last round of whatever this is. So I wouldn't be able to find anything new." He tapped the one finger against the side of the monitor. "None of these new scans have shown anything."

"I'll be back," Jack said without preamble, shrugging on his coat.

"Where are you going?" Ianto probed.

"I've got an idea. See you soon." Without another word Jack turned and left.

Ianto stared after Jack for awhile before looking away. "Actually, I have somewhere I need to be, too."

"Anything we can help with?" Amy asked.

"No," Ianto said, shaking his head slightly. "Something I need to do on my own." And he left. Rory would have sworn he heard Ianto mumbling something about Jack not ever telling him anything.

"What's up with those two?" Amy asked, pointing at the door both men had departed through.

"Don't know. Looks like a bit of a spat though." Rory said with a little laugh. "Seems a bit strange to be arguing about domestics in the middle of a worldwide crisis, though, doesn't it?"

It was Amy's turn to laugh now. "Jack runs Torchwood. When are they not in the middle of a worldwide crisis? Or at least a nationwide one?" She turned him around in his chair and kissed him. "I'm so glad our lives are nothing like that."

The monitor on her wrist beeped. "Ah, I'll just go check on our niece and nephew while you save the world."
Chapter 13

Bleary eyed, Trisha squinted at the screen. Hours of analyzing data collected during the last 'episode', as they were being called around here, wasn't yielding the results that she wanted. She kept hitting dead ends and it didn't help that there seemed to be a highly classified file that seemed to have been created just after the first episode. Her fingers twitched over the keyboard. She had designed the majority of the computer system, well she and her mother had. A few button pushes and she could open the back door she'd put in. Untraceable, no one would ever have to know.

Except that she would. Trisha had bent the truth, sometimes almost to the breaking point, with some of the things that she had done to protect Tony's family or to find Sabrina in the first place. Creating false identities for James, Rose and Tony back in the 80's. Hiding Amy's whereabouts from Jack after her book had come out. But this was different, this was hacking a file well beyond her security clearance. One that some of the higher ups didn't want her to see for some reason. This could get her court marshaled, or worse. But it could also help to solve what was going on.

Sod it, she thought as she began putting in the code to circumvent the security. A knock on her door stopped her mid-typing.

"Patricia, I need a moment," Hannah said, stepping just inside the doorway.

Quickly Trisha closed the screen she had been using to hack the file and motioned her mother inside.

"Not here," Hannah said with a shake of her head. "It's personal. Let's go for a walk." Not once had Hannah ever pulled Trisha out of work for a personal issue. Trisha wanted to question it, but there had been a tone in her mother's voice that told her not to.

Trisha nodded, stood and followed her mother outside. They had walked a fair distance away before Hannah stopped and turned to her only daughter. "Something's not right here," Hannah started without preamble. "Colonel Oduya is playing this way too close to his chest. He knows something that I don't. I take it you've found the classified file."

"Of course," Trisha agreed. "What's in it?"

"No idea," Hannah said with a sigh.

This was truly confusing. "How can you not know? You've been Colonel Oduya's right hand the past few years. Before that you were assigned to the Brigadier. Very few people have your clearance."

"Exactly," Hannah said, exasperated. "I just wish the oddities ended there. We have both been officially ordered to cease all contact with Torchwood."

"What? The higher ups don't want help from a group of people who routinely deal with aliens. Have they lost their minds?" Trisha was floored.

"We have also been explicitly told not to seek out the Doctor's help in this and if he contacts us, we are to refuse any and all help." Hannah sighed. "They're hiding something big, something that would be very bad for them if it got out." Taking a deep breath, she asked, "Have you been in contact with the Doctor today?"

Trisha shook her head. "I haven't had any contact with the Doctor since the Atraxi incident."
Rolling her eyes and crossing her arms over her chest, Hannah stared at her daughter. "Both of us know that isn't true and it's time we were honest with each other. Anthony, your husband, was born in another universe and is actually the son of Jackie Tyler. A woman who was listed among the dead after Canary Wharf.

"Rose Tyler is his sister and was originally a companion of the Doctor before being stuck in a parallel world. Eventually she married a 'metacrisis' version of the Doctor and they have one biological son, Rory. I know the whole story and can continue to give you the details that you already know or you can just accept that I know."

"But how?" Trisha felt her whole world tilt on its axis. "How did you know? I was so careful."

"Not really, Sweetheart. You changed your name to Tyler after you were married. I was one of the ones in charge of Canary Wharf. Add that in with the fact that I was privy to Martha's reports after the Sontarans and I figured it out."

"But how do you know about the metacrisis? I specifically made sure Martha's report didn't include anything about James." Trisha wished that she had somewhere to sit down. Her legs felt a bit weak.

"Ah," Hannah said as if she'd been caught. "That is something I can't tell you yet. Spoilers."

Great, Trisha thought, one more thing she was sure would have to be dealt with sometime in the future. "I can't believe this. Why didn't you just tell me that you knew?"

"You wanted to keep that part of your life separate from your life here at UNIT. I wanted to respect your wishes. I've never been much of a mother but I do respect your choices, Patricia." Hannah loosened her stance. "I don't blame you. It could be dangerous if people knew that EJ and Jamie were the Doctor's grandchildren."

"You're not a bad mother." Of all the revelations made just now, Trisha somehow felt that this one was this was the one that needed addressing the most. "Inattentive at times, yes, but I always knew that you loved me. Even if you did miss my wedding." Trisha gave her mother a teasing smile.

Hannah released a deeply held breath. "I came to the first three attempts. I mean, how was I supposed to know that was the one that was going to take? Honestly, I figured that it would take a half dozen tries before you two actually tied the knot. I was shocked the two of you hadn't just run off the Las Vegas by then."

Trisha snorted. She had long since forgiven her mother for not being at the wedding that fourth time. Being a mother herself, she had a better appreciation for her mother having raised her all on her own. Most of the way she had felt about her mother when she was younger, was the product of teenaged angst. Trisha had taken her parents divorce and the deaths of her father and Granddad hard. It had left her felling abandoned. So she had pushed everyone away in order to protect herself, convinced that everyone would eventually let her down. Her mother had done the best that she could.

Hannah's phone beeped, bringing them back into the present situation. "Damn, I have to go."

Trisha nodded. "I haven't heard from the Doctor or Rose today. I've been trying to call but they are out of reach. Although Rory's planet-side. He and Amy are in his TARDIS at Torchwood. Oh, and apparently the kids were in the TARDIS during the last episode. They were unaffected, so Rory won't let them out until after all this is over."

"Good, I'm glad that they aren't going unprotected." Hannah leaned over and kissed her daughter's cheek. "I'll come by the house later so we can compare notes without prying eyes. In the meantime,
don't let anyone in command know that you've been in contact with Torchwood. Or that you're in contact with anyone connected to the Doctor. See you later."

Trisha agreed. "Yeah. Later." As Hannah left, Trisha found a bench a few meters away and sank onto it. She needed a few minutes alone to process what the hell had just happened.

Jack rang the doorbell and took a step back. He was always nervous when he visited here, never sure what kind of reception that he would get.

A dark curly haired, middle aged woman answered the door. "Hello. Should have known you'd show up today," Alice said, opening the door a little wider.

"Hello to you, too." Jack gave her a big smile, trying to hide the hurt at her words. She stepped aside to let him inside.

"Uncle Jack!" A blonde headed boy of about eight shot out of the kitchen and jumped into Jack's arms. "I was talking like an alien, we all were. It was brilliant."

"Oh, I'm sure it was, Stephen." Jack gave him a quick hug before setting him down. The moment the boy's feet hit the ground he shot off once again.

"Tea?" Alice asked from behind him.

"That would be great," Jack agreed, and followed her into the kitchen. They made small talk while Alice made the tea.

"Have you heard from Joe?" Jack asked as he took a proffered cup.

"Just got remarried." Alice spoke easily of her ex after so many years. "He calls sometimes to speak to Stephen, sends him post cards remembers his birthday. I know worse fathers."

That stung, Jack thought. "How are you for money?"

"Fine, Dad, just fine. You've set us up nicely. Then again, it must easy to just write a check," Alice said tersely.

"You're the one who asked me to stay away. I'd be here every week if you'd let me, every day. I just want to be a part of your lives." It was true. Jack usually had no trouble charming himself into people's lives. Alice was a different story, though. Her mother had hid them deep undercover when Alice was a child. She had tried to protect Alice from the things that Torchwood could have done to his daughter to force him into submission if he stepped out of line.

"I can't stand it. I look older than you and that's never going to change." She paused and looked up at him. "One of these days, Dad, you're going to be standing at my funeral looking the same as you did standing at Mum's. That's why she hated you so much. You make us feel old." She leaned against the counter.

Jack tried to give her a half smile. "Actually, I found a grey hair not that long ago."

Alice laughed. "Well, isn't that just the end of the world." The two of them took a few minutes to revel in the humorous situation.

"Have you told him?" Jack asked, nodding out the door towards Stephen.

"What, that you're his grandfather?" Alice shook her head. "How would I explain it?"
"He's still young enough to not notice that I don't age." Jack said with a shrug. "We could spend some time together; I could take him places, buy him things. Make the most of it while he's still young." Alice shot him a look and he quickly added, "Not today. He should stay with you while all this is going on."

"Do you know what's happening?"

"Not yet." He sounded resigned. "But I'm working on it. We have some of the best people working on it." He stood up. "I should go." He stepped out into the garden and hugged his grandson goodbye.

When he walked back through the house Alice was waiting by the door. "Your friend, Rose?" She started pulling out an old photograph her dad had given her, one taken right after the Blitz. Rose had been standing between Jack and the Doctor. "You said that she doesn't age either, but she's not immortal. You said she's a grandmother. How do her children cope?"

Jack smiled sadly at the picture. He'd taken it and a couple of others from his old room on the TARDIS after the Year that Never Was. "They take it one day at a time." He pulled out another picture from his wallet. It was a photo from Rory's wedding, one of the big family ones. "It's hard on her, too. There is so much that they will all lose eventually. But they don't think about it that way. They try and think about what they have now." He leaned over and kissed her cheek.

"I really gotta go. World to save. I love you, Alice." Turning, he left. Not wanting to hear if she responded or not. It would hurt too much if she didn't.

On his way back to his car, he pulled out his phone and dialed. "Rupesh? Captain Jack Harkness. You have a children's ward, don't you? I need a kid."

Ianto pulled his car to a stop in the drive of his sister Rhiannon Davies' house. He knocked on the door and was immediately let inside.

"Come in, come in," Rhiannon said. "I brought the kids home early today, on account of what's going on."

His niece Misha was playing a video game. Ianto pulled out a stack of money out of his wallet. He peeled off a bill and handed it to her. It was a small thing to give her, just money. Working at Torchwood he had more of it than he could spend, so he tried to help out his sister financially.

David, his nephew, had come downstairs, given his uncle a quick hug, collected his money and headed back upstairs. Ianto discreetly placed the rest of the money someplace where his sister would find it later. Neither of them would ever mention it but he knew she appreciated the gesture.

"So what's going on?" she questioned, sitting down at the table.

"I missed Misha's birthday." That part was true. "I thought I'd take her to McDonald's or something." He hated lying to his sister, but Rory said they needed a kid. Nothing bad would happen to his niece and she wouldn't even remember it.

"Oh, that's 3.95. Big spender you are," Rhiannon teased.

"Alright then, cinema?" Ianto shrugged.

"Sounds fine. What about Saturday?"
"I'm busy Saturday. I'm off today…” Ianto tried to act like today was no different than any other day. He tried to make it seem that his wanting to take Misha for the day had nothing to do with the weird things happening to children.

Rhiannon scoffed. "You're Civil Service. You lot invented Saturdays. Besides you're not having her today. Not with what's going on. I'm keeping them with me. I'm not letting her put of my sight."

"She'd be with me," he explained as if it was obvious.

"I said no." Her voice was firm.

Realizing that his stubborn, overly protective sister wasn't letting the kids go today, Ianto relented. "Fine. It was just an idea." He'd have to find a kid another way.

"You don't have to leave," his sister said, observing his body language. "Sit down, you daft sod. Let's catch up. I have that spinach dip."

Reluctantly, Ianto unbuttoned his jacket and sat down in a chair at the table. She had immediately set about making tea and getting snacks all the while filling him in on what the kids and Johnny (her husband) had been up to.

Settling back down, Rhiannon brought up something that she'd obviously wanted to talk about. "Susan on the corner was in town and it was her anniversary so they went to that posh French place in town by the memorial and there was you."

"So..." Ianto shifted uncomfortably.

"There was you...having dinner...with a man," Rhiannon prodded.

"So?"

"Having dinner with a man...in a restaurant."

Ianto sighed, not liking where this was going. "So, you have dinner with Tina."

"Not in town." Rhiannon shook her head. "Susan said he was gorgeous. Like a film star. Like an escort."

Ianto cleared his throat. "He's my boss."

"She said it was intimate." She raised her eyebrows. "I said, well, he's had girlfriends, and she said, well, no girl was getting her feet around that table. No chance! Have you gone bender?"

Looking over at his niece, Ianto hissed, "Misha's hearing this."

"She's not bothered." Rhiannon waved dismissively. "Her friend Shan's got two mothers." She paused. "Go on?" Knowing that she may be pushing him too hard, she sighed. "You never tell me anything these days. Dad died, that was it. You were off. You couldn't wait, like I did something wrong. I didn't, did I?"

He hated that he made his sister feel this way. But he couldn't tell her things about his life. It was for her own good that she didn't know the details of his life. "It's not that. It's my job. It's... difficult. It's..." He closed his eyes for a second and opened them again. "He is very handsome." Ianto allowed himself a small smile while thinking about Jack.

"No?" Her eyes were wide with shock.
"Now stop it." Ianto was adamant.

"You're kidding me? Really, though? Really? Christ all mighty!" For all her teasing she'd never thought he'd admit it. "He's nice, though, is he? Is he? Oh my...I mean, since when?"

Ianto let out a slow breath. "It's weird. It's just different. It's not men. It's...it's just, him. It's only him. And I don't even know what it is, really, so...so I'm not broadcasting it."

Rhiannon nodded but her loud-mouth husband had chosen that moment to come through the door. Johnny had immediately started teasing his brother in-law with incredibly inappropriate gay jokes. Time to go, Ianto thought. After hugging his sister, niece, nephew and even Johnny goodbye, he headed back to the Hub. It was time to go back and see if Rory could use some more help.

---

Gwen tried to stop herself from fidgeting in the chair in the small room that she had been led to at the Duke of York Hospital. She had called Rhys on her way here. They were supposed to be house shopping today, she'd promised. Another promise broken due to her job, thankfully Rhys agreed that creepy things happening to kids took priority. She was lucky to have found such an understanding husband.

Something he'd said kept replaying in her mind. 8:40 and 10:30. Specific hours in Britain that using children would get the most attention possible. Specific British hours. Her stomach lurched suddenly, she must have forgotten lunch.

A nurse had given her a quick run-down on Timothy's history. 52 years old, had been in this facility for 3 months but had been in care since he was found homeless on the streets on Leeds when he was eleven. Bloody hell, Gwen had thought, that poor child. The nurse had gone on to say that he had never been reported missing and at one point had spoken with a Scottish accent.

Across from her, Timothy sat sideways on his chair and didn't look at her except out the corner of his eye. Oddly, he kept sniffing the air.

"Can you remember the voice?" she asked slowly, trying not to startle him. "You said, 'We are coming.' Can you remember why? You know what I think it was?" Gwen paused for a moment. "Aliens."

Timothy almost jumped at the word but looked away again, refusing to even look at her in his periphery. "There's no such thing," he insisted.

"Those days are gone. I don't mean to scare you, because you're perfectly safe, but I think aliens are using you to speak." Once again, she tried to meet his eyes. "What d'you think?"

He shook his head and began to rock slightly. "No such thing. Isn't it, isn't it?"

Gwen remained calm. Even the most sane of people had a hard time believing what she was about to say. "I've met aliens. It's part of my job. But I'm not the authorities, or the police, or the army. So anything you say is just between me and you. And I will believe you."

"Give me your hand," he said, holding out one of his hands to her.

Tentatively, Gwen extended her hand. Timothy grabbed it and sniffed it before releasing it. Gwen quickly stuck her hand underneath the table between them.

"You're telling the truth," he said softly.
"How can you tell?" Her question was more curious then accusatory.

"I can smell it." One of his shoulders ticked up. "You've...met them?"

Gwen nodded, someone being able to smell an alien on her was more than likely the least weird thing she'd hear of today. "Dozens of them," she confirmed.

"Still not safe. Isn't it, isn't it?" His eyes darted around them. "They're watching." He looked up at the camera in the corner of the room.

Her eyes followed his and she gave him a small smile. "Well, I can do something about that." She pulled out a small pen like device and used it to zap the camera. "It's called a gizmo." Grinning, she put the device back inside her pocket.

He laughed, maybe laughing just a bit too much before he stopped.

"I think you've seen aliens, too." Gwen's words were soft, trying to convey to him that she understood. "What's your name? What's your REAL name? When did you last say your name?"

All the lightness he'd shown earlier was gone. Something obviously was scaring him. "Never."

"Then tell me. Please."

His eyes went out of focus like he was remembering a dream or a long forgotten memory. "I was a kid."

"What happened?" she said coaxingly.

"They took us out. In the night. In the dark. Isn't it? Isn't it? They told us, they said we were going to a new home." His eyes shimmered with tears.

"Who did, who said?"

"The staff." His response was automatic now.

"A care home?" Gwen asked but he didn't hear her.

"They drove us away for miles and miles." He paused and licked his dry lips. "They were there. In the sky."

"What did they look like?"

"Light. A bright light. The light... took them." His voice caught on the words.

"Took who?" Gwen asked gently, trying to get him to remember more.

"My friends." A single tear ran down his face.

"But not you?"

"I ran. There was something, there were people, there was..." His head reeled back as he saw something in his mind's eye. "Isn't it, isn't it, isn't it, isn't it?"

"You're all right, you're safe. OK? You're safe now." Reaching out a hand, she lightly touched his arm.
He shook his head and rocked himself again. "But they're coming back. I've been smelling them for months. In the air. Long time coming."

"Tim, I can help. Look at me. I can help." He looked at her and she gave him a reassuring smile. "If kids went missing, something's got to be written down and I will find it. But to do that, I need to know your name."

"I was Clem," he whispered. "Clement MacDonald."

Taking her hand off his arm, she held it out to him. "Hi, Clem."

He shook her hand. "Hi."

"Where were you from? It was somewhere in Scotland. Do you remember?"

"Holly Tree," he mumbled.

"Holly Tree, now then, is that a town, or a place, or...?" Once again she was gently pushing for more information.

"The Holly Tree."

"The Holly Tree? Is that where it happened?" They were getting close and she knew it. "Clem? Was it? What was the Holly Tree? What was the Holly Tree?"

He sniffed loudly. "You're pregnant."

Gwen froze, confused. "Sorry?"

He nodded, a small smile on his lips. "Yes, you are."

"No." She smiled and shook her head. "I don't think so."

"Yes. I can smell it. Three weeks."

There was the sound of running down the corridor and the door slammed open. "Oh... Bloody hell, I've been running." One of the nurses was trying to catch her breath. "That camera's gone off, it just went dead! Still. No harm done, eh?"

Looking sternly at Gwen, the nurse indicated that it was time for her to leave.

"Congratulations," Clem said, ringing his hands together.

Unnerved, Gwen walked straight to the car park. Once outside, she dialed the Hub. "Ianto, I need a search on Clement MacDonald, could be M-C or M-A-C, and try the words 'Holly Tree' and Scotland. We're looking at the 1960s, got that?"

She paused while he responded, not really listening. "Then try the words Timothy White, with the option of Timothy White's, apostrophe S, like the shop. Yeah, and if you find anything, let me know straight away; don't wait for me to get back. I'll see you later." Without waiting to hear if he responded, she rang off and stared blankly as she opened her car door.

Little did they know that their phone call had just been intercepted and the name Clem MacDonald had just set off an alert within a small task force run by the Home Office. They also didn't know that this time Clem MacDonald wasn't going to sit around and wait for the Light to come back.
Rupesh was waiting outside the hospital as Jack pulled up. Slamming the door of the car shut, Jack hurried up to him. "I promise, we can zap these kid's memories so they won't remember a thing, no side effects."

"But, there's been another death," the doctor blurted out as he hurried Jack inside, down a few flights of steps and into the basement.

"Mr. Chow Lee Jee, Chinese again. He came in with a nosebleed that wouldn't stop. Next thing you know, it's been diagnosed as a brain hemorrhage. He died at 16:25," he explained on the way.

The mortuary room was draped with dark plastic curtains. A black man in a hospital uniform stepped up to stop them. "Sorry, he's with me. Dry Patanjali, A&E." Rupesh showed him some ID. "We just need to check Mr. Chow Lee Jee." The guard nodded and let them pass.

"Well, he hasn't gone missing," Jack said dryly, looking over the body.

Rupesh rolled his eyes. "I can see that."

"Need to run a toxicology scan. Not on the NHS, we've got much better equipment." Jack pulled down one of the dead man's eyelids. "Pupil's blown, that corresponds with a brain hemorrhage, though it could be induced artificially. No sign of trauma to the skin, apart from bruising, but that's ..."

A gunshot rang out and Jack crumpled to the floor, dead before he saw the face of the gunman.

Hours later when Jack gasped back into life, the little bit of sunlight that had filtered in through small windows had faded. The room was now filled with menacing shadows and the still, lifeless body of Rupesh Patanjali. "Oh, no," Jack said sadly.

They had obviously walked into a trap. Now he just wasn't sure if Rupesh had been caught in the very trap he'd set for Jack or if he'd simply been an unfortunate bit of collateral damage. Pushing himself up, Jack stood and ran out of the hospital as fast as he could.

Gwen walked into the Hub. Ianto and Rory were both hunched over computers. Amy was nowhere to be seen.

"Result!" Ianto exclaimed. It felt good to get at least one answer to today's mysteries. "There was a Holly Tree Lodge just outside Arbroath. It's a hotel now, but up until 1965, it was a state-run orphanage. And they had a Clement MacDonald!"

Gwen walked straight past both of them without a speck of attention paid. She headed for the autopsy bay. Ianto just kept talking.

"He was taken into care, April 1965, after his mother died. No father on record. In November 1965, he was transferred, along with... Oh." Ianto noticed that she wasn't listening.

Rory placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Guess she doesn't want to hear about the transmission that I intercepted either." Amused, Rory shook his head. "Whatever is bothering her must be important, though. Otherwise she'd never ignore you in the middle of a crisis like that."

Outside, Jack made his way in through the tourist office entrance. A dark man was leaning over a railing watching him. "Over to control," the man said. "Harkness now approaching door one, over."

A raven haired woman was sitting in a car parked nearby. "He's inside! We don't know how deep
that place goes. Give it five. Over."

Down in autopsy, Gwen was focused on keeping her hand still as she placed it on a flatbed scanner. A beam of light passes across it as the full body scan is complete. Gwen tilted her head and studied the projection on the wall. There's a little red blip, a little red blip in the pelvic region.

Upstairs, the huge cog door opened and Jack stepped inside. "We need damage control at St Helen's. One body. Dr. Rupesh Patanjali. Shot in the back."

"What happened?" Ianto asked.

"I don't know. He was just left there right beside me. Like someone's gloating." Jack shook his head, trying to remember anything at all.

Ianto stepped forward. "Did they kill you?"

"Yeah."

Ianto moved in for awkward hug, patting Jack's back in an attempt to comfort him. Rory averted his eyes, not wanting to interrupt their private moment.

Pulling back, Jack said, "Maybe we're being targeted. Whether it was him or me, we should be careful. Better tell Gwen."

"She's back, she's in the lab." Ianto nodded down the stairs.

"Gwen!" Jack called as he went to find her. "Boy, have I had a day," he started before he looked up to see what she was up to. His eyes widened in shock as he noticed that significant red blip. "Oh, my God. Is that...?"

Gwen took her hand off the scanner. Her eyes were still staring at the wall and she didn't speak.

"How long?" Jack asked.

"Three weeks." Gwen's voice betrayed no hint of her emotions on this news.

"That's good, isn't it?" Jack asked. He loved babies, new life with all their potential in front of them. He was so happy for her but he wanted her to be happy, too. "From where I'm standing, it... looks good to me."

"Yeah." The tiniest of smiles starts to blossom on her face. "Bloody hell. It's brilliant!"

"Ianto!" Jack yelled, grinning madly. "We're having a baby!"

Ianto ran in and leaned over the railing. His face was half-confused, half-excited.

"Have you told Rhys?" Jack asked.

"I've only just found out myself," Gwen grinned.

"Oh, you told me before you told him, he is gonna love that," Jack teased.

"Congratulations," Ianto said sincerely.

Rory had come in too, offering his congratulations as well.
"That is just bloody spectacular! But what about this place, and my job?" Suddenly she was nervous.

Reassuringly, Jack put his hand on Gwen's, which was now on the scanner. "We'll manage." Jack squeezed her hand. "We always do." The scanner kicked into life and the blaring claxon of an alarm sounded.

"What the hell is that?" Gwen looked around, confused.

A new image was being projected on the wall. Jack's this time. And now there was a red blip in Jack's abdomen. "Oh, my God," Jack breathed.

"There's a bomb, there's a bomb inside your stomach." Ianto was frantic.

"Let's go," Rory said, pulling on Ianto's arm and motioning to Gwen.

"Get out," Jack commanded and Gwen told him no. "All of you, get out right now." He dragged her up the stairs and handed her off to Rory. She was kicking and screaming.

"It has a blast radius of one mile!" Ianto yelled, as if the blast radius would matter once they were inside the TARDIS.

"Look, there must be something we can do. Look, we can stop it. We can fix this, OK? We can rip it out of you." Gwen was still protesting as Rory pulled her closer to the TARDIS door.

"I'm telling you. Get out!" Jack was yelling by this point.

"It's active." Ianto checked a scanner. "Two minutes!"

"I can't just run, Jack." Gwen tried one more time.

"You're pregnant," he said flatly.

She stilled in Rory's arms. With a nod, she extricated herself from Rory's arms and ran inside the TARDIS.

"Lockdown sequence initiated," the voice of the computer said flatly.

"Ianto, you need to go." Jack's voice was soft and forceful.

"There must be a way to override the mechanism." Ianto was still hysterical. "Rory help me."

"I'm trying to help you." Rory grabbed his arm. "Let's go."

"For God's sake, get out!" Jack yelled. The computer voice reminded them that a lockdown was imminent.

"There'll be nothing left of you!" Ianto sobbed.

Jack shook his head. "I can survive anything. You would die and never come back. Is that what you want?" He turned to the other man. "Rory, take care of them." He motioned for Rory to head into the TARDIS.

"See you in hell, Jack," Rory said before turning to run into the ship. He busied himself at the controls, ready to send the ship back to Tony and Trisha's place.

Jack grabbed Ianto and pulled him into a fierce kiss, a farewell kiss, one that was far too short.
Abruptly, Jack pulled back and shoved Ianto through the open door to the ship. "I'll come back. I always do." Pressing his wrist strap into Ianto's hands, he slammed the doors shut in Ianto's face.

Taking a step back, giving the ship room to dematerialize, Jack closed his eyes and awaited the impending explosion.

Inside, Rory threw the switch to take them far away from Cardiff, but the ship quaked and threw herself into the Vortex.

All over Earth, Humanity's children stopped. Eyes blank, faces expressionless. It started again. "We are coming. We are coming. We are coming. We are coming…back."
Chapter 14

Tony's fingers traced lightly up and down Trisha's back as he held her tightly. Tears had started to fall down her face. She was scared and he couldn't blame her. Less than an hour ago they had been informed that the Torchwood Three Hub in Cardiff had been at the center of a massive explosion. No one inside would have survived.

Jack would be fine, of course he would. But presumably Ianto and Gwen had been there and Rory, Amy and their children had definitely been there. Tony had spoken to Rory not half an hour before the explosion. His little brother wasn't letting EJ or Jamie out of the TARDIS, so Tony had to trust that the ship would of course have survived the explosion.

But if one of the others had been in the Hub… Rory at least had the potential to regenerate. Honestly, Tony wasn't sure how he'd feel if his baby brother suddenly showed up with a different face. More than anything he wanted them safe and he wanted Mum and Dad to hurry up and get here. Trisha had spoken with Mum five minutes ago and they had promised to be here soon.

"I'm sure they're fine," he murmured against her hair. "EJ and Jamie were in the TARDIS, and she can survive a little explosion. They're all fine." He was trying to convince himself as much as her.

She nodded her head and sniffed back the tears. "I know." Her words were soft and almost inaudible. He slowly rocked her in his arms as they waited, ears straining for the sound of hope.

A minute later the vwhorping sound came from the spare room and they were on their feet and outside the door in an instant. Tony bit back the sting of disappointment that it was the wrong one. Not that he was unhappy to have the blue TARDIS materializing here; it brought the Doctor and Rose Tyler, two people that they most definitely needed to solve whatever crisis was going on. But his children, his brother, his sister and his friends were still unaccounted for.

Trisha sobbed as the door opened and Rose stepped out. Trisha threw herself into the elder woman's arms. Rose soothed her as best she could as she pulled her to the side to let the Doctor out.

"What's going on?" the Doctor asked, noting the worried expressions on Tony and Trisha's faces. "Are the kids alright?" His voice was full of concern, but there was a hard edge underneath and a glint of rage in his eyes.

Tony knew that was the face that made armies turn and run. He should be afraid, but he wasn't. The Doctor was on their side. His rage was against anyone who would dare harm anyone he cared about. "Rory ran multiple scans on both of them. No trace of any ill effects from the first round of 'possession'. And they were safely in the TARDIS for the second and third incident."

"Good." The Doctor gave a small nod and pulled Tony to him for a long hug. "We'll figure this out," he whispered in the younger man's ear. "No reason to worry now. Your mum and I would never let anything happen to them or any other child. Okay?"

"Where is Rory?" Rose asked softly.

"We haven't heard from them since the explosion. We have no idea if they made it out or not," Tony reluctantly admitted.

"Well I can feel him, in my head," the Doctor explained, trying to calm everyone down. "His TARDIS seems to be heavily shielding, so I can't get a message to him. Why don't you explain to me what's been going on while we wait for them to arrive."

"I'll make tea," Trisha said, pulling back and wiping her eyes. "And then we can tell you everything that we know."

The control room shook violently once more before stabilizing in the Vortex. "What the bloody hell?" Amy yelled as she stumbled in from the corridor. "I thought you were supposed to be the best driver in the family. The kids are asleep and you decide now is a good time to start driving like Dad?"

"Sorry, dear. She doesn't like dematerializing in the middle of an explosion." Rory gritted his teeth as he dropped below the console.

"Explosion? What explosion?" Amy stared at Gwen and Ianto. Both looked like they were in unqualified shock. Ianto looked slightly less stable so Amy tentatively approached the other woman. "Gwen." She placed a hand lightly on the brunette's arm. "What happened? And where's Jack?"

Gwen whipped around, grabbing Amy's hand and clutching it in her own. "Bomb...Someone set a trap. Planted a bomb in Jack's stomach. We barely made it out." Gwen's knees gave out and Amy helped her over to a chair. "Oh God, Jack."

"Jack was in the explosion?" Amy asked gently, wanting a bit of a clarification.

Ianto was the one that answered. "Yes, and we should be out there trying to find him, not just floating around in deep space." Ianto slammed his hands down on the console. The Welsh man allowed himself this brief bit of outrage before reigning himself in. "If Jack could have even survived that."

Amy came over and covered his hand with hers. "Jack is a fixed point in time and space. He's a fact. He'll be fine, I promise."

Ianto gaped at her for a moment. "How do you know that?"

Amy gave a small shrug. "I thought that was universal knowledge."

"Apparently not," Ianto grunted. "Especially since no one had bothered to tell me." He paused. "Are you sure he'll be okay?"

"Of course we are," Rory called from his half hidden position. "Amy and I have met a future version of him. One that's from quite a few years in the future and the explosion hasn't changed that meeting."

"What are you doing down there?" Gwen asked, leaning under the console looking at Rory.

The man in question slid out from underneath the control panel with his sonic between his teeth. "Thermo coupler was damaged. Needed to fix it before we went anywhere else."

Rory stood and looked at the people around him. "Alright, first things first. Whoever blew up the Hub and tried to kill you probably has eyes all over the Plas. So it's not the best time to go and retrieve Jack." He turned to Ianto to address the protest before it was made.

"We can track down where they take him later. Cleanup will either be handled by the Home Office or UNIT. Either way, they both are notoriously consistent on leaving a paper trail. And we happen to have an in with UNIT’s number one computer programmer."

Now he turned to Gwen. "Whoever did this is going up assume that you and Ianto are dead, at least
until they can't locate your bodies. We need to go and get Rhys. He knows where the Hub is and we
can't let him think you're dead."

"They could be at the flat by now." Gwen said, shaking her head. "It could be too late."

"Time machine," Amy said, trying to contain her smirk. "We'll just show up at your place a minute
or two after it happened." Gwen nodded and Amy went over to help Rory with the controls.

"Ianto, is there anyone we need to..." Rory began to ask.

The other man shook his head. "I don't have much family, just my sister and her kids. They don't
know where I work."

"Right, so the plan is, get Rhys, head to Tony and Trisha's to regroup, find Jack and then figure out
what the bloody hell is happening to the children of Earth." Gwen said, sounding much more like her
normal self.

"Got it in one," Rory said with a grin. He threw another switch and the TARDIS landed in Gwen's
flat. "Stop number one."

Without preamble, Gwen stepped into her home and walked straight into the bedroom. "Come on
Rhys, time to get up. Chop, chop."

"What's going on?" a sleepy voice called from the bed.

"Someone tried to kill me tonight. They succeeded in blowing up the Hub and I don't want them
coming after you. So get up, get dressed and get in the TARDIS."

"In the what?" Rhys asked, not understanding that last bit. Still, he has stood up and pulled on his
trousers.

"The TARDIS," Gwen repeated, pointing out the door towards the lounge. "And before you ask,
yes, there is an alien space ship sitting next to the sofa. It's also our means of escape, so shift."

It only took Rhys a few minutes to finish dressing and to follow Gwen towards the tiny blue police
box. "How are we going to fit in there?" he asked before crossing the threshold. Gwen shut the door
behind him.

His eyes went wide as he stared at his surroundings. Slowly spinning in a circle, his jaw went slack.
"How did you fit all of this in that little bitty box?"

"The ship's dimensionally transcendent," Ianto said flatly.

"What?" Rhys asked, still not understanding.

"The ship, she's called the TARDIS. She's bigger on the inside and she's alien," Gwen clarified.

"Ah, alien, that explains it then. Should be used to weird things like this by now, shouldn't I?" He
gave a rueful chuckle. "So this has something to do with the freaky kid thing, doesn't it?"

"Possibly," Rory said as he set his magnificent ship down for a seamless landing in her customary
spot in Tony's spare room.

The door burst open before anyone inside had moved towards the door. Trisha ran up to her brother-
in-law with panic filled eyes. "It's been over an hour. Where the hell have you been? Are they okay?
EJ and Jaime?"
Rory pulled her into a tight hug. "They are fine. They didn't even wake up in all the chaos. They're in their room."

Trisha took off down the hall before Rory could say another word. The door opened again and five more people walked in, Tony, Sabrina, Jenny, Rose and the Doctor.

"Is everyone alright?" Rose asked, stopping to hug Gwen, Amy and Ianto, before getting to Rory. "We know there was an explosion. But what happened and where's Jack?"

"Jack was the center of the explosion," Ianto explained, trying to keep his voice even. "He was ambushed at the hospital earlier today and someone planted a bomb inside his abdomen."

Jenny squeaked in surprise and Rose went over and squeezed Ianto's arm.

"Well." The Doctor rubbed his hands together. "Seems like we have some work to do, find Jack, send whoever is terrifying all the humans by using their children as ventriloquists puppets, and…"

He turned on his heel and faced Rhys. "Introduce ourselves to the newcomers. Hello, I'm the Doctor."

"Rhys Williams, Gwen's husband," the man in question managed to say.

The Doctor clapped him on the arm. "Nice to meet you, Rhys Williams. Now if you can't be useful please stay out of the way."

"Rude." Rose said, crossing over to where Rhys was standing. "Rhys, I'm Rose. It's nice to finally meet you. Come on, I'm sure you're tired, exciting night and all. I'll find you a room. You can rest while this lot works." And she led him out of the room towards the living quarters.

Behind her, she heard Rory and the Doctor discussing a file of compressed information that Rory had discovered. Unfortunately, he had only started decoding it when the Hub's computers were destroyed.

It was five in the morning when Trisha heard the knock at her front door. She was already dressed in her uniform, ready to head to work, so she drew her sidearm. Everything about the events of yesterday had her on edge. Slowly she made her way to the door. "Who's there?"

"It's your mother." Hannah's voice came through the heavy wooden door. "I'm alone, so lower your weapon and let me in."

Automatically Trisha lowered her weapon and engaged the safety. She opened the door and ushered Hannah inside before she holstered it again.

"Thank you for letting me know the children were safe after what happened last night." Hannah leaned over and kissed her daughter's cheek. "I've been up all night," the older woman said, walking toward the kitchen. "Been following the chatter on the Torchwood incident." She walked over and turned on the electric kettle before sitting down at the table and pulling out her laptop. "Something big is going on and whoever is behind this is doing their level best not to leave a paper trail." Hannah began typing when someone entered the room.

"Trisha, I need to borrow your toaster, and when I say borrow, I mean buy you a new one later." The Doctor looked up from whatever he was fiddling with and noticed the newcomer. "Oh, hello, I'm... John Smith. Friend of Tony's..."

"It's alright, Doctor," Trisha said as he wheeled around, apparently not expecting her to not have
called him Dad. "This is my mother, Hannah Stalwart. She knows everything, don't ask me how but she knows. Mother, this is the Doctor."

"It's a pleasure to finally meet you," Hannah said with a small smile. She stood up and extended a hand to him.

"The pleasure is mine." He took her hand and shook it. "I remember your father. Good man. Always had a picture of you and your mother on his desk."

"He would have been flattered that you remembered him." Hannah gave him a genuine smile before sitting back down and resuming her typing. "As I was saying, whoever is behind this isn't leaving much of a paper trail, but I have managed to find out a thing or two. That, and I managed to bug Frobisher's phone." A mischievous smile flitted across Hannah's face.

"You bugged his phone? Why? How?" Trisha asked, more than a bit impressed with her mother's deviousness.

"The how was easy enough. The man's used to being an overlooked civil servant. The Colonel had a closed door meeting with him yesterday and Frobisher neglected to take his cell phone into his office. He left it on that Spears woman's desk, so I gave it a little upgrade." Hannah looked up with a smug smirk.

"As for why..." A muscle twitched in anger on Hannah's jaw. She turned the screen around so that Trisha and the Doctor could see. "I had a bad feeling about him and I was right. He signed Jack's death warrant. His and several others."

She pulled up a memo from Frobisher.

**ORDER TO KILL**

Colonel Michael Sanders (ret.d)

Ellen Hunt

Captain Andrew Staines

Captain Jack Harkness (active)

"Why try and kill Jack? He must know about his immortality. Did he think that Jack couldn't come back from the explosion?" the Doctor asked as he pulled Hannah's laptop closer to him.

"The working theory is that Jack's Lazarus qualities are tied to the Cardiff rift. They mistakenly believed that destroying the Hub would destroy Jack as well. All of Torchwood One's files on him, the ones that predate his recruitment, all went missing in the aftermath of that facilities downfall."

"Lucky for Jack," the Doctor remarked as he found a few more interesting files on the computer.

"It wasn't luck," Trisha said with a smile. "Seems like I've misjudged you, Mother. I thought that you were always one to play by the rules. You deleted all of Jack's files."

"I destroyed the hard copies as well. And there may have been a computer virus introduced that deleted all mentions of Rose Tyler, maybe." Hannah gave a knowing grin. "When it comes to protecting people I care about or people who need my help, the rules go out the window. There is some big cover up going on here. Something that Jack and these others know that could be dangerous to the British government if it came out."
"Any idea what it could be?" the Doctor asked.

Hannah rolled her shoulders in discomfort. "A few, actually, there are things in Jack's past that I know that he isn't proud of. Things that he did when he was threatened or he didn't have a choice. I'm sure that you have some idea what Torchwood is capable of, Doctor. And the list of things they had planned to keep Jack under their control is…" She shuddered. "Let's just say there are so many things that are worse than death. So please don't judge him too harshly for whatever comes out of this."

Trisha stared at her mother. She knew that Hannah had been the Torchwood Three liaison before Trisha volunteered for the job. Trisha also knew that Hannah and Jack had been friends. Hell, Trisha herself had known Jack for longer than most people in the family, but she had failed to notice just how much her mother cared for Jack.

"Back on point, I've got a few more things to cover before I have to go." Hannah's carefully crafted persona snapped back into place. Trisha was much more like her than either one ever really admitted. "Right now, the Home Office is working under the assumption that Gwen and Ianto perished in the explosion last night. I'm guessing that's not the case."

"Both of them are safe and sound in my TARDIS," the Doctor confirmed.

"I thought as much, since Rhys Williams was not at home when Gwen's flat was raided last night." Hannah took a deep breath. "Ianto's sister is under surveillance, so please take care in contacting her. I'm not sure that it's the right time for anyone to know that members of Torchwood survived, or that the Doctor is here. At least not until Jack has been…recovered." She swallowed hard.

"He'll be fine," the Doctor said reassuringly. "Jack can easily survive this."

"Thank you, Doctor." Hannah gave him a small smile. "Jack is a very dear friend. We've been through a lot, he and I." She turned to her daughter. "Trisha, I'm not sure that you should come in today. I can make excuses…"

"No, I'm needed there too. There are plenty of people to work on the problem from here. You need another ally at the office," Trisha said, bracing for a fight.

Hannah stared down her daughter before yielding. "Alright, I could use you there. I've already called Anthony's hospital and told his bosses his presence is needed elsewhere, national security and such. Not that he can't handle himself. I just think that it's better to keep everyone as together as you can until this is over. Speaking of which…" She handed the Doctor a piece of paper.

"What this?" he asked.

"The address of a UNIT owed abandoned warehouse. With Trisha's ties to UNIT and Torchwood, I think it's best for your base of operations to not be at her home." Hannah checked her watch. "Now I really must go. Trisha, see you soon." She stood and kissed her daughter on the cheek before again extending a hand to the Doctor. "Thank you for coming and for keeping our grandchildren safe. Keep the laptop, it has everything on it that I know so far and I can update it remotely."

Hannah had swept from the room before either of them had a chance to respond. The Doctor's lips curved into a smile.

"What?" Trisha asked. "I didn't even find out until yesterday that she knew who you were."

"It's not that." He gave a small laugh. "You are so like her."
"I am not," Trisha protested. "Ok, maybe a little. Not many people can get you to shut up and just listen to what they have to say. Must be a gift that she passed down to me."

"Plus she appears to be all straight laced on the outside," he kissed Trisha's head, "but has the heart of a rule breaker. Just like you."

"Always thought I got that from my bio dad." Trisha smiled. "Guess not all of it came from him." She turned around. "So, you needed the toaster?"

"Yes, and maybe a few other things," the Doctor said, moving toward the cabinet.

"Touch the coffee maker," Ianto said as he entered the room, "and you will make enemies of half the people here."

Trisha wondered how much he had overheard. "Like I'd let him near that or the tea kettle." She scoffed. "I wouldn't want a full on revolt. Two things I've learned, Yan, never get between Torchwood and coffee and never get between a Tyler and their tea." The three of them smiled and the Doctor grabbed the toaster and electric mixer before leaving the room.

Trisha waited until he had cleared the doorway before pulling an extra toaster out of a cabinet. "I keep extras of things like that. Survival skills, if you want to be around the Doctor and still have toast," Trisha confided in the Welshman.

"Probably the best idea," he replied before bustling around making coffee and tea. He asked Trisha if they had decaf for Gwen but wouldn't say why.

Handing over the container, Trisha put a hand on his arm. "I don't know if you heard, but your sister…"

"Is under surveillance, I heard." Ianto swallowed. "I need to let her know I'm alright."

"We'll find a way to let her know," Trisha promised.

---

Rory stood in the doorway of EJ and Jamie's room. Thankfully both of the kids were still fast asleep. Tony was sitting vigil at their bedside, almost as if he was afraid to let them out of his sight. Rory cleared his throat and Tony looked up. Nodding to the hallway, Rory turned and left the room.

Tony followed, closing the door behind him. "What's going on? Did it happen again?"

"No, not yet. Still too early if this is being set at British hours. I just wanted to let you know that Hannah came by this morning, according to the Doctor. Brought us some really good information and apparently got you out of going to work today." Rory rocked back on his heels. "I can sit with them, if you wanted to get some sleep. I'm sure they'll be up in no time."

Gently Tony touched the door frame and stared at the door as if he could see through it. "Mum and Dad made it look so easy, you know." He turned back and looked at his little brother. "Raising children and not giving the appearance of worrying every single minute of every day about our safety. Now I lie awake at night sometimes and wonder how they had the courage to even try to have more kids."

Tony clapped his brother on the shoulder. "I tell you, though, it's worth it. All the fear, all the sleepless nights, it's worth it when they wrap those little arms around you and tell you they love you. It's brilliant."
"I hope I get to find out for myself soon." Rory gave him a tight smile.

"No doubt you and Amelia are getting plenty of practice in the meantime," Tony said with a wink.

"Oh, shut up," Rory huffed, pushing him away. "I'm surprised you and Trisha don't have a whole litter by now. The way the pair of you carry on."

"I'm thankful that we don't. Especially if they were girls. Once they started I would never sleep again." Tony laughed. "Thankfully I have a little time till we get there with EJ. And I'm going to take you up on that shut eye. Where's Trisha?"

"She was about to head into work. Guess she figured that she could be of more help there."

"That's my girl," Tony beamed. "I'll get some sleep and be up in a bit. See if I can be of some help here. Night."

"Night."

Gwen was sitting on the edge of the bed pulling on one of her boots when Rhys rolled over and kissed her shoulder. "I think this is the best bit of alien technology I've seen so far, this ship," he said, waving a hand around the room. The hum around them shifted and Gwen would have sworn it was a noise of approval. It probably was.

"Sleep well then?" Gwen asked, kissing him back.

"Yeah. Did you get any sleep?"

"I got a couple hours, more than enough. I'll be running on adrenaline now." She finished adjusting her boot and looked at him. "I have something to tell you. Something I found out last night."

"What's that?" Concern was written all over his features.

"This is one of those moments that you picture in your head. And it never quite turns out how you expected." She gave him a small smile.

He scrambled into a sitting position. "What have you been picturing telling me?"

Gently, she covered his hands with hers. "I'm pregnant. We're having a baby."

Before she has the last word out of her mouth he had grabbed her and crushed her to him. "When did you find out? How long?"

"About three weeks." She pulled out of his crushing arms, needing to breathe. "And I just found out last night. Now don't be mad. I was doing the scan when Jack came in."

"So you told him first. Typical."

"Pipe down and let me finish. It saved our lives him walkin' in. I was worried about keeping my job; he grabbed my hand to reassure me. My hand that was on the scanner and we saw the bomb that was planted inside him. Him findin' out saved my life, the baby's life."

Rhys scowled for a moment before conceding. "I guess, since it saved your life I can forgive it, just this once. But from now on, Gwen, come to me first. Really, I mean it. Family first, our family."

"I promise, alright?" She leaned over and kissed him. "Now, I've got to get out there and get back to
"Go on." He swatted her on the backside. "Go defend the world against extra-terrestrial infiltration. Later we'll talk about you still doing this in your condition."

"Yes sir." Gwen gave him a mock salute and left the room.

A few hours later both of the TARDISes had been moved to the warehouse and EJ and Jamie had been carefully moved to the Doctor's TARDIS. The logic had been that it would be easier to have one TARDIS available for travel, to use the Doctor's TARDIS as headquarters and Rory's as transportation.

In fact, that's what they were currently doing. Ianto had sent a message to Rhiannon to meet him at noon at the park where their dad had broken his leg. Jenny was going to be piloting the TARDIS, since the Doctor and Rory were busy building some sort of scanner, and Rose was helping babysit Rhys and the kids.

Gently, Jenny set the ship down in the park and Ianto watched on the scanner as Rhiannon pulled up. She exited the car and sat down at a picnic table. Slowly Ianto pushed the door open and looked around everywhere.

"Hey," he said, walking up to the bench.

Rhiannon took in his general appearance. He was as clean cut as ever, giving her no indication as to why the military were looking for him. "Oh, my God! What's going on? Those soldiers nearly scared the kids to death last night."

"I'm not sure yet." His eyes were still darting around. Jenny had now stepped outside the Police Box and was watching the area as well. From the outside she looked calm. Maybe she was just another Nanny watching the kids at the park, but underneath, she was on guard, her reflexes primed in case of attack.

"I wasn't followed. Sit down." She nodded to the seat next her.

Ianto sat down. "You worked out my little code, then?"

She gave him a sad look. "Dad didn't break your leg on purpose, you know."

Shaking his head, Ianto said, "He pushed me too hard. He always did."

"Well, you should've held on tighter." This time she smiled a bit. "Seriously. Why are there people after you?"

"That bomb, last night. It was meant for me and the people I work with."

Her heart stopped momentarily. "My God! Why?"

"I don't know," he denied, before catching that concerned look in her eyes. "I think it may have something to do with the kid thing."

"What sort of civil servants are you?" She stared at him as if she was seeing him for the first time.

"Unappreciated ones." He looked around again. It wouldn't do to get caught now.

Rhiannon placed a hand on his arm. "Are they okay? The people you work with?"
"Gwen's fine. I'm not sure about Jack." A muscle in his jaw twitched.

"Is he your boss? The one Susan saw you with?" She squeezed his arm.

"He'll be OK. They won't get rid of him that easy. I just need to find him." Ianto stood up suddenly. Grabbing her hand, he hauled her to her feet as well. "Come on, I need to show you something. And we need to be quick about it."

"Where are we going?" she asked, jogging to keep up with him.

He stopped short in front of Jenny. "Nowhere, just I need to explain a few things and I need you to not freak out."

"Alright." Rhiannon nodded.

"Rhi, this is Jenny. She's a friend. Jenny, this is my sister."

"Hello." Jenny smiled and extended her hand.

"Hello." Rhiannon shook the proffered hand but then turned to her brother, confused. "What's this about then?"

"I work for Torchwood," Ianto said quickly.

"That daft place that everyone round here keeps babbling about? Everyone talking nonsense about aliens, it's barmy," his sister scoffed.

"With everything going on around you, how can you not believe in something from another world?" Jenny asked innocently. "Would you even know if you were in fact talking to an alien right now?" She wiggled her eyebrows.

"You are kidding me, right?" Rhiannon's eyes darted back and forth between her brother and the short, human looking blonde girl.

Ianto shook his head. "I really wish I were, or at least that I didn't have to tell you. But protecting the world from aliens is what I do. It's why someone is after me; it's about the thing with the kids. Jenny and her family are allies and they can travel in ways that are hard to explain." He took her hand again and pulled her towards the door to the Police Box. "This is one of their ships."

Rhiannon laughed. "Now you are kidding me."

"Step inside," Jenny prompted.

"Alright, what am I going to find in here? Doorway to another world?" She let Ianto pull her inside and she gasped. "Oh my God, it is. It is a whole other world in here."

"Rhi, listen to me. We can't stay much longer, but I need to tell you something important." Ianto looked her straight in the eyes.

She swallowed back her disbelief, if the thing could happen with kids speaking in unison all over the world, surely a bigger on the inside ship was possible as well. "Alright, what is it?"

"Keep David and Misha with you at all times. Don't let them leave the house and don't let anyone take them. And most importantly, if Jenny or anyone else shows up at your house with this ship or one that is slightly more blue, go with them. Gather as many kids from the neighborhood as you can and go with them. Jenny and your family will keep you safe."
"You know what's going on don't you?" she pressed.

"Not yet, but we've got a bad feeling about this." He grabbed her arm and pulled her back outside. "Now I'll be in touch. Get home before anyone get suspicious. Now Jenny…" He turned to the young woman but noticed that she wasn't moving. None of the kids in the park were moving either.

All over the world, every child stopped. Every child and three adults just stopped.

Clem MacDonald stopped in a bar in Camden.

Jenny stopped in a park in Cardiff.

And Rory Tyler stopped in an abandoned UNIT warehouse in London.

Then as one they started to speak. "We are coming tomorrow."
They had only stepped outside the TARDIS for a few minutes. The Doctor had needed to check a sensor that he had planted outside the warehouse and Rory had come to help.

The array was a sophisticated powerful sensor that would hopefully pick up the source of the telepathic wavelength this unknown creature was using on the children. With a bit of luck, the next time that the creature struck they'd be able to backtrack it or at least have a way to identify it.

Suddenly Rory stopped. His eyes glazed over and his mouth opened and closed involuntarily. "We are coming tomorrow. We are coming tomorrow."

The Doctor swung around in shock. "No, no, no. No!" he shouted, rushing to Rory's side. "Rose!" he screamed over his shoulder.

Calm down, he thought, as he forced air into his lungs. The others had no ill side effects after it was over. There was no reason to believe that Rory would either. Except that Rory wasn't a human child.

"We are coming tomorrow," Rory said again before the door to the TARDIS crashed open.

"Doctor, what's wrong?" Rose had started to ask but was cut off by Rory once more.

"We are coming tomorrow."

Amy had come out now, too, and was sickened by what she saw.

"Oh my God!" Rose said, rushing to her son's side. "Why..."

"Shhh," the Doctor said, raising a finger to his lips. "Rory, can you hear me?"

Not even the slightest recognition crossed Rory's features. "We are coming tomorrow."

"Rory, fight it. Look at me. Fight this. I'm here, I'm right here." The Doctor brought his hands up to the young man's face. "Trust me, I've got you."

"We are coming... No, no." Rory's head started shaking violently. The Doctor's hands held him steady. Gently, the Doctor reached his mind out to Rory, surrounding him with the older Time Lord's presence, while staying on the outside of his shields.

"It's alright. I promise everything is going to be alright." His fingers inched closer to Rory's temples. "Let me in, please?"

"We are... Dad, please?" Rory was able to give a small nod and the Doctor plunged into his mind. Once inside, the Doctor used his own mental shields to strengthen Rory's. The young man had done a fairly decent job of fighting whatever this was off on his own.

Once Rory's mind was protected, the Doctor tried to follow the telepathic signal back to its source, but it was to no avail. The signal was abruptly cut off.

The immediate crisis over, the two men broke apart, panting from mental exhaustion. Amy caught her husband before he hit the floor. The Doctor had staggered backwards into Rose's waiting arms.

"What the hell was that?" Amy asked, caressing Rory's cheek.
"Why did it affect Rory? He's not a child," Rose said as if she was pointing out the obvious.

"By human standards, yes, Rory is an adult." He pulled away from Rose and moved closer to Rory. "But you are more than just human." He was only speaking to Rory now. "By Gallifrayean or TARDIS standards you are still very young. He wouldn't hit maturity for at least another century."

"But how did I fight it off?" Rory asked.

"You are an incredibly powerful telepath. More so than almost anyone I've met." He paused and looked back and forth between Amy and Rory. "Definitely more than I had originally thought."

The Doctor turned to Amy. "Tell me, every other time this has happened Rory has been in the TARDIS, yes?"

"Yes," Amy agreed even if she wasn't sure where this was going.

"So she wasn't just protecting EJ and Jamie," Rose concluded.

Rory stood up tall now that he had shaken off the physical effects of his psychic assault. "So if it affected me... Where's Jenny? Would it have affected her as well?"

"Oh yes, Jenny!" The Doctor turned back to Rose. "Where is Jenny?"

"She went with Ianto to meet his sister."

In Cardiff, Ianto ran up to Jenny as she was still reciting the words from another being.

"Why is she doing that?" Rhiannon asked. "She doesn't look like a child."

"We are coming tomorrow."

"Looks like it, no," Ianto said as he brushed a hand across Jenny's cheek, trying to get her attention. "But she's alien, a Time Lord. And she's only a few years old. Her father is actually over 900 years old."

"Has this happened to her before?"

Ianto shook his head. "No, she only arrived on Earth last night."

"We are coming tomorrow," Jenny echoed.

"You're mad, Ianto. You should be sectioned for the daft things that you're saying," Rhiannon didn't step away. She simply stared at her brother and the young woman.

He turned to her. "This is what I do, what we do. We deal with things like this."

"So deal with it. Stop it," Rhiannon said firmly.

"We are coming tomorrow."

"We're doing our best," Ianto promised.

"Is something wrong, Ianto?" Jenny asked, having come back to her senses.

Whipping around, he saw that every other child in the vicinity had resumed their normal activities. Jenny followed his gaze. "What's going on?"
"Jenny, what do you remember about the last few minutes?" Ianto asked.

The blonde's brow furrowed in confusion. "You took your sister inside the TARDIS. I stood guard out here. I blinked and suddenly you were staring at me. What happened?"

"It was the kids again," Rhiannon said softly. "They said 'We are coming tomorrow'. And you were saying it, too."

"No, I wasn't." Jenny shook her head before closing her eyes. Her eyelids twitched as if she was concentrating very hard. "I'm missing almost five minutes. Oh my God. Why?"

"I think we need to get you back inside the TARDIS and back to your dad," Ianto said lightly, tugging on Jenny's arm.

"Yeah," Jenny agreed as she followed. "It was nice to meet you." She smiled at Rhiannon. "I just wish it had been under better circumstances."

"Sure." Rhiannon nodded as she watched the young woman enter the ship. Reaching out a hand, she stopped her brother from following. "Are you sure that you can stop this?"

"If we can't, then no one can." Ianto gave her a quick hug. "Remember, keep the kids with you, and if a TARDIS shows up, go with them."

She swallowed hard and nodded. "Be careful." He squeezed her hand and disappeared inside the purple box.

That box soon began to disappear and she felt her stomach lurch. If she hadn't seen so much with her own eyes in the last two days, she wouldn't believe it. She still wasn't sure that she believed it, but she believed Ianto would never let anything harm her or her children. So if that Police Box showed up, she'd do what he asked and gather every child in the neighborhood inside it. She just hoped it never darkened her doorstep.

Amy had immediately taken Rory to the Med Bay to have Tony run some tests. The Doctor stood in the warehouse with his arm around Rose, staring at the spot where the other TARDIS should be. Both of them were willing it to appear.

"She may have been inside when it happened, my love," Rose said quietly. "For all we know she was inside."

"And if she wasn't?" His voice was filled with anger but had just a slight edge of fear in it. "I can't lose her again, not now."

"Even if she was, she'll still be perfectly fine," she assured him.

He turned to her, fire in his eyes. "I should have seen it though, at least with Jenny, if not Rory. They're different and I should have known this could happen. The creatures could use their telepathy against them… If they hurt them, if they hurt anyone…"

"Stop." Rose pulled back and cupped his face, trying to quell the storm raging inside. "They are doing this to scare every last person on Earth and it's working. But you and I, we'll stop this. Then whatever is doing this will have to answer to us." The gold flecks in her eyes momentarily flared brightly. "Defenders of the Earth."

"The Stuff of Legends." He squeezed her hand and she felt some of that anger dissipate.
"Exactly…" Her words were cut off by the keening metal on metal sound of the second TARDIS coming into view. Ianto was out the doors before Rose and the Doctor could make it to them.

"It happened to Jenny," he said quickly. "When the kids started talking, Jenny did too."

"Rory too. It happened to Rory as well," Rose said as the Doctor pushed past Ianto to get to his daughter.

"What?" the Welshman said in disbelief. "I understand Jenny, but Rory…"

"He's still a child by Time Lord standards, but he could fight it off." She edged closer to the TARDIS. "Did Jenny do that?"

Ianto shook his head. "No, she just kept saying the words over and over. Like all the other kids."

Rose sighed. "Well, let's go in there, calm the Doctor down and get Jenny into the Med Bay for some tests."

---

Three hours after the 'incident' Rory was official sick of being poked and prodded. Every diagnostic that could be performed had been run on both him and Jenny. And yes, that included having Dad, having the Doctor, poke around a bit in there.

The good news was that there didn't seem to be any lasting damage done. Jenny had bounced back to her usual self quickly. That probably had a lot to do with the fact that she didn't remember it happening. The bad news was that they were no closer to discovering what was going on than before. The only thing that had been detected was the frequency the aliens were transmitting on, 456. Fat lot of good that did.

His thoughts traveled back to how it felt with them inside his head. It had been unnerving. Something had been in his head and he felt more than a little violated. Not by what Da... the Doctor had done. Having him inside his head had been comforting. It hadn't been similar to the times his dad had been in there, it had been exactly like that. His presence, his aura, if you will, had been the same. And now Rory was more confused than ever.

He needed his mum. She had left the Med Bay earlier to help Sabrina get a finicky Jamie to take a nap. Part of him knew that she needed to leave to get away from the tension in there. She and the Doctor were angry. So was Amy, for that matter.

Mum didn't think clearly when she was incredibly angry and it was harder for her to keep someone else in line when her judgment was clouded. So she would have gone to help with the kids for a reprieve.

With that in mind, he headed towards the kids' room. Instead, turning a corner, Rory found himself outside the door to the Library. Turning the handle, he pushed the door open. The ship had brought him here so he was unsurprised to see his mum sitting alone on the sofa in front of the fire. Jamie was in a cot near her.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you," he said, backing out of the room, at least feigning that he didn't need her right now.

"Don't be silly, sweetheart, come in. Jamie's out cold, I was just reading." She set her book down and patted the sofa next to her. He quickly made his way across the room and plopped down next to her.
"Are you alright?" she prodded.

"Maybe…" He sunk into the cushions. "I don't know."

They sat in silence for a few minutes. With a sigh, Rory scooted down the couch until he was lying down. His head rested in his mum's lap and immediately her fingers were ruffling his hair.

He held back a snort of laughter when he pictured the two of them doing this hundreds of years from now. It may seem silly and a little bit like a six year old but it also made him feel extremely loved and safe. Right now he needed the love only his mother could give.

"Rory," she said softly. "What's really bothering you?"

"I called him Dad today." It came out as a barely audible whisper.

"Ah." Her hand stilled in his hair. "And now you feel like you're betraying Dad, because you are starting to see the Doctor in that role. And it's hard to reconcile the two in your head, isn't it?"

"Great big Time Lord brain and I can't wrap it around this." Rory sat up, resting his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. "I mean it's not weird that Tony, Trisha, Sabrina or even Amy call him Dad now. It sounds right for them to call him Dad. It's just... I can't.. But today, they felt the same, him and Dad. No difference at all."

Standing up, Rose crossed the room and picked up two photo albums off the shelf. She set them down on the table before pulling Rory's hands away from his face.

"It's like, Mum, it's like I miss him so much." Rory let out a sob. "And yet he's right here at time."

"Oh my love, I know exactly what you mean." Rose pulled Rory into a hug and let him cry into her shoulder.

A few minutes later Rory pulled back and wiped his face with the back of his hand. "Sorry," he mumbled. "Middle of a crisis here and I'm having a breakdown."

"It's understandable, though. What happened to you, you felt it. Someone invaded your mind and used you. You're allowed a bit of a breakdown."

Reaching forward, Rose pulled a photo of her first Doctor out of one of the albums. "When the Doctor first regenerated, even though I watched it happen, it was difficult to mesh them into one person. I knew in my head that they were the same man. But at the same time they were so different. One gruff and moody with big ears." She smiled as she traced the face in the photo.

"The other a bit ADD, with great hair and big smiles." Rose pulled out the photo of her and the Doctor that first Christmas, both wearing those paper crowns. "Eventually I was able to see them both as my Doctor. I loved him in that tenth body completely, even though I still missed the ears on his ninth form."

"How anyone could miss those satellite dishes is beyond me," Rory said, taking the pictures from her. "And that nose."

"Oi! They suited him." Rose slapped her son lightly on the arm before grabbing another set of photos from the second album. "It was different with Pete." Her gaze lingered on the photo of her as a baby being held by this Universe's Pete.

"I barely knew my real dad. Only a baby when he died and I simply got to spend a few hours with
"Was it easy for Gran?" Rory asked, taking the second photo from her, the one of Pete, Jackie, Tony, Rose and James the night of the election. His dad had always carried that picture in his wallet.

Rose shook her head. "That first year was hard for both of them, even after Mum got pregnant with Tony. They both had these expectations. She wasn't his Jackie and he wasn't her Pete. Eventually, though, everything worked out and every day for the rest of their lives they simply loved each other for who they were."

Looking down at the photo, Rory's fingers traced his Dad's face. "What about for you and Dad? Did you accept him right away?" He had never asked about those early days just after Bad Wolf Bay. Oh, there had been stories of his parents' early courtship. Dad had told him about being followed by the tabloids and various misadventures they had together. But neither of them had ever mentioned those first few weeks and Rory had never asked.

His mum stiffened a bit before speaking. "The first time I called him Doctor it felt wrong. I tried to think of it as just another regeneration but I was still so angry at the fully Time Lord Doctor that seeing them as the same person hurt. Don't get me wrong, I still loved your dad; I have always and will always love him. I just felt that loving Dad meant that I didn't love the Doctor. And even though I was so mad at the Doctor for abandoning me, just like he said he never would, it never stopped me loving him."

"But you and Dad worked through it. I mean, I'm proof of that." Rory gave her a half grin.

"Yes, Rory, you are the best of both your dad and me and all either of us wanted was for you to be happy."

"I am happy, Mum. Just confused."

"Dad and I talked a lot about what would happen when the Doctor reentered our lives. He knew that he wouldn't have nearly as long with us as the Doctor would and I know that he wanted us to love the Doctor as if it was him. After I mourned him for at least a hundred years."

'What?' Rory didn't think Dad would have been serious about that.

"Just him teasing," she assured her son before pulling out another two photos. The first was one with James and the entire family the day that EJ was born. The second was one with the Doctor at Rory and Amy's wedding. "Because they are the same person. The quirks may be different but they are the same underneath."

"I know it here." Rory tapped his temple before laying a hand on his chest. "I just don't always feel it here and I feel like I should. Everyone else seems to be having a much easier time with this."

"You can't judge yourself by someone else's standards. Don't be too hard on yourself and don't push too hard. If you want to call the Doctor Dad he wouldn't mind. If you never call him Dad, that's okay, too."

"Thank you for understanding, Mum." Rory leaned his head onto her shoulder.

"Our lives keep bringing us impossible situations and more changes than I care to think about at times." She took his hand in hers and spoke softly. "One day, I will miss his big chin and floppy hair. I'll miss the raggedy Maths professor that he is now. The same way I miss the ears and the nose and the leather or the pretty boy with the spiky hair who wore trainers with a suit. Or the man who stood
by my side for years and gave me you." She wiped a tear from her eye.

"And one day, if you regenerate... I'll miss your face, too." She brushed her hand down Rory's face. "In the meantime, we learn to see past the packaging and see the person underneath."

Rory couldn't bring himself to say anything. She was right, of course she was. They sat there in comfortable silence for a few minutes before Rory brushed another subject he'd wanted to ask her. With so many people milling about and traveling in two different ships, sometimes it was hard to pin someone down for a private conversation.

"There's something wrong with Amy." He spit it out as bluntly as he could and, as he thought might be the case, she didn't act surprised.

"Yes, there is," she said softly, squeezing his hand.

"Do you know what it is? Because I know there's something but I can't quite put my finger on it." He paused, not sure he wanted the answer to his next question. "Do you know what's wrong?"

She gave him a sad smile. "The Doctor and I have a pretty good idea, but now's not the time to discuss it. After this is over, though, I think you and Amy should travel with us for a bit."

"I think that's a good idea, too," Rory quickly agreed.

There was a soft knock on the door and Sabrina stuck her head in. "Trisha's on the phone. She and Hannah have found out where they're holding Jack. I'll stay with Jamie."

Rory and Rose stood quickly and left the room, but not before Rose gave her daughter a quick hug. They quickly entered the console room where the Doctor, Amy, Jenny, Tony, Gwen and Ianto were huddled around the view screen.

Trisha's face is filled the screen. "I've sent over the floor plans and the basic layout of the military compound where they're holding him."

"Is he alive?" Ianto asked. "I mean, is he okay?"

"He is doing much better now." Trisha went white for a moment. "I'll send you the link for the CCTV feed. Just be thankful I didn't send it earlier."

"Why's that?" Gwen asked.

"They didn't recover many remains, and apparently it's painful regrowing a body after it's been blown up." Trisha shook her head clear. "Anyway, they are building something big on the top floor of the MI-5 building. I'm sending over schematics on that as well. We believe that this is going to be the place where contact with the alien species will occur. There's some sort of gaseous combination being piped in there as well."

Hannah cut in over her daughter's shoulder. "A combination of 25% nitrosyl chloride, 22% hydrogen chloride, 20% nitrogen, 12% fluorine, 9% hydrogen cyanide, 6% acetone, 6% phosgene. In short... poison. Do you think that you can figure out what this creature is now?"

"Maybe," the Doctor said as he began to pace. "We haven't come up with anything nearly as useful on our end. Just the frequency they have been transmitting on, 456."

"What did you say?" Hannah demanded.
The Doctor spun on his heel and turned back to the screen. "456. Why, does that mean something to you?"

"It might, but I need to check something first. When Jack gets back, let me know, he and I need to talk." Before anyone could say anything else, Hannah was out of the room.

"That was strange," Ianto mumbled to himself.

"That's Hannah," Trisha shrugged. "You might want to act fast on Jack's rescue. I'm watching a live satellite feed of a concrete truck rolling onto the yard. That may not bode well for our favorite immortal man."

"Thank you, Trisha, we'll see you later," the Doctor said as he flipped off the screen to the live feed of Jack's cell. Turning to the people in the room, he said, "Alright, so should we come up with a plan or just make it up as we go along? Personally I'm in favor of the make it up as we go along."

"I'll go." Ianto volunteered immediately. "I can sneak into the base…"

"Won't work," Rory said, cutting him off. "You and Gwen were supposed to die in that explosion. We can't just let you waltz in there." He pulled out the laptop that Hannah had left this morning and brought up the floor plans of the military base.

"Look." Amy leaned over her husband's shoulder. "They're so confident that no one can save him they put him in a room with an exterior wall. Bless."

"Why don't you just use the TARDIS to break in and pull him out?" Gwen asked.

"We could." Tony drew out the last word. "But I'm not sure we want anyone to know that Dad is here yet and a blue Police Box is a dead giveaway."

"We could turn on the chameleon circuit in the other TARDIS. Make her a different shape that they wouldn't recognize," Jenny offered.

"It still might raise too much suspicion, to have something appear out of thin air like that. I want to hold off anyone suspecting that we're here." The Doctor tapped his chin. "At least not while Trisha is out there. Which leaves…"

"A vortex manipulator," Rose finished for him. "And only four people in this room who would know how to use one."

"Two of whom are remanded to the protection of the TARDIS until this is all over," the Doctor said as both Jenny and Rory began to protest.

"Enough," Rose said, silencing both her children. "We don't know what these things are capable of and the two of you are vulnerable to it. Which means it's down to me since we don't want the Doctor seen yet." Rose walked over to Jenny and opened her hand to her daughter. "Please, Jenny?"

The younger blonde nodded and unbuckled the leather strap from her wrist. "Be careful, Mum."

"I always am." Rose kissed Jenny on the forehead and headed towards the doors. The Doctor trailed behind her. "You may want to have some clothes ready for him, love. I'll bet he's starkers," Rose said once they were outside.

"What is it with that man and his continual need for nudity?" the Doctor asked, rolling his eyes and helping her to adjust the strap on her wrist. "Come home soon." He leaned over and gave her a quick
kiss.

"I promise," she said and pushed the buttons that teleported her where she needed to go.

Jack struggled against the bonds in his cell. "Come on! Who's the genius behind the camera?" He pulled again, hoping that he could break or dislocate his wrists to get out. "Come on, come on out and take your bow! Show yourself! Face me like a man!"

A circular hole opened up in the ceiling and a petite brunette leaned over. "I'm not a man."

"Who are you? What's all this about?" Jack demanded.

"Apparently you can't die, so it would be foolish to tell you anything." She shrugged. "But I will say this. If I can't kill you, I can contain you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jack asked, struggling harder now.

A flash of bright blue light filled the room. "Who the hell are you?" the brunette commanded.

"Someone you shouldn't have crossed," Rose said irritably as she took out her sonic screwdriver and released Jack's handcuffs.

"It's good to see you, gorgeous," Jack said, pulling her into a naked hug. Well, at least he was naked.

"You, too," Rose smiled. "Time to go." She pressed a few buttons on Jenny's manipulator.

"Where the hell do you think that you're going?" the woman above them spat.

Rose gave her a half smile. "We're going to be doing what you should be doing, saving the world."

"Again." Jack flashed a cheeky smile as he put his hand on the manipulator. With another flash of blue, the two of them were gone.

Across London, Hannah Stalwart stood outside the entry to her house. As soon as she stepped through the doorway, she heard a noise from the kitchen. She drew her service weapon as a precaution. She had a fairly good idea who was inside, had told her to come, in fact.

"You can put the gun away, Hannah. It's just me," a familiar voice called from inside. "I'm in the kitchen, just needed some parts."

"You had better not be destroying my teakettle again, young lady." Hannah sighed as she holstered her side arm.

"Nope." She popped her 'p'. "I'm making use of all those lovely toasters you've been collecting at boot sales. It's like you knew I'd be visiting."

"What exactly are you building?" Hannah asked as she crossed to stand in the doorway.

"A Faraday cage," the young woman answered. "I'm using your panic room. It's small and has telly and wifi access. You don't want me to get bored while I ride this little adventure out do you?" She waved a hand toward Hannah's normally hidden room. "Sorry about the mess."

Hannah snorted. "If you were really sorry, then you'd clean up your mess before you left. Which, having known you for the better part of two decades, I know you won't." Hannah moved further into the room. "Why do you need a Faraday cage? I figured if you were here, out of everyone's line of
sight, no one would know you were being affected either."

She shrugged. "We don't know what these things want, and trust me, I don't want them in my head."
The young woman looked Hannah up and down. "Why are you home? I guess I assumed you'd be at UNIT until the wee hours of the morning trying to fix this."

"I needed a file, looks like something from Jack's past may be back to haunt us." Hannah walked past her to a small file cabinet and pressed her palm against it. A few loud clicks later and the door slid open. Hannah shuffled through a bunch of files before extracting the one on the 456. Really she shouldn't have these files. They were supposed to have been destroyed after Canary Wharf.

She had destroyed the digital copies of Jack's files but had kept the hard copies in case Jack needed them one day. Like today.

"Can I see my file, then?" the young woman asked from the other side of the room. "You always said I could, when we got closer to time. We're pretty close now, aren't we?"

Hannah sighed and pulled a file in a familiar shade of blue out of the front of the drawer. Silently she removed the back few pages before sliding the door shut. Foreknowledge of those events wouldn't be good. "Here," Hannah said, handing her the file. "That's all you can know for now. And don't even try to open that cabinet. It's the best in the Universe and if anyone but me tries to open it, everything inside will be destroyed."

"Yes ma'am." The girl gave her a salute and eagerly took the file.

"Now I have to go. Keep inside, don't order takeaways, and if you need anything, let me know."

"Hannah," the girl said. "Thank you, and not just for the file. Thank you for looking after me all these years. I know it's cost you a lot with your relationship with Trisha. When I can tell her, I will. I'll tell her it's my fault."

Walking over, Hannah placed a kiss on the dark complexion of her cheek. "It is not your fault. You needed my help all those years ago. I chose to be a part of this and I chose the way I handled it with my daughter. Now I really need to go. I have to let Jack know what's going on before everyone else finds out."

"Off to do damage control?" The young woman smiled.

"With that man," Hannah nodded. "Always."
Chapter 16

Jack slid onto the bench next to her. "I would have thought we'd be meeting at your place." It was nearly half past four in the morning. He'd rushed to meet her here soon after the Doctor had let that little piece of information slip into the conversation, 456. The Doctor had been watching for Jack's reaction more than anything. Jack had known the rise in pitch of his voice, his dilating pupils, and increased pulse rate had told the Doctor exactly what he wanted to know.

Now the Doctor knew that Jack knew something. Something Jack wasn't ready to share with the rest of the class yet.

"Right now I don't want you anywhere near there," Hannah said, handing him a cup of coffee. "Sorry, Jack, as much as I care about you, it's not safe for my family to be seen with you."

He snorted. "No, it's not, especially when the other grandmother to your grandkids just busted me out of a holding cell. I never imagined, all those years ago, when I told you stories about her and the Doctor that your daughter would marry their son. Sometimes it really is a small Universe."

It was Hannah's turn to laugh. "You really have no idea how true that statement is."

"Something you're not telling me, Han?" Jack quirked an eyebrow.

"I would if I could. You know that." She shook her head. "What took you so long to call me?"

"Well, Ianto was eager for a reunion," Jack teased and Hannah rolled her eyes. "You know how it goes when I come back from the dead. There's hovering, and comparing of notes. The Doctor accidently 'forgot' to mention the 456 until an hour ago. I think he was just waiting to see if I had the same reaction you did."

"And I'm guessing that you did."

"Kinda hard not to panic when something like the 456 comes back." Jack sagged forward. "I gave them twelve children. No questions asked."

"It's not like you really had a choice." Hannah put a hand on his arm. "The things that Torchwood would have done to make you comply... And then they just would have had someone hand them over anyway."

"That's not how he'll see it," Jack said, leaning into her.

"Well then, sod the Doctor." Hannah elbowed him in the ribs playfully. "I have the Torchwood file on the 456." She nudged her computer bag with her foot. "It's all in there."

"I thought you destroyed those files."

"I lied." She shrugged and stood up. "Sue me. At least this gives us a jumping off point. Maybe we can figure out what they want before they arrive today."

"We know what they want, more children. What else could it be?" Jack stood up and the two of them began walking towards her car. "They can't be trusted. This time I won't let them have even one child, not one."

"Good," Hannah said, sliding into the driver's seat. It was a relatively quick drive, especially with the
lack of traffic this early in the day. Neither said another word until Hannah parked her car in the
warehouse. "Are you ready?" she asked once they were out of the car.

"Time to face the music and solve the problem," he said with a forced smile. Hannah came over and
took his hand and the two of them walked into the blue TARDIS. Despite the earliness of the day,
the console room was bustling with people. Rose, the Doctor and Gwen were huddling around the
view screen. Ianto and Rory were working on their own laptops. Jenny was peering over her
brother's shoulder.

"So you two finally decided to join us," the Doctor said, not bothering to look up. Everyone else
looked up and Ianto's gaze immediately fell on Jack and Hannah's joined hands. "So what, exactly,
does 456 mean?" The Doctor looked up before stepping around the console. No one spoke as he
came to stand in front of the newly arrived pair. With a squeeze, Hannah let go of Jack's hand and
reached into her bag, extracting the 456 file. She handed it over to the Doctor, who tucked it under
his arm and continued to glower at Jack.

"1965." Jack swallowed. "The British government was contacted by an alien race, known only by
the frequency they were transmitting on, 456."

"What did they want?" Rose asked, coming to stand beside the Doctor.

"A gift," Jack replied curtly, not dropping his gaze from the Doctor.

"What kind of gift?" That was Rory.

This was the moment that Jack had been dreading. "Children, they wanted twelve children."

"Why? For what purpose?" someone asked, Jack wasn't sure who, he'd barely heard the words over
the sound of blood rushing through his ears. The only person he was sure didn't ask the question was
the Doctor. The Time Lord was staring straight at him and Jack wasn't going to dare look away.

"The 456 said they would live forever."

"And you just handed them over?" Anger tinged Gwen's voice. Jack just nodded.

The Doctor's jaw clenched. "In exchange for?"

"A cure for a pandemic virus that could have wiped out up to 10% of the world's population. It
seemed like a good deal." Jack knew how bad those words sounded and he was ready to face their
wrath.

"Where did you take the children from?" Ianto asked.

Jack opened his mouth to speak but Hannah answered instead. "The Holly Tree in Scotland. They
were orphans."

"So they wouldn't be missed," the Doctor said dryly.

"Oh my God, Clem," Gwen said suddenly. "Clem MacDonald, he must have been one of the
children. That's why he was speaking along with the children." No one paid her much attention
because the Doctor spoke next.

"Children, Jack! You just handed them over willingly, with no concern as to what would happen to
them." The Doctor's anger was dripping off every word. "I expected better from you."
"What else was I supposed to do? Hmm? Even if I had refused, it would have been done anyway and it would have been so much more painful for me," Jack yelled. "But you never seemed to care what happened to me, did you? The high and mighty Time Lord just left me on my own because I was 'wrong'. Do you have any idea how many times I had died by that point? How many of those deaths had been because I was tortured? So yeah, maybe I stopped caring."

The Doctor turned his hard gaze on Hannah. "And you knew about this? Yet you said nothing. What kind of game are you playing?"

Hannah didn't even flinch and was about to answer when Jack stepped in front of her. "Leave her out of this. The only reason she knows anything is because I needed a friend to talk to and she was there for me. Which is more than I can say for you, Doctor."

"Where did she get this, then?" The Doctor waved the file he had been given. "Was it just lying around somewhere?"

This time Hannah wouldn't let Jack come to her rescue. "Don't be stupid. Of course I don't keep my files lying around. Yes, I took some of the hard copies of Jack's Torchwood files after Canary Wharf. Figured they might come in handy one day and I was right. For your information, I keep them secured in a model FXL security cabinet from Juron that is encoded to specifically to my DNA and palm print. It also has the built in self-destruct option if anyone but me tries to access them. So yes, I think they are fairly secure."

The Doctor blinked in surprise. His voice momentarily lost that hard quality. "Really? Where did you get something like that?"

"A gift from a friend that needed a really big favor back in the early nineties," she replied evasively.

"Jack," Rose said softly, breaking the tension in the room. "When did you start to care again?"

"After Alice." His voice was almost a whisper as he said words meant only for her. Because Rose was the only person he had ever told about the existence of his daughter. For a moment his eyes sought the Doctor's, looking to see if he showed the slightest hint of recognition at the mention of Alice's name. He didn't. Rose must not have told the Doctor about Jack's daughter.

"I'm sorry, Jack," Rose said, pulling her friend into a hug. "I'm sorry for all the things that happened to you because of what I did."

"Aw, Rosie," his voice softened as he hugged her tightly. "It's alright, I promise. Never be sorry that you didn't want me dead."

Rose pulled back and the Doctor and Jack once again locked eyes. Neither said anything but the Doctor tilted his head to one side and held out a hand to Jack in a silent truce. Hesitantly, Jack took his hand and shook it. The Doctor smiled and spun around. "Excellent, now we are at least on an even footing, information wise, with the people in the government. At least until the 456 arrive sometime today. Now we just need to find a way into that meeting."

"I think I can help with that," Hannah volunteered. "The Colonel has requested that I stay close to him today. I can make sure that I'm in that room at Thames house."

"Again, excellent. Now what can we use to help Hannah give us eyes and ears in that room? Something undetectable..." The Doctor opened a drawer in the console and began to rummage through it.

Gwen pulled out a contact lens case. "I have these. Fit like regular contact lenses. We can send the
wearer messages and it has lip reading software."

"Good, good," the Doctor said, still digging in the drawer. "Aha," he exclaimed. He pulled out a small box. "One of these will give us audio. Just leave a chip, a miniscule chip in any room and we'll hear the smallest of pins drop."

There were a few minutes of frenzy as Hannah was given the necessary tools to facilitate the viewing of today's events. Very soon the Lt. Colonel was making her way out of the TARDIS. "I'll let you know if anything goes wrong. Keep Patricia here today. It's better if she's not in the office just in case anyone gets suspicious of me. Now I really must go."

After the door had shut, the Doctor cleared his throat. "It looks like we have some preparations to make and some files to read. Rory, you're with me." Now it was the Doctor's turn to make a dramatic exit.

At the Davies household, Johnny walked through the front door, guiding a neighbor's child inside. "This is Eliza, and she's lactose intolerant, so no milk."

"Oh, right," Rhiannon said, smiling at the girl. "You take your coat off; you go in there and play, all right? That's it now, Johnny. No more kids! I'm full to bursting." She had taken Ianto's warning seriously and now had almost half the estate's kids in her home. She'd take more if she had to and her husband knew it.

"It's a public service! The schools are closed, people still got to work. Life goes on!" Johnny said, not having a clue what Ianto had told Rhiannon. He knew that his wife had volunteered to help everyone but didn't know that she was secretly keeping them nearby in case a Police box showed up.

"Yeah, with you making a profit." She rolled her eyes.

Johnny shrugged. "Ten quid a kid. Look, that could be our slogan, ten quid a kid!" With a laugh, he turned and headed back outside.

Alice Carter sat on her stairs and once again dialed her father's number. After a few rings the voicemail picked up. "This is Jack Harkness, leave a message and I'll get back to you."

She hung up without leaving a message. There had never been a time when she couldn't get in touch with him. Something must be very wrong and it might be time to change communication tactics.

"Stephen, I'm just going to pop over the road. I won't be a minute, OK?" Alice called towards the living room.

"Alright, Mum," he called back.

Stepping outside, Alice spotted a young lady just hanging up her mobile. "Excuse me, could I borrow your phone?" Alice called. "I just want to make a call to my sister, she's a bit worried. It's all this stuff with the kids. And my mobile's not working. Is that okay?"

"Yeah, sure." The girl smiled and handed the phone over.

"I won't be long," Alice said, taking the phone and stepping a few feet away. "Brilliant, thanks."

The phone rang and a woman answered. "Hello, Cardiff Bay police station."
"Yeah, I'm trying to contact Captain Jack Harkness, he works for Torchwood. I know it's not your department, but..." There's a beeping sound. "I think he was might have been in that explosion, and I can't get in touch with him. He's got this private number and he always answers it but..."

At the military base Jack was rescued from, the mysterious brunette examined a screen over the shoulder of a soldier. The call from Cardiff had been redirected here. "I'll need your name and address," the soldier said gruffly.

"I just want to know where he is," Alice said quickly.

'LOCATION CONFIRMED' the computer screen in front of the soldier now displayed. "I'll need your name and address," he said again.

Alice didn't reply. She simply slid the phone shut and handed it back to the girl. "Lovely, thank you very much. Thanks." Quickly she ran back inside her house fearing that she'd just made a terrible mistake.

At the military base, the brunette stared at CCTV footage of Alice on the phone. "Can you find out who she is?" she asked.

"I'm on to it," the soldier responded as his fingers began to fly over the keyboard.

The Doctor and Rory stood alone in a small TARDIS room filled with television screens. They were currently all tuned to various newscasts from stations all around the world. A few of them switched over to the British Prime Minister.

"In light of what's happening with our children, we've temporarily closed the schools. As a further precaution, we have introduced a temporary curfew for everyone under the age of 18. Keep your children at home, where they'll be safe. The curfew takes effect immediately and will continue until further notice. But rest assured. We are doing everything in our power to find out what's going on, to safeguard our children.

"In the meantime, we are asking everyone to stay calm, and to go about your lives as normal. There's nothing to suggest we are in any danger, and as soon as we find out anything more, the public will be informed. And as always, I thank you, for your trust, and for your faith."

The screens switched back to various reporters. "Do you think this goes all the way to the top? To Prime Minister Green?" Rory asked.

"It has to," the Doctor said, slumping into a chair. "There is no way that man doesn't know everything that's going on. Oh, he'll be using others to do the dirty work, keeping his hands clean and such, but there is no way he's uninformed."

Rory nodded and his eyes continued to scan the screens. There was probably nothing useful to be gleaned from them, but the setup would be helpful for later when Hannah was inside those secret meetings. "What about Jack?"

"Captain Jack Harkness." The Doctor closed his eyes and idly swiveled the chair from side to side. "He's right; I shouldn't have just abandoned him on the Game Station. He needed me and I failed him. Turned out alright in the end but... I regret it the same."

Jack was in the kitchen when Ianto found him. "Why didn't you tell me about the 456 before?" Ianto said without even greeting his partner.
Casually Jack turned around and leaned heavily against the counter. "I didn't know it was them until earlier. It's not a story I like to tell so I figured I should tell everyone as group."

"That's not what I meant and you know it." Ianto crossed his arms over his chest.

"What do you mean then?" Jack actually looked confused.

"Hannah. You told Hannah and not me. What else are you hiding?" The younger man let out a sigh. "I tell you everything."

Letting out a groan of frustration, Jack crossed the room to where Ianto was standing. "I've lived for over a thousand years…And I've done things that I'm not proud of, things that maybe I'm trying to protect you from. Hannah is a friend that's seen me through some rough times. That's all she is a friend, and the things I've told her could get her killed. I don't want that for you."

"You can tell me anything, Jack. You should know that." Ianto took a step towards him.

"I do." Jack raised a palm to the other man's cheek. "But not at the expense of your life, Yan. Our lives are already dangerous and I want to see you grow old. Not be cut down in your prime."

"Do you think that one day your luck will run out? And that you'll die and not come back?"

"No, I don't." Jack paused. "I'm a fact. That's what the Doctor says." Jack dropped his hand to Ianto's shoulder.

"So... one day, you'll see me die of old age. And just keep going."

Nodding, Jack said, "Yes. I'm sorry."

Ianto gave him a sly smile. "We had better make the most of it, then."

"I suppose," Jack said with a grin.

The Welshman's gaze trailed up and down Jack's body. "Like right now?"

"Ianto," Jack smiled. "The world could be ending."

Giving a small laugh, Ianto said, "The world's always ending."

"Well, in that case…" Jack pulled Ianto towards the door to the kitchen. "We'd better find a room."

At a pub in Camden, Clem MacDonald was unpacking a purse that obviously wasn't his. The barmaid eyed him suspiciously when an ID fell open. "Such a long time ago," Clem began to ramble. "But it's all coming back. Isn't it? Cos of that smell... Closer and closer. Happens today, well, it's always today, isn't it? Same as yesterday. Today and yesterday. I knew they'd come back. Bastards always come back."

Clem loudly sniffed the air. "I can smell them. Just like last time, isn't it?" He shut his eyes tightly as a series of flashbacks hit him. A group of children being told to walk into a light. "Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! STOP! STOP!"

Two uniformed police officer stepped inside the pub. "That's him..." The barmaid said, pointing at Clem.

"No. Oh, no, don't take me, they'll get me," Clem cried as he tried to flee. But it was to no avail as
the officers soon were leading him away on handcuffs.

A few hours later Trisha, Gwen and Rose were sitting in the kitchen monitoring the goings on of UNIT, the Home Office and various police agencies.

A picture of Clem popped up on the screen, alerting them to results from a search Trisha had been running. "Whoa, what's that?" Gwen said, pointing at the screen.

"Ah, facial recognition software," Trisha said, typing a few things quickly. "And... arrested two hours ago in London. He wouldn't give his name, but that is Clement MacDonald."

"I'll go get him," Gwen volunteered.

"Um, no," Rose said, shaking her head. "I'm not sure that you should be out and about right now."

Gwen rolled her eyes. "Look, Rose, I know that you're just trying to 'keep me safe', but really, I'm more than capable of looking after myself. Plus I may just be the only one that man would trust."

Rose smiled. "Fine, but take Trisha. She can use her authority to spring him from jail and make sure when you get him back here to keep him away from Jack. It may be too much for the poor man to take."

"Aye-aye," Gwen said with a salute before she and Trisha left. They almost knocked the Doctor over on the way out.

"Find anything useful?" the Doctor said as he sidled up next to Rose.

"Clem MacDonald," Rose said, turning into his arms. "He was arrested a few hours ago. It's probably safer for him to be here with us. I'm not sure that we'd be able to actually get him inside the TARDIS' protection, but we can try."

"Sounds like a plan." The Doctor pressed a kiss into her hair. "When this is over and we've found Amy and the baby, I'm taking you on a two month holiday, my beautiful Rose. We've had so very little time alone lately."

"Comes with the territory, I guess. No time for shagging when we have to save the world." She caught her tongue in her teeth as she smiled. He was leaning over to kiss her properly when there was another beep from one of the laptops. They both turned and saw a picture of a middle-aged brunette pop up. "Damn," Rose said, coming over to the screen. "They've found her."

"Who's found who?" the Doctor asked as he read the name Alice Carter across the bottom of the screen. "Jack mentioned an Alice earlier. Any connection?"

"Yep, same one, and now the people after Jack know where she is. I have to get to her fast. Sorry, I can't explain," Rose said as she started adjusting the manipulator still on her wrist. The Doctor grabbed her hand and pulled her quickly through to the main console room and to the TARDIS doors.

"Go," he said, half pushing her out the door. He touched her temple. "Call if you get in trouble."

"Love you," Rose said and she pressed a soft kiss onto his lips.

The Doctor smiled. "I love you too, Rose Tyler." She stepped back and activated the vortex manipulator.
Chapter 17

Gwen drove to the police station and Trisha sat beside her in the passenger seat, typing away at the computer. "What are you doing?"

"I'm just sending an official memo to the Police station. Letting them know that I'm on my way to pick up Clem, under a guise of national security threat, of course." Trisha smiled and finished and hit send. "There now, we shouldn't have any problems."

Gwen chuckled as she parked the car in front of the station. "Jack's right. You are good. You and Tony would be the perfect fit for Torchwood."

"Ah, no thank you," Trisha said tightly. "My kids come first and having two parents in dangerous jobs wouldn't be a good idea."

"But you travel in the TARDIS with the kids. What's the difference?" Gwen asked, genuinely curious.

Letting out a slow breath, Trisha responded. "She protects the children. The TARDIS has no problem dropping off us adults or even teenagers in dangerous situations. Trust me, she's done it to me plenty of times and I loved every minute of it. But when the kids are there it's different. She'd never put them in danger."

"I'm sure you've heard I'm pregnant, can't keep a bloody secret in this group." Gwen groused. "How do you do it? Working at UNIT and having babies?"

"I did hear. Congratulations, by the way." Trisha paused and considered her answer. "I won't lie to you. It's not easy, by any means. And unlike you, I'm more of back office staff at UNIT than the one on the front lines. Having a great support group helps and make sure the nanny's CV is in order. The rest just kind of happens..." Trisha popped the car door open. "Let's go rescue Clem and we can discuss nappy choices and morning sickness later."

Gwen smiled and followed Trisha in to the station. It only took a few minutes to convince the people at the station to hand Clem over into Trisha's custody. Honestly, with everything going on, they seemed glad to be rid of him. Gwen followed the officer down the hall. The door clanged opened to reveal Clem sitting on the small cot against the wall. He was rocking back and forth slightly, obviously upset.

"Clem?" Gwen said softly. "Do you remember me?" Clem's head sprang up to look at her. Loudly, he sniffed the air. Recognizing her, he then he gave a cry of relief and reached out for her. Gwen walked into the cell and wrapped him in a hug. "It's all right. I've got you."

Gently, she rubbed circles on his back and gently led him out of the station and into the waiting car.

Alice Carter walked down the stairs at her home carrying a laundry basket. Stephen was sitting in front of the telly watching some children's program. "It's boring. I want to see aliens," he moaned.

"Yeah, be careful what you wish for," Alice scoffed. "Put some cartoons on." She carried the laundry to the back door with the intention of hanging it on the line, when there was a knock at the front door. With a sigh, Alice dropped the basket and changed directions. Opening the front door, she was met with a person that she had seen only in pictures.
"Hello Alice. I'm Ro..." the blonde began but Alice cut her off.

"You're Rose, Dad's friend." She stepped back to allow Rose to come inside. "Is he alright? I've been trying to get in touch but he's not answering his phone."

Rose gently laid a hand on Alice's arm. "Jack's fine now, but I'm afraid that you may be in danger."

"Why?" Alice blanched.

"It's the thing with the kids. There are people after Jack because of it and they want to use you and your son as leverage. We need to go now," Rose said and then moved towards the living room and Stephen.

"Where are we going?" Alice knew the answer really wasn't necessary, though. She trusted that Rose would keep them safe. Grabbing both her and Stephen's coats off a hook by the door, Alice led the way into the living room.

When Alice was very young her mother had taken her away from her normal life and the two of them went into deep cover. Not because, as most people thought, to get away from Jack Harkness. They were hiding from people who wanted to hurt him and would have used her or her mother against him without a second thought.

When Alice was older, Jack had found them again and he had seemed incredibly grateful for any contact he was allowed to have with her and Stephen. Alice knew it was dangerous to have him in her life, but he was still her dad. She trusted him not to allow anyone to harm her or her son. And her dad had always told to trust Rose if the woman ever showed up.

"I have this ship, a space ship. We can keep you safe there. She even blocks the telepathic signal that the 456 are sending out to the children." Rose explained as she watched Alice help Stephen into his coat. "We can fill in the details later. For now, we just need to go."

"But the telly said we've got to stay inside," Stephen protested.

"Never mind that. Now listen to me. This is Rose. She's a friend of Uncle Jack's. We're going to go out, and you're going to be quiet, OK? Don't make a sound. Just like those games your gran taught you, do you remember?" Alice said, grabbing his hand.

"We in trouble?" Stephen looked trepidatious and just a little excited. "Gran always said, there'd be trouble."

"Then do exactly what she said. Just like the games. Nice and quiet. And don't let me out of your sight. Come on." Alice followed Rose out the back door. They had just cleared the doorway when soldiers in black uniforms broke down the front door.

"Run," Rose shouted, grabbing Alice's hand and dashing towards the alley. But it was no use. They were halfway down it when s group of soldiers appeared at the end of alley and more appeared from the way they had come. The same brunette that had held Jack hostage stood in the front of the group of soldiers.

"Get out of the way," Rose said in a low threatening voice.

"No," the brunette spat. "And don't even think about using that teleporter on your wrist or I won't even hesitate to have the boy shot. We can test to see if he's as immortal as his grandfather." The woman took a step forward and Rose held up her hands.
"Take me. Let him go," Alice said as she stepped in front of her son.

"No," Rose and the brunette said in unison.

"He's only a child," Alice protested.

The brunette shrugged. "So? Alice. If we wanted you dead, we'd have opened fire by now. Let's make this easy and the three of you can come with us peacefully."

"Oh I don't think so," Rose said with a derisive laugh. "I think that you and your band of misfits had better let us go before you make him angry."

"I'm not afraid of Jack Harkness and I'm not letting you go," the woman said calmly. "Now surrender or I will have to shoot you."

Rose laughed and took a step towards the woman. "I wasn't talking about making Jack angry. But I wouldn't want to be on his bad side either."

"Then who?"

"The Doctor." In a flash, Rose whipped the other woman around and twisted her arm behind her back. Several guns clicked, ready to fire and then a noisy wind seemed to come out of nowhere. The men took several steps back and a few of them lowered their weapons.

Alice stood completely still as a room started to form around her, a large brightly lit room that seemed to hum with energy. She blinked and scanned the area around her. Stephen was still next to her his hand firmly encased in hers. Rose and the other woman had arrived here as well. Several people that she didn't recognize were standing around a column on a raised platform in the center of the room.

A familiar face was mixed into the crowd and he looked shocked to see her there. "Dad!" Alice yelled. She pulled Stephen behind her, as she bound up the stairs, throwing herself into Jack's arms. Relief filled her as she hugged him tightly. "I didn't know what happened to you," she said softly.

"I'm fine, shhhh. See I'm fine. Are you okay?" Jack asked, pulling back to look at her and then her son. "Both of you?"

"Fine now. Where are we?" Alice said, giving a tight smile.

"Inside the Doctor's TARDIS," Rose said from her new position by the front doors. She turned the brunette around and slammed her against said doors. Rose leaned in until she was less than an inch from mystery woman's face. "Now you go back and tell your bosses that if they come after Jack and his family again, they'll have to come through me."

"And who are you?" the brunette asked, refusing to be intimidated.

Rose growled. "You can call me the Bad Wolf." And in one swift movement, she opened the door and pushed the woman outside.

"Blimey, Mum," a young man with brown hair said as the door slammed shut. "It's a good thing we weren't in the Vortex just now."

"Like I would have done something like that. I just wanted to scare her a bit," Rose said with a small laugh.

"Or a lot," Jack chuckled.
"Mission accomplished then," a red head smiled. "And who are our guests?"

"Sorry. Everyone this is Alice and Stephen Carter." Rose smiled at them and began pointing to everyone in the room in turn. "This is my son Rory and his wife Amy." She pointed to the man and woman who had most recently spoken. "That's my other son Tony, my daughter Jenny. That's Ianto Jones from Torchwood and that man over there who looks a bit like a Maths professor is the Doctor."

"Oi," the Doctor protested and Stephen giggled.

Alice swallowed hard, looking around the room. It was overwhelming, one minute she had been standing in an alley surrounded by soldiers and now she was on what she could only presume to be an alien space ship. Oh God, she had called Jack Dad in front of Stephen.

"Uncle Jack," Stephen said, looking up at them. "Are we on a spaceship?"

Jack looked at Alice. She nodded, might as well tell him the truth. There's no going back now. "Yeah, buddy. This is the TARDIS; she belongs to my friend the Doctor. Come on, I'll show you and your mum a really cool room that has all sorts of video games. This way." Together, the three of them started walking towards one of the halls when Jack stopped.

He turned back and ran over to hug Rose. "Thank you, Rosie."

"Anytime, Jack. I'll always have your back." Rose released him and gestured to the people around her. "It seems both of us have some explaining to do."

Jack jogged back to where Alice and Stephen were and this time they did leave the main room. Somewhere behind her she heard a man with a Welsh accent ask. "What did she mean by 'Dad'?" At least Alice wasn't the only one keeping secrets, she thought as she allowed Jack to pull her down the corridor.

The noise of kids shouting was almost deafening at the Davies household. At last count Rhiannon had twenty-five kids in the small flat. "I charge extra for cleaning. Tell your mum, it's another two quid," Rhiannon sighed and scrubbed the little girl's face. "Go on then." She patted the girl on the back and pointed her back in the direction of the other kids.

Turning towards the sink, Rhiannon listened to the roar of the children. And then there was silence. Every child stopped and was simply pointing off in the distance, in the exact same direction. "What is it?" Rhiannon asked the nearest child. "Stop it." The familiar panic she felt every time this happened began to set in. She tore out of the house and ran straight into her husband.

"It's on the news, they're pointing." Johnny looked around wildly.

"I know, but they're pointing over there." Rhiannon said, pointing in the same direction as the children. "What's over there?"

Trisha was navigating her car through the heavy traffic when Clem went stock still and started pointing into the sky.

"What is it? Clem?" Gwen asked from the back seat.

"It's happening again," Trisha said as she began looking for an opening in the line of cars.
"But he's not speaking, just pointing." Gwen reached out and touched his arm.

"All the more reason to get him back to the TARDIS as quickly as possible. Now you might want to hold on." Trisha looked in her mirror once more and then jerked the car onto the sidewalk. Quickly, she turned down an alley and soon they were clear of traffic.

In the console room of the TARDIS, Ianto stared after Jack after he left with his daughter. "What did she mean by 'Dad'?

Rose shook her head. "She meant that Jack is her dad. Beyond that I can't say much about their relationship."

"Why is she here?" Jenny asked. "And who was that woman that showed up with you."

"She's here because I couldn't let the people after Jack use her or her son as leverage against him. That woman," Rose said with disgust, "is one of the people we have to thank for blowing up the Hub and for holding Jack hostage."

"And you let her go?" Tony looked incredulous.

Rose gave her son a half-smirk. "She was let go as a warning. Don't mess with friends of the Doctor." She turned to the Doctor and gave him a seductive smile. "Nice rescue by the way, love, very dramatic."

"Well, I am very impressive." The Doctor wiggled his eyebrows.

Amy rolled her eyes. "Now is really not the time, you two."

"Especially when it's happening again," Rory said, nodding to his computer screen.

"What are they saying?" The Doctor rushed up behind Rory and peered over his shoulder.

Rory shook his head. "Nothing, just pointing."

"News says, all the children in America are pointing east. And all the children in Europe are pointing west." Ianto's fingers flew over the keys.

"It's us," Tony said. "They're pointing at us, pointing at London."

"According to reports, children in London are all pointing towards the center of the city." Rory explained. "If I had to make a guess I'd say that they were pointing at Thames house and to whatever Trisha said they were building up there."

Tony's phone rang, cutting some of the tension in the room. "Hello… yeah, the news reports say it's happening all over the world… It appears that all the kids are pointing at Thames house… alright, get here safe… Love you, too."

"What did Trisha have to say?" Rose asked.

"She said it's affecting Clem as well. They were in the car when it started. She's racing back here and every time she turns the car, he keeps pointing in the same direction that he was originally, right at Thames House."

In the sky over London, a column of fire punched through the cloudy blue sky. Its destination, none other than Thames House and for what felt like an eternity the unearthly fire continues to pour into
the building. Then it stopped and every child in the world spoke three of the most ominous words yet. "We are here."

Trisha pulled her car into park, just as Clem was freed from the 456's control. "It's them," he sobbed. "They're back."

Gwen hopped out of the back seat and was gently pulling him out of the car. "Come on. You're connected to them; we need to find out how."

Tony stepped out of the TARDIS, carrying a medical bag a few moments later and came to stand near the group. "Hello Clem, my name's Tony."

Clem sniffed loudly and then point between him and Trisha. "You're her husband."

"Yes, he is my darling husband," Trisha said with a smile.

"Sabrina and I have set up a room for you to use." Tony indicated one of the few offices and the group made their way over to it. A television and several computers had been set up as well as a bed, a table, four chairs and a fridge. "I was hoping to give you a check-up." Clem tensed and Tony laid a hand on the man's arm. "Nothing invasive, I just wanted to check your heart rate and blood pressure." He held out a stethoscope and blood pressure cuff.

Examining both of them briefly, Clem nodded in agreement. "Nice house you have here."

"We just want you to be comfortable," Gwen said with a smile. "Can we get you something to eat?"
Clem nodded again and Gwen fixed him something to eat while Tony finished the exam. After that, Tony filled everyone in on what was going on and helped set up the live feeds that Hannah would soon be sending.

About an hour later Rhys had joined Gwen, Trisha and Tony outside with Clem. Amy had been having some stomach pains so after Rose and the Doctor exchanged worried looks, she went to sit with the Stephen, EJ and Jamie. Everyone else was gathered in the television room to watch everything unfold. Jack was standing somewhat awkwardly between Ianto and Alice.

One telly was showing an image of Hannah and another man stepping out of a car. "At Downing Street, these images are from five minutes ago. They been identified as Colonel Oduya and Lt Colonel Stalwart of the Unified Intelligence Task Force and this is coming live, that's General Austin Pierce, representing the American Armed Forces, he's heading inside Downing Street right now."

"And we're live," Ianto said as the images from Hannah's contact lenses filled the screen.

"We have full audio as well," Rory said, turning up the volume on one set of speakers. Another screen flickered into life as it connected to another view of the meeting room at Downing Street. "It also looks like Hannah planted another one of those cameras in the room. So we'll see what the Prime Minister is up to even if she isn't in the room.

"You know," Rose said, bumping the Doctor with her shoulder. "Downing Street looks pretty good since they rebuilt it."

He looked down at her and smiled. "It does, doesn't it?" Then he turned his attention to the screens.
General Pierce was sitting across from PM Green. "I have been asked to convey, from the President of the United States, his absolute fury. Is that understood?" The General hadn't raised his voice but the rage coming off of him was evident.

"Very much so." Green nodded.

Pierce continued. "That landing wasn't spontaneous. It was planned; it was prepared, by you. And don't go calling this diplomacy, Mr. Green... You have established a court, the sovereign court of Great Britain, in direct contradiction of the statutes of the United Nations."

Green was stone faced. "We were acting under orders."

Colonel Oduya tilted his head in contemplation. "Did they threaten you?"

"I think we can say the mere existence of the 456 is a threat," Green scoffed.

The Doctor rolled his eyes as there were several more exchanges about 'no claims of ownership' and how 'unfair' it was that the 456 had come to Britain, instead of America, of going straight to UNIT. Like all aliens would automatically know the first contact protocols that had been put in place. The Prime Minister offered to let all the American President as well as all the world leaders. Of course with all the security involved that was impossible and everyone in that room knew it.

"Then I offer to withdraw," Green said, holding up his hands in surrender.

"What does that mean?" Pierce asked.

"I won't usurp the United States, or any other nation." Green leaned forward. "I suggest that dialogue with the 456 is taken out of my hands." He paused. "And conducted by the civil service."

"They're still British," Pierce objected.

"But not elected, with no authority of State," Green said. "And that's exactly what we need. Middle men. John Frobisher's already spoken to the 456, I suggest he continues."

"Always playing politics," Rose ground out. "Pass the blame, keep your hands clean. I hate it."

"I'd suggest that UNIT steps in," Oduya asserted.

"I wish it were so," Green conceded. "But the 456 chose Britain. They designated the location. It's out of my control. What do you want to do, anger them? Look... John Frobisher's a good man. And better than that, he's expendable. So what do you say?"

Pierce narrowed his eyes. "Do we have your absolute guarantee that you won't enter the room?"

"My absolute guarantee." Green gave them a sneaky smile.

"Gentlemen, I insist that I be allowed in the room as an official UNIT observer. I have considerable knowledge in extraterrestrial matter and would be an invaluable resource to Mr. Frobisher," Hannah added. "You have my word that I will not interfere or intervene in the diplomatic negotiations."

Oduya leaned forward. "UNIT agrees to concede negotiations to Mr. Frobisher, if Stalwart is allowed to be in the room and step in if necessary. She is my best officer, when it comes to these sorts of alien contacts."

The Prime Minister looked Hannah up and down for a moment before nodding curtly.
"Then that's agreed," Pierce acknowledged.

"Agreed." Oduya nodded.

The group broke up and Oduya and Hannah went to a small room off the main hall. "I'm counting on you not to let him screw this up, Stalwart," Oduya said soon after they were alone. "But only step in if things are going to hell."

"Sir, trust me, I have a flawless record. Why would I let Frobisher ruin that?" Hannah joked.

"There's something else," Oduya paused. "There has been a sighting of the Doctor. The TARDIS was seen outside the home of Jack Harkness' daughter."

"Harkness is a known ally of the Doctor, Sir. Dr. Jones' report after the incident with the 27 Planets confirmed that. I know that you insisted that UNIT not contact the Doctor, but it's highly conceivable that Harkness or someone from the Torchwood team reached out to him."

"Your daughter has had dealings with the Doctor in the past as well. I remember the Atraxi incident."

"She was simply at the right place at the right time. I doubt Patricia would know how to contact him, besides she was given a direct order not to contact the Doctor. And she knows how to follow orders."

"Patricia always seems to be at the right place at the right time when it comes to the Doctor. Royal Hope Hospital, she was outside when it happened."

"Her husband was a resident there." Hannah sounded unconcerned.

"We weren't able to contact her for three days after Canary Wharf, missing from the incident with the 27 Planets, and she was missing again when Harold Saxon returned and turned everyone into a version of himself. And yet again today, she called in sick. Add to that the fact she is UNIT's liaison to Harkness. I think that Captain Tyler knows more than she's saying."

"And I would know how? Patricia and I don't have the closest relationship. I devoted my life to my career and my daughter suffered for it. Biggest regret of my life, that is. I'm honestly surprised she hasn't just cut me completely out of her life." There was the slightest hint of pain in Hannah's voice. "She only lets me see my grandchildren because she's the better person."

In the converted office, Trisha blanched and looked over at her husband. "She knows that's not true, right? She's my mother. I would never cut her out of my life."

"I'm sure she doesn't believe that." Tony came over and wrapped an arm around her.

"Sounds to me like that Colonel is getting too close to the truth about you," Rhys said. "She's protecting you."

"Yeah," Trisha said softly and turned back to the screen.

"Well, nevertheless," Oduya continued. "The Doctor is still here and I'm not sure what he's up to. We still don't know what the 456 want and I don't want him messing up what could officially be our first contact."

"From what I've hear, Sir, the only reason the Doctor comes here is to help."
"Hannah," Oduya said, the hard edge in his voice diminishing slightly. "I've known you a long time and I know how good you are at your job. I wouldn't want you to throw all of your life's work away because you aren't willing to be honest with me. If you know something, anything, I expect you to tell me immediately. And if you or your daughter hears from the Doctor or Harkness..."

"Understood, Sir," Hannah barked.

Without another word, Oduya turned and left the room. When the door shut, Hannah turned towards a small mirror in the room.

"Well, that was enlightening," she seemingly said to herself. "Guess I had better find Frobisher and help get this show on the road."

The Doctor walked over to the keyboard that they could use to send messages to the contact lenses. He typed 'stay safe'.

Hannah smiled and snapped into a salute. "Yes, sir."

Again the Doctor's fingers flew across the keys. 'Oh, don't salute.'
First contact with the 456 had gone exactly how the Doctor had thought it would. Hannah had been brilliant about planting the recording devices all over Downing Street, including inside Gold Command as well as at Thames House. There wasn't an important conversation going on there that he didn't know about. John Frobisher had apparently made a deal with the aliens to keep the 1965 'negotiations' off the record. Not surprisingly, the 456 had not held up their end of the bargain, just another indication that they couldn't be trusted.

So the cat was out of the bag, so to speak. All the world leaders knew that Britain had not only had contact with the 456 before, but they had willingly given children to them and had attempted to cover everything up. At least that meant they no longer had a reason to hunt Jack and his team.

Still, it bothered the Doctor to no end that he still had no idea what species the 456 were. They had gotten a good look at the creature when a camera man had been allowed inside its tank. It had also afforded a look at what had happened to the children from 1965. It had three, vulture-like heads, was covered in a slimy green substance and liked to spit copious amounts of yellow bile everywhere. It was disgusting.

But not nearly as bad as what had become of the children. The child they had seen had a bald head that was distorted; his eyes had been overlarge and stared blankly into space. There had been a black gas mask across his face with tubes attached to it. The child only vaguely resembled a human anymore.

Oh, the 456 claimed that the children lived beyond their years and felt no pain. The Doctor desperately hoped that that was true, hoped that those poor children felt nothing at all ever again. He had no idea what they were using them for, an energy source maybe; tomorrow he would confront them and give them a chance to back off. Of course, he would offer to help them, no matter how hard he had to fight the urge to destroy them now. He was quick to anger in this body, especially when someone threatened his friends, family or innocent children.

Ultimately, the 456 had returned because they wanted more children, 10% of the prepubescent population to be exact. Millions and millions of children, and the government might just hand them over to these creatures as a gift. If the children weren't handed over, the 456 had vowed to destroy every human on the planet. There was no proof that they could do that, but the mind control over the children was enough to frighten anyone.

He had reacted badly to the news, but his Rose had been there to bring him back to his senses. Closing his eyes, he remembered those moments.

Jack let out a long slow breath. "That is a giant step up from the twelve that they wanted the first time."

"You think?" the Doctor bellowed. "They were testing the waters the first time, seeing if the simple minded creatures of this planet would blindly give up children for their own gain. And they did, with very little resistance. So they think they can do it again."

Alice looked horrified by the Doctor's words so Rose walked over and placed a hand on her arm. "Don't let it bother you. He loves humans. It's just that when he's stressed, he likes to insult other species."

The Doctor glared at her for a moment and Rose shook her head. "All species are made up of both
good and bad aspects, my love, including your own." She looked pointedly at him. "So let's stop with the blanket generalizations, ta."

With a roll of his eyes, the Doctor began pacing the monitor room. He was mumbling something under his breath. This went on for several minutes before Rory dared to interrupt him. "So, Doctor, any idea what these creatures are or what they want with the kids?"

The Time Lord sighed heavily and leaned against the wall. "No idea and trust me, it takes a lot to admit that. But I do know that they will not get one single child, not one."

"Fre…Frequencies," Alice stammered abruptly.

The Doctor looked up startled. "What?"

Alice cleared her throat. "These things are communicating with frequencies or wavelengths. Can't you… I don't know, reverse the signal they're using and stop them?" Earlier, they had told Alice everything that they knew about the 456. Obviously she had been paying close attention. Jack beamed at his daughter's brilliance and Rory nodded in contemplation.

"It could work. We weren't able to trace the signal using Rory last time, but maybe we could use one of us as a transmitter. Of course we'd have to use a combination of shielding from both of the TARDISes to stop the transmission from frying our brains," Jenny said and looked over at her Dad. "What do you think?"

"The possibility of frying either yours or Rory's brains aside," the Doctor said dryly and Rory scoffed at the prospect. "If we did that, we might kill every last one of them and we have to give them a chance first."

"Even after everything they've done with the children so far?" Alice asked, a note of panic laced her voice. "They want us to hand over millions of children."

Trisha spoke up this time. "Everyone deserves a chance. Either way, we'll stop 'em." The brunette winked at her.

Honestly, Alice had come up with a tangible solution, but it would only be used as a last resort. Although he shivered at the thought of using one of his children as the transmitter, using a human child meant certain death. Rory was the better choice for it. He was the stronger telepath and he was older, having had more time to build his mind's defenses. Plus, his connection to either TARDIS was stronger and the shields were more willing to hold.

Right now they needed a plan to get into Thames House and confront the 456 as well as let the Prime Minister know that the Calvary had arrived. And there was no longer a need to negotiate because the 456 weren't getting any more children, not one single child.

Late the following morning, Ianto found himself in the kitchen of the Doctor's TARDIS making tea and coffee for everyone. It had been a long night, and almost everyone was slightly sleep deprived. Over the course of the night, the Doctor's band of merry misfits (as Ianto began to call them in his head) had watched as the heads of the British government had stumbled all over themselves to decide on a course of action.

They had tried to counter offer. They offered the 456 a fraction of the number they had been asking for. That offer was soundly rejected, and all over the world children began repeating a number, a different number in every country, a number equal to 10% of the child population of that country. It became apparent that the 456 would settle for no less than what they demanded.
In the end, they had caved to the pressure and decided to hand over the children who attended the lowest performing schools in the country, the ones most likely to produce criminals and the dregs of society. Someone had even had the nerve to suggest that they could spin this as a good thing. A cull of the 10% of the children with the lowest potential could be seen as a good thing, less people to drain the resources of the better part of the population. It made Ianto both sick and furious. A few years ago, that would have included not only himself, but Rose Tyler and Mickey Smith as well. No one could accurately judge a child's potential. Ianto himself had helped to save the world, multiple times. Mickey had helped to save the multiverse. And he shuddered to think what could have become of all of reality without Rose. Narrow minded idiots.

Of course the team had come up with a plan. It focused on three fronts. The first was Rose and Hannah confronting the Prime Minister in the Cabinet room at the newly rebuilt Downing Street. Jenny had teased her mum about not getting any ideas about keeping the Vortex Manipulator when this was all over. Reluctantly, Rose had admitted it was a convenient way to travel.

Second, Rory, the Doctor and Jack would take the Doctor's TARDIS to Thames house to confront the 456 directly and give them the chance to leave peacefully. The last front of the plan was the reserve team. Jenny would take the Tyler family TARDIS and park it in the back garden of his sister Rhiannon's house. That way the children there would be protected if things went pear shaped.

There were only two problems with this plan. Firstly, Clem refused to step into the protection of the TARDIS. Yesterday had been upsetting, to put it mildly, for the poor man. The 456 had said something about a remnant remaining; Clem had been convinced that they were talking about him. He was incredibly scared but still refused to trust the alien technology. Honestly, no one could really blame him, so Gwen and Rhys had agreed to stay behind with him.

And then there was the problem of Ianto himself. There was no way that he was just going to be relegated to the TARDIS outside of his sister's house. He was going into Thames house with Jack and that was final. After years of working for Torchwood and, more recently, outing himself on the front lines, he wouldn't allow himself to be relegated to tea boy again. Now if he could just find Jack to tell him.

But the man in question had spent most of the night secreted away with Alice. Ianto knew that he shouldn't be jealous of the woman for getting Jack's attention. Nor should he be surprised at her existence. Even if he was loyal to the one he was with, Jack had always been...open with his affections. It would have been more surprising to Ianto if Alice was the only child Jack had fathered.

What was upsetting him right now was that Jack hadn't bothered to tell him that he had a daughter, or a grandson. Nor had he been told about the 456. Rose and Hannah seemed to be the ones he confided in about such things. It seemed like all he was getting was the surface and nothing underneath. Ianto didn't doubt how Jack felt about him and he was certain Jack knew he loved him. But would it be enough if Jack couldn't trust him with his secrets.

"Stop thinking like that," he muttered under his breath.

"You know," Jack's voice floated in from the doorway. "They say that talking to yourself is the first sign of insanity."

"Really?" Ianto half-smiled. "I always thought it was when you started to answer back was when you knew there was a problem." Picking up one of the coffee mugs, Ianto handed Jack one made just the way he liked it.

"You are a life saver." Jack took a large gulp and stared at the other man. "What's wrong?"
Ianto rolled his shoulders and said, "I want to go with you, the Doctor and Rory to meet with the 456."

"No," Jack reacted quickly. "It's dangerous and we have no idea what they are capable of. I don't want you in that room."

"But it was okay to send Hannah in there yesterday?" Ianto spat. "You always play everything so close to your chest. I wish that you would just trust me, too."

With a thud, Jack set the coffee mug down on the counter. "You really want to talk about this now?"

"Why not now? There's never a good time, is there? You keep shutting me out. I didn't know about the 456, I didn't know you had a daughter. But Hannah knew and Rose knew. Talk to me, Jack. I'm right here. Or do you not trust me the way you trust them?" Ianto didn't raise his voice but his tone was pleading.

"Have you ever had to look at a child, your child, your grandchild, and know that you are going to outlive them by decades, by centuries?" Jack asked, his voice filled with agony. "Because I have and Rose has. She and I will both have to bury our children while we still look young. So yes, I told her about Alice, because I needed someone who would understand that. And the things I told Hannah…"

Jack turned his back and took a deep breath. "I needed someone who would absolve me; Hannah was a parent herself when I told her. If she could forgive me for it, see past it, then maybe… Maybe I wasn't as horrible as I thought. All these years, I consoled myself by believing that maybe those kids were in paradise, and now I know. I'm a monster, Ianto."

"Jack." Ianto laid a hand on his back. "You're not a monster. If you were, you wouldn't care what happened to those kids. But you can talk to me about these things. I won't judge you."

"Just stop," Jack said, shrugging him off. "We'll talk about this later."

"Sure, fine." Ianto knew he didn't sound convinced but he didn't care.

Taking a step closer to him, Jack said, "After all of this is over, we'll talk. I promise." Jack leaned over and placed a quick kiss on Ianto's lips. "And if you really want to, you can come with us to meet with the 456."

"Good, thank you."

"Ahem," Sabrina cleared her throat from the doorway. "It's time to go."

Twenty minutes later, the Tyler family's TARDIS had dematerialized with the majority of the family in it. The Doctor, Jack, Ianto and Rory were in the Doctor's TARDIS awaiting the signal for them to storm Thames house. It also left Rose in the warehouse with Gwen, Rhys and Clem to watch the latest feed from Hannah in Gold Command at 10 Downing Street.

Rose's eyes were glued to the monitor. The group consisting of Prime Minister Green, high ranking members of the cabinet, John Frobisher, American General Pierce, UNIT Colonel Oduya, and of course, Hannah were sitting around a long conference table. Rose's fingers itched as she triple checked the coordinates on the manipulator. It was almost show time.

*John Frobisher explained what they were going to be distributing through the news media. "So... We need a cover story to explain why the operation is happening, and to encourage participation. So*
the suggestion is we announce the children will be given some sort of inoculation; a jab to stop them speaking in unison. We stress that there's no immediate danger, that everyone will be seen in due course. Then when it goes wrong and the children disappear, we blame the aliens. Claiming innocence, we face the music.”

"We say the 456 double crossed us?" Pierce asked.

"Well, it is the aliens' fault that this is happening. Why not blame them?" someone off camera expounded.

"Yes, we play the part of naive dupes rather than willing accomplices," Frobisher agreed." And I believe that this is a plausible cover that can be used by countries all over the world. We are forcing the news outlets to keep a lid on what is really going on. That will buy everyone time."

"No one in this room is a willing accomplice," Green said pointedly. "This is extortion and I will not now, nor ever say that we did this willingly." He took a deep breath. "Now, ladies and gentlemen… Comments? Anyone?"

From the end of the table, Hannah cleared her throat and stood up. "With all due respect, sir, I have something to say."

Green smiled politely at her. "Yes, Lt Colonel Stalwart?"

"I don't believe that any of the preparations are necessary. I know for a fact that we have a trump card."

"And what is that?" Pierce asked, leaning forward in his chair.

"Torchwood," Hannah said, straightening her shoulders. "And the Doctor."

Frobisher jumped to his feet. "That's ridiculous. The Torchwood Hub was destroyed and all of the employees killed in the explosion a few days ago."

Hannah rounded on him. "An explosion caused by a bomb that you ordered to be planted in Jack Harkness' body. My grandchildren were there that night. Count your lucky stars that they escaped along with Ianto Jones and Gwen Cooper or you would have to answer to me." He slumped back into his chair.

"Stalwart, did you say the Doctor?" Colonel Oduya interrupted and glared at her. Apparently he was upset that she hadn't told him immediately about the Doctor being in contact.

"That's my cue," Rose said and pressed the button on the manipulator. A moment later she appeared in Gold Command, standing right beside Hannah. "Yes, Colonel, Hannah did in fact say the Doctor."

"Who the hell are you?" Green demanded. "And how did you get in here?"

"Dame Rose Tyler, Prime Minister. I would say it was a pleasure to meet you, but I'd be lying." Rose eyed him disdainfully. "Oh, and I have a teleport." She held up her wrist and turned to Frobisher. "I'm sure your lackey told you all about it, didn't she?"

Frobisher sank further back into his chair in an apparent attempt to look invisible.

"And what is your connection to the Doctor, Dame Tyler?" General Pierce asked.
"Oh, that is fairly complicated." She smiled wryly. "For now, all you need to know is that I'm on your side."

"What do you want from us?" Green asked.

"That's simple," Rose said with a small shrug. "I want you to stop all of your plans to hand over any children to the 456 and you to let the Doctor and Captain Harkness handle any and all discussions with the 456 from now on."

Pierce looked indignant. "We should just let this Doctor and Harkness speak for the planet? What authority do they have?"

Colonel Oduya looked like he wanted to say something but Rose cut him off. "You can trust the Doctor's track record by the number of times that he has saved this planet. Most recently from the Atraxi, but there were also the Sontarans, the Nestene Consciousness, the Sycorax, the Slitheen... And those are just a few examples."

"This place looks nice since you've rebuilt it." She looked around the room, a smile forming on her lips as she remembered the first time she was in Downing Street. Then she leaned forward onto the conference table. "This planet owes the Doctor and Captain a chance to handle this. Because one way or another, we are the only shot that you have at ending this without causing a massive rebellion."

Prime Minister Green and General Pierce shifted uncomfortably in their chairs and Oduya stepped forward. "UNIT and the United Nations stand behind the Doctor, Dame Tyler. I'm sure that none of the people in this room would object to the Doctor negotiating with the 456 on behalf of the planet. How soon can this be arranged?"

Rose beamed and nodded to a television monitor. "If you turn on the camera feed from Thames House, you'll find he's just arrived."

The moment that the Colonel had agreed to the meeting, Rory and the Doctor materialized the TARDIS right into the room containing the 456 on the thirteenth floor although they would have done the same thing had no one agreed. The Doctor didn't need permission to save the world. He did it whether you liked it or not.

"Right," the Doctor said, clapping his hands together. "It's show time. Rory, stay here, monitor for any signs of trouble. You two..." He pointed at Jack and Ianto. "Let's go."

Rory called out, "Good luck," as the other three men stepped outside of the doors of the ship.

Taking one step forward, the Doctor spoke first. "Hello, I'm the Doctor and these are my friends, Captain Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones. We're here to negotiate on behalf of the human race." He fiddled with his bowtie, in what looked to be a nervous manner. It wasn't nerves, just one of his ways to try lull an opponent into a false sense of security.

"You are not human." The voice of the 456 drifted out of a speaker box near the tank.

A smirk formed on the Doctor's face. "No, I'm not. But I've sort of adopted this planet. I'm quite fond of it, actually. So I would hate to see something happen to the children of its people." The Doctor strode up to the tank. "I want to help you. Whatever you need these children for, we can find something else that you can use instead. Let me help."

He took a deep breath. "As a father and as a grandfather—you need these children. Are they keeping
you alive?"

The 456 responded, "No."

"Then what are they for?" Jack stepped forward and asked.

"The hit," the 456 said simply.

The Doctor's brow furrowed. "I don't understand."

"The hit," the voice from the box began. "They create chemicals. The chemicals are good."

"Good in what way?" The Doctor did not like where this was going.

"We feel good. The chemicals are good," the 456 said.

Ianto finally spoke, his voice filled with revulsion. "They're like... drugs?"

"Yes," was the cold reply before the creature spit its yellow bile against the wall of the tank. "We need the children."

Gritting his teeth, the Doctor addressed the 456 again. "Well, I'm sorry about that, but this time you will not be getting one single child. Not one."

"You have yielded in the past," the disembodied voice said.

Jack snorted. "And don't I know it. I was there. In 1965, I was part of that trade, and that's why I'm never going to let it happen again."

"Explain," the 456 demanded.

"You're not getting a single, solitary child," Ianto declared. "We won't let you."

"You yielded in the past. You will do so again," the 456 replied.

"In the past," Jack answered, "the numbers were so small they could be kept secret, but this time, that is not going to happen."

"And why not?" the voice from the speaker asked.

"Because," the Doctor began, "if you don't leave this planet for good, I will destroy you. I'm only giving you one chance. I suggest you take it."

Ianto spoke again. "You've got enough information on this planet. Check your records. Their names are the Doctor and Captain Jack Harkness. Take a look and see what you're facing."

The speaker crackled to life again. "This is fascinating, isn't it? The human infant mortality rate is 29,158 deaths per day. Every three seconds, a child dies. The human response is to accept, and adapt. You have yielded in the past, you will do so again."

"The human race does not hand their child over to be used as drugs." The Doctor's blood boiled and he yelled, "Last chance, leave now or I will make you leave."

"Then the fight begins," the 456 responded. There was a slight hiss of what sounded like an air canister being slowly released and there was a slightly tangy taste on the Doctor's tongue. Immediately he engaged his respiratory bypass, knowing that he only had mere moments to get
himself and Ianto out of the room if they wanted to survive.
Chapter 19

The Doctor flew to Ianto's side. He wrapped an arm around the man's throat and clamped a hand tightly over Ianto's mouth, effectively cutting off his airway. Not knowing what was going on, the Welsh man kicked and fought as the Doctor drug him back towards the TARDIS door.

"What the hell is going on!" Jack yelled.

"Virus," was all the Doctor managed to say before Ianto went lifeless in his arms.

"Action has been taken," the 456 said in the same monotone voice. "You wanted a demonstration of war. A virus has been released. It will kill everything in the building. Now the remnant will be disconnected." A high pitched noise came bursting from the speaker just as the Doctor managed to drag Ianto into the TARDIS and slam the door shut.

A loud, high pitched, whinging noise filled the air of the warehouse. Clem collapsed to the ground clutching desperately at his ears. "Turn it off," he managed to scream through the pain and then he just continued screaming.

Gwen fell to her knees next to the man and Rhys joined them. "What's happening?" he demanded.

"No idea." She pulled at the hands of the elderly man, trying desperately to get him to look at her. There was blood pouring from his eyes and nose. The noise changed pitch and Clem stopped screaming. He stopped screaming, and breathing, and living. Whatever that noise was, it had killed him. A few tears escaped Gwen's eyes. After everything that had happened to this man, he didn't deserve for things to end like this. Her only consolation was that maybe, hopefully, his suffering was at an end.

Rory flew towards the door and helped the Doctor haul Ianto towards the med bay. "What happened?"

Taking a deep breath of clean air, the Doctor said, "They declined my offer to let them leave peacefully. I'm afraid that Ianto has stopped breathing but I don't think he had a chance to inhale the virus." They had reached the door and the Doctor pushed it open. Together he and Rory set Ianto on an examination table. "Let's get him breathing again and make sure the virus hasn't invaded his body."

Rory looked up at the ceiling for a brief moment. "Right," he mumbled. "I have an idea. Stay here, help Ianto and start on the antivirus. I'll be back in a flash."

Jack had raised the alarm and had all of the people in the building clambering towards the exits. But Thames House was designed to withstand a biological attack. Nothing could get in or out. The people were trapped inside with a fast-acting, deadly virus. Rory landed the blue box in the middle if the lobby and set to turning knobs on the console, extending the protective field of the ship to its limits. He wasn't sure if this virus had made its way down this far, or how much good this would do, but it was their best shot of helping those poor people. Especially the ones that had already inhaled the virus. For those people, if they couldn't synthesize the antivirus in time...

The TARDIS groaned at the strain of purifying the air within her protective field. "I know it's a strain, but thank you." Rory patted the console and she hummed back, not able to respond back with their normal telepathic communication. There was no time to lose and Rory sped down the corridor...
to the med bay.

Inside there was a steady beat of a heart monitor pinging away near the bed Ianto was lying on. The Doctor was hunched over a monitor. "Is he…" Rory started. "Did Ianto get infected by the virus?"

The Doctor's eyes flicked to the Welshman. "No, I got him out of the room in time. He's just unconscious, that tends to happen when someone cuts off your air supply." He pointed at the screen. "Look at this virus. It's beautiful, it'll kill a human stone dead in five minutes but it is a thing of beauty. It would, probably, even manage to give me a case of the sniffles. Impressive, considering my superior biology."

Rory rolled his eyes. "Wasting time, Doctor. Antivirus?"

"I've got the basic structure worked out, but if they've already been affected it may be too late. Like I said, highly aggressive and I'm not sure that once they're infected we can stop it."

"Doesn't mean we won't try." Rory elbowed the Doctor. "Budge up; I need room to work, too." He didn't miss the proud smile the Doctor gave him before they began addressing the problem at hand. There had been a shift, for the better, in their relationship in the past few days. Rory, for one, was very happy about that.

"Are you happy now?" The Prime Minister stared daggers at Rose. "Your friends accomplished nothing except getting people killed. What now?"

"Two choices," General Pierce began. "Either we go to war against an enemy we can't beat, or we go to war against our own people, for their own good."

"Or you shut your mouths and still let us handle this," Rose snarled. "Yes, this wasn't the outcome we wanted but the 456 have had their chance. They could have left peacefully. Now they have brought what's going to happen on themselves. And just so you know, if you hand over a single, solitary child you will live to regret it."

Rose stood and turned to Hannah and the Colonel. "We'll be in touch."

And with a flash of light, Rose Tyler vanished from the Gold Command room.

A bald cabinet member, Hannah thought his name was Yates, started speaking. "I don't care what that woman or the Doctor say they can do. It's obvious that their attempts have failed and we have no choice. We have to hand over the children."

"That would not be advisable," Oduya said quietly but forcefully. "UNIT will still stand behind the Doctor, and I'm sure that many of the other world leaders would rather give him a chance to fix this rather than hand over millions of innocent children."

He stood and motioned for Hannah to follow him. "Mr. Green, I warn you that if you continue with your plan, then UNIT will be forced to take action against you." Then he turned and Hannah followed him out of the room.

Once in the hallway, Oduya rounded on her. "I should have you court marshaled for this. You were given a direct order to tell me immediately if you had contact with the Doctor or Harkness. You made me look like a fool in there."

Hannah opened her mouth to speak but he cut her off. "And don't think for a minute that I didn't catch it. Tyler… Rose Tyler…Patricia Tyler and her husband Anthony Tyler. There's a connection. I
know it and I intend to find out exactly what Captain Tyler's connection to that woman and the Doctor is."

"And if you're smart, sir, you would stay as far away from that connection as possible." Hannah hissed. "Because you won't want to find out what happens to people who try to exploit my daughter's connections."

"Is that a threat?"

"No sir. Just a bit of friendly advice." Hannah smiled, turned on her heel and walked away.

A few hours later, Gwen, Rhys, Hannah and Rose had joined the Doctor, Rory, Jack and Ianto in the TARDIS. A heavy silence filled the room. This was the last calm before the storm, the point where everyone knows what's coming but they haven't taken the final step yet.

However there was some good news, despite the close call. Ianto was going to be perfectly fine. Yet after a celebratory 'we're still alive hug' between the men when they had collected Jack's body from the makeshift morgue at Thames House, Jack had made sure to keep at least a person or two between Ianto and himself.

Clem had died, and all in all, 47 people had died from the 456's virus. It was a far cry from the hundreds that would have died had the TARDIS not been there, but it was still unforgivable. There was no way that they would have been able to stop an altered strain of the virus, should the 456 chose to release it. A similar virus would be able to wipe out the entire population of Earth within a day's time. This had made them realize what kind of creature they were dealing with and what options they actually had.

"So what now?" Ianto asked, breaking the silence.

"Now we end it," Rory answered, none too cheerfully.

"How?" Rhys asked.

"We find a resonate frequency that we can use against the 456," the Doctor replied dryly before he moved to the console. "It may take us a while to find the correct one. We had better get started before we either give the government an excuse to hand over the children or the 456 to kill every human on the planet."

"Clem," Gwen said suddenly. "Can we use the same frequency they used to kill Clem against them?"

The Doctor looked pensive. "That might work. Do you have a recording of it?"

Gwen held up her laptop. "Yeah, it's on here."

Jack snatched it from her hand and walked over to where the Doctor was standing. "Excellent, this may be just what we need." Ianto hovered nearby, offering his help where he could.

"And then what?" Rose asked with a small hint of anger in her voice. "We use Jenny or Rory as a transmitter? It could kill them. I can't… We can't…"

"Mum." Rory came up and put his hand on her arm. "I'll be fine. If we use yours, the Doctor's and both TARDISes' shields, I'll be fine."
"I can't lose you or your sister," Rose said softly. "There has to be another way."

It only took a moment for the Doctor to step over and wrap Rose in his arms. "I will never let anything happen to any of your…our children or grandchildren. I'll monitor every aspect of what's going on inside Rory's head and at the first sign of trouble we'll stop and find another way." He tipped her head up so he could look into her eyes. "I promise you that Rory will be fine."

"Ok," Rose said, wiping a few unshed tears from her eyes. "Let's kick some 456 arse."

The Doctor squeezed her tightly and dropped a kiss into her hair. "That's my girl."

It was early evening by the time they had moved the second TARDIS into Ianto's sister's backyard. The majority of the rather large group of people had departed into the Tyler family TARDIS, leaving only the Doctor, Rose, Jack, Jenny, Rory and Amy in the other console room. Rory had wanted Amy to wait with everyone else, but Amy had told him that she wasn't leaving him. They were in this together or not at all.

Rory sat in one of the chairs on the raised platform, diodes and wires attached to his head. He focused on breathing in and out, not on thinking of how dangerous this was.

"Are you ready?" the Doctor asked, squeezing his shoulder. Rory nodded and the Doctor began to ramble out the plan for the umpteenth time. "So, here's what's going to happen. We've got you connected to this TARDIS, which is connected to yours. Your mum and I will be here to help bolster your shields and Jenny and Jack will be monitoring your brain activity. If you go above the designated safe area, Jack will shut everything down."

He clapped his hands together. "Now I don't think that we have to keep you connected for long. You just need to connect to the same brain waves the 456 were using on the children, set up the resonate frequency and let the children of Earth do the rest. Any questions?"

No one said anything, but Amy stepped forward and grabbed Rory's hand. "I love you to the ends of the Universe."

"And back again," he finished as she leaned down and kissed him. Pulling back, he said, "I'll be fine. I promise."

She punched his arm and smiled. "You'd better." Then she stepped back to stand by Jack.

Rory closed his eyes tightly. "I'm ready." He heard the clicks on the keyboard from Jack and felt the Doctor's fingers press into his right temple and his mum's press into his left. His whole body tingled with electricity as he reached out his mind to seek the telepathic link between the children that the 456 had established.

Sweat beaded on his brow under the pressure of the connection that he had found. "Got it," he breathed out and once again he heard Jack typing on the laptop. This time, he was feeding Rory the frequency he needed to end this. The Doctor's fingers were pressing so tightly that Rory was sure there would be bruises later. The high pitched squeal that had killed Clem now filled his head and somehow he knew that all over the world, every child began to wail.

Now that it had begun, Rory knew that he could safely disconnect. But then he heard another sound, a distant howl in the back of his mind. It was powerful, yet familiar and comforting, as if it was always there in the background and yet he hardly ever noticed it. Letting go of the screech, his mind latched onto the howl.
A feeling of peace and protection washed over him. The pressure on his left temple increased and a second howl joined in, slightly higher in pitch than his. It was as if they were singing an ancient and powerful ballad. The fingers on his right temple twitched before quickly being removed as if the fingers of the owner where singed.

Through a hazy veil Rory heard someone yelling, "What's going on?" and another astonished whisper of "Bad Wolf." But right now, the people behind the voices didn't matter. Rory focused on tracing the link back to the creatures that had caused all of this. He and the wolves howling in his head reached out to find the ones that had panicked helpless parents and had used innocent children for their own nefarious intent.

He found the connection to the one in Thames House as well as to the ship, hiding, well-disguised on the outskirts of the solar system. Without conscious thought, he poured the power of the wolf howl into all of those creatures. And molecule by molecule, atom by atom, the 456 were pulled apart in a haze of golden light and the children of Earth were once again safe.
Chapter 20

The golden glow that had been surrounding Rory and Rose dissipated, and the two of them collapsed. Rory slunk into the chair, and Rose fell onto his shoulder. Both appeared to be sleeping peacefully. No one on the TARDIS made an attempt to move towards them, nor did they make a sound. Even the normal background hum of the ship didn't seem to be there. Jenny, Jack, Amy and even the Doctor were stunned by what they had just witnessed.

Everything had been going as planned, and the Doctor had felt Rory begin to pull away from the telepathic link with the 456. Suddenly, he had been pushed forcefully out of Rory's mind. Well, not so much pushed as ejected, forcefully and painfully. And when he looked back he had seen something that had made his blood run cold. Both Rose and Rory had been bathed in a golden glow and were radiating the same power he thought he took from Rose on the Games Station.

This was the power of the Bad Wolf. His mind flashed back to what Idris had told him only a few days ago. "It is a great power, one always born out of love. The power to give and take life, to heal and to be so much more than they could ever thought possible."

Rory and Rose had torn the 456 apart atom by atom using a power born out of love: love for EJ and Jamie and all of the other innocent children of Earth. What would Rory be capable of once he found out his wife and unborn child had been kidnapped? That thought scared the Doctor immeasurably because he'd felt a similar pain when Rose had been ripped from him at Canary Wharf. And there had been moments when he had been ready to rip apart both Universes to get her back.

This moment of reflection was broken by the door of the TARDIS slamming open, Tony striding in and Amy, Jenny and Jack all finding their voices again, so that four people spoke at once.

"Is it over?"

"What the bloody hell was that?"

"Did you know that would happen?"

"Brilliant."

The Doctor was unsure of who said what, but a moment later Tony was running up to the platform towards his mum and brother. "Dad, I thought you said Rory would be fine, and what happened to Mum?"

"They're just a bit sleepy after what they did," the Doctor said evasively as he stalked towards the unconscious pair.

Tony had pulled Rose back so he could check her pulse and breathing, both of which appeared normal. "You don't mean… that howling thing was them?"

"What howling?" Jack asked.

"Let's get them to the med bay. I want to check something," the Doctor said, scooping up Rose into his arms. He listened to Tony's explanation along the way.

"Well," Tony began as he helped Jack carry Rory the short distance down the hall. "It started like Dad said it would, with the children screaming, and then it changed. They were howling, but it was more of a song, beautiful really." He heaved Rory onto the bed and turned to face the Doctor. "It
was Bad Wolf, wasn't it? Mum and Rory? Did you know that this would happen?

"Yes... and no," the Doctor replied, his voice barely above a whisper. His eyes were locked on Rose's face. "This was the Bad Wolf, but I didn't know this would happen. They don't know how to control it yet. But don't worry, they'll be fine." He turned away from Rose. "If it's like the Games Station or like the trip from Pete's World," he now had vivid memories of both, "then they should be up in a minute. Back to normal a few minutes after that." He then began busying himself at one of the monitors above Rory's head.

"Dad?" The soft, tired sounding voice came from Rory.

The Doctor looked down and took the young man's hand. "Nope, I'm just the Doctor. How are you feeling?"

Rory squeezed his hand and said, "No, you're Dad and I'm fine. Little woozy but fine. How's Mum?"

"Still sleeping after the two of you almost scared me into my next regeneration."

"Sorry about that." Rory half-smiled.

"Yeah, well, it did the job. Later I want to know exactly what happened, and I'll tell you a few things I've discovered about that power you and Rose share. But for now, just rest." The Doctor squeezed his hand again before he let go and stepped away. Amy immediately took his place by her husband's side.

"What now?" Jenny asked, looking between her mother and brother.

Pulling his daughter into a tight hug, the Doctor said, "The danger is over now, so we start taking people home. If you could take care of that for me, I'd be grateful. Just give me a minute alone with Jack first."

Jenny nodded and walked over to Rose while the Doctor pulled Jack into the corridor.

"What's up, Doc?" Jack smiled, but he couldn't hide the pain in his eyes. The last few days had been hard on the former Time Agent. Sins of the past had come back to haunt him in a rather large way and had almost cost him his team when the Hub exploded. His daughter and grandson had been in danger, and he had almost lost Ianto today.

The worst part was that Jack would never even know how close he had been to losing even more. The Doctor could see the other possible outcome, see the other timeline, the one that would have been if he hadn't come. It would have cost Jack too much, and the Doctor was just glad to have spared his friend that pain.

But he also needed to prepare Jack for what was to come with Amy. "I need to tell you something and you can't breathe a word of it to anyone."

Jack's back straightened. "Of course. You have my word."

"Right then," the Doctor said sadly. "It's about Amy. She's in danger and we are going to need your help very soon…"

"I'll see you tomorrow at the office then," Trisha said to her mother as they stood in the warehouse where Hannah had left her car. The purple TARDIS had materialized there a few minutes ago.
Hannah had hugged her grandchildren, Jenny, Jack, Gwen, Rhys, Sabrina, Tony, Ianto, Alice and Stephen goodbye, the danger of the situation had made them fast friends.

This moment right now was a time for celebration, a well-earned celebration. However, Hannah knew that the hardest times were still to come for the Tyler family, and the heartache they would soon feel would be almost overwhelming. Oh, how she wished that she could warn them, but she couldn't mess with time.

Now, though, she and Trisha had a few moments alone. Hannah smiled with pride at her only daughter. "Of course, we have plenty of paper work to do now." She leaned over and hugged Trisha tightly. "I love you, Sweetheart, and you are the best thing that ever happened to me. I don't tell you that enough, and hopefully one day you can forgive me, for everything."

"I love you too, and I forgave you a long time ago, Mum. Come 'round for tea tomorrow. The kids will be glad to see you." Trisha let her go and Hannah's smile slipped.

"I'd like that, very much." Hannah pulled out her keys. "I need to get back and make sure that my house guest hasn't made a mess of things." Damn, she swore under her breath. After all this time she had almost let the cat out of the bag.

Trisha quirked an eyebrow. "House guest? You didn't mention that you had someone staying with you. Who is it?"

"It's no one really, just someone I helped out years ago with a sort of witness protection thing." Hannah was trying to spin this, and it wasn't coming out right. "Just someone who was in town and dropped in unexpectedly. Don't worry about it."

"If you have a man over, you don't need to be embarrassed," Trisha teased. "Have fun...I'll see you later." She pressed a quick kiss on her mum's cheek and walked back into the TARDIS.

Hannah let out a slow breath and unlocked her car. Fifteen years of protecting that girl and not once had she slipped, not once. It had almost cost her the relationship with her only child to keep Melody safe, yet she had never been so close to revealing her part in the Tyler family's future. And here they were, less than a month away from the tipping point, and she almost ruined everything. She prayed that Trisha wouldn't spare another thought to the house guest until after it had happened in her timeline. Otherwise, who knew what will happen.

Jack carried a half asleep Stephen while Alice opened the door to her house. Jenny was trailing behind them, twirling her sonic screwdriver in between her fingers.

"You don't have to stay here tonight if you don't feel safe. I mean people smashed in this door only a day ago to get to you and him," Jack whispered to his daughter.

"I'll be fine, Dad," Alice replied softly. "Besides, Jenny said she'd reinforce the doors and make the lock only open with a genetic match. We'll be fine, and if not, you're just a phone call away."


The buzz of Jenny's sonic filled the air as she began work on the door. "This will only a few minutes," the blonde said, waving her free hand towards the stairs. "But take your time. Alice, it was nice to meet you."

"You too, Jenny, you too." Alice gave the woman a quick hug, before trudging up the stairs behind Jack.
Once Stephen was settled into bed, Jack pressed a soft kiss into his forehead. The little boy mumbled, "Night, Granddad," before rolling over and falling into a deep sleep.

There was a catch in Jack's throat as he spoke. "Night, buddy. Love you." The only response he got was a light snore. Jack smiled and stepped back to the doorway where Alice was waiting.

"After everything that's happened the last few days," Alice began, "you being his grandfather doesn't even seem to faze him."

"But are you okay with him knowing? Because if not I'll stay away. I won't like it…" Jack shook his head and Alice laid a hand on his arm.

"I think you should come by more often, Dad. Anytime you like. Maybe even take Stephen on trips to the zoo or wherever." Alice smiled. "He'd like that. I'd like that."

Before she could speak again, Jack pulled her into a hug. "You have no idea how happy that makes me. I love you, both of you." With one hand he was stroking her hair; the other was pulling her tighter. In the past few days he'd lost Torchwood, had almost lost Gwen and Ianto but he had gained his daughter and grandson wanting him to be a bigger part of their lives. "And I promise to keep this part of my life, the part that you were dragged into, away from you. Well, to the best of my ability."

Torchwood and the things he had done in its name had cost him so much, but he was done with that particular aspect of his life for good.

Alice laughed. "I'm the daughter of two Torchwood agents, and even if I did spend a large portion of my life in hiding, I'm not surprised that I got caught up in those types of events. Honestly, I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner." She pulled back from the hug. "This weekend come by, we can do something together, as a family."

"I wouldn't miss it for anything." Jack kissed her cheek. "I'd better go. It's been a long day, and there's still so much to do." They shared another quick hug, and Jack had a bounce in his step as he bounded down the stairs. This goodbye had been easy, the next two wouldn't.

The grinding, metal on metal sound of the TARDIS filled the living room of Rhys and Gwen's flat. The ship landed in the same spot it had only a few days ago before the world was seemingly tipped on its axis and life had changed completely. Jack stood aside and let the parents step out first. Had it only been three days since they had discovered that Gwen was pregnant? Maybe it had been four days?

"Ah, home sweet home then," Rhys said with a relieved laugh. "I'm glad all that's sorted and life is back to normal. For now at least." Neither Gwen nor Jack said anything, so Rhys tried to fill the uncomfortable silence. "So, when do you start rebuilding your super-secret base of operations?" His smile was large and genuine.

Jack shook his head slightly. "We don't, or at least I won't." Rhys' face fell.

Gwen looked her soon-to-be former boss straight in the eye. "You don't have to run away, Jack."

"I think I do," Jack replied calmly. "All I've been for more than a thousand years is Torchwood. I've given them everything, sacrificed my integrity, put the people I love most in constant danger. You and Ianto both almost died because people were trying to get to me. People that we thought were on our side. I'm done losing people I care about." He closed his eyes briefly. "Look at what happened to those children because of me, at what happened to Clem. They knew how to exploit me and I let them."
Jack sighed. "I think it's time I strike out on my own, go a little more freelance. It's harder to hit a moving target, they say." A dry chuckle escaped his throat. "I just need some time to myself."

A tear slipped down her cheek. "So, this is it? I'll never see you again?"

"No, I'll be back. Anytime you need me and when the baby's born." Jack beamed at the thought of the baby, and he clapped a hand on Rhys' shoulder. "That little one can expect to be spoiled by Uncle Jack. In the meantime, if you need anything you let me know. Or you can get in touch with Tony or Trisha. There's nowhere in time or space I can hide from Rose."

"God help her, having to put up with you for all of eternity," Gwen joked.

"It's her fault really, shouldn't have turned me immortal if she ever wanted to get rid of me for good."

And then Gwen broke. With a sob she launched herself into Jack's arms. "I'm going to miss you, Jack."

"Hey," Jack said stroking her back, "this isn't goodbye forever."

"But what am I going to do now, without Torchwood?"

"That's the best part. Anything you want." Jack pulled apart from her. "You could go to work for UNIT. Trisha and Hannah would pull strings to get you in, or you could freelance, or maybe just take some time for you and Rhys and that baby." He hugged her again. "I'll miss you." Then he turned to Rhys and shook his hand, telling him to take care of his family.

"Take care of yourself too, mate," Rhys said, unsure of what else to say. He'd always been jealous of the other man, but he'd never really expected him to just walk out of their lives.

Jack walked towards the TARDIS, and just before he entered he turned and said, "See you both soon."

A moment later Rhys and Gwen stood hand in hand in their lounge watching the time and space ship disappear. When the noise and wind faded completely, Gwen squeezed her husband's hand. "Let's go for ice cream; the baby and I want ice cream."

With a soft thump the TARDIS landed in the back garden of Rhiannon Davies' house. A slightly confused Ianto turned to face Jack, and he saw the TARDIS disappear behind them.

"Jenny took Trisha, Tony and the kids back home," Jack said and, as a way of explanation, held up his wrist. "And she fixed my mode of transportation, so I'll catch up to them later. Much later, possibly."

"What now?" Ianto asked softly, though he was sure he already knew the answer. "Where do we go from here? Torchwood…?"

"I'm not rebuilding Torchwood." Jack almost snapped, but he took a deep calming breath before continuing. "I can't… no more, no more busting my ass just to be repaid the way I was over the last few days."

"Where will we go? We could freelance the way Mickey and Martha do. Or I'm sure we could go with the Doctor and Rose or Rory." Ianto looked up to meet Jack's eyes and saw the older man shake his head almost imperceptibly. "Oh…You're leaving. Just you."
Jack closed his eyes and took a small step back from Ianto. "I'm not meant to be here. Not in this
time, never was." He held up his wrist. "Now, I can go anywhere, any when."

Stepping forward, Ianto placed a hand on his arm. "Stay? Please stay for me."

"It's better for you if I go." Jack's words were insistent.

"I love you." The Welshman tried to pull the other man in for a kiss.

Jack wrenched free and put several feet between us. "You shouldn't. I'm dangerous." This was hard
enough as it was.

"I can handle myself just fine, thank you," Ianto protested.

"How many times in just the last few days have you almost died?" Jack spat, anger and pain mixing
into his voice. "If you spend too much time around Torchwood, too much time around me, you start
to think you're invincible too. You didn't want to leave me before that bomb exploded. Do you know
what that did to me? Do you know what that would have done to you?"

"Jack…” Ianto stepped forward.

"No!" Jack stepped back; they were in some sort of dance now. "Yesterday, you insisted on going
with us to see the 456. If the Doctor or the TARDIS hadn't been there…” his eyes flitted to the
bruises the Doctor had left on Ianto's neck. "If it had just been us then your body would have been
lying alongside everyone else who breathed in that virus."

"But the Doctor was there."

"And you shouldn't have been. I shouldn't have let you go, but you refused to listen and I caved.
What happens the next time you don't listen or when someone gets the jump on us and you're dead?
Torchwood agents don't tend to die of natural causes. I could name hundreds of people that I cared
about that died because they weren't fast enough, or they made the wrong choice or were just in the
wrong place at the wrong time. Owen, Tosh…Lisa"

Ianto flinched at the sound of his late fiancée's name. "Then we stop. Slow down. We can still live a
life together."

"I can't do that. I can't sit still that long. And I can't let you follow me headlong into danger."

Ianto's mood shifted now from hurt to angry. "So everyone else that travels through time and space
fighting aliens, it's okay for them but not for me? From what you told me, the Doctor was constantly
placing his companions in danger."

"His companions were never permanent, and never did they share the relationship that you and I
have."

"He and Rose…"

"They weren't like that when they first traveled together."

"Rory and Amy…"

"Amy is not my responsibility, but you would be." Jack took in a ragged breath and he thought about
what the Doctor had told him. Amy and her unborn child had been kidnapped. The two of them
could die or be lost forever, and that's not what he wanted for Ianto. Jack couldn't let Ianto die. Never
Ianto.

Jack stared directly into the warm eyes of the man that he loved and knew what he had to do. As hard as this was, Jack felt deep down that this was the right thing to do. "Look, normally I'm a seize the moment type of guy. Live life to the fullest and damn the consequences. But I have lost so many people, so many people that I loved over the years. I can't lose you. I can't have you die young, can't let your life snuffed out before it reaches its potential."

"But you're still going to be a part of other people's lives." Ianto was grasping at straws now. "You said that you're dangerous and yet you want to be a part of your daughter's life."

"It's different."

"How?"

"Alice understands how dangerous my life is. She'd never ask or want to be a part of that part of it. With her and Stephen it's visits, a day or two here and there. I could stretch their lives out over hundreds of years for me. Those visits would be enough for them. They wouldn't be enough for you."

A single tear slipped down Ianto's cheek. "It could be enough."

"Would it? A stolen weekend here and there? You want what I can't give you." Jack stepped forward this time and wrapped his arms around Ianto. "Promise me that you will have a great life, a fantastic life. Don't just sit and think about what could have been."

"I promise," Ianto whispered and Jack kissed him. Soft, sweet and tasting of goodbye.

Slowly Jack pulled away, stepped past Ianto and walked away. In a flash of blue light Jack was gone. For the longest time the Welshman stared at the spot where Jack had disappeared. If he turned away it made it real, and right now he didn't want to think about that. Didn't want to think about the fact that for the second time in his life he had lost the person that he loved. How many times had that happened to Jack? And how did he always keep going?

"Ianto?" Rhiannon called from near the back door.

Without turning around Ianto asked, "How long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough to know what happened." She had moved closer and placed a hand on his shoulder. "I'm sorry."

"Yeah, me too."

She moved her hand to his arm and tugged gently. "Come on, I'll make tea."

"You're so British," Ianto said dryly. "And I'll just bet you use bags."

"If you're going to complain, then you make it. Or worse, I'll send you down to the pub with Johnny," Rhiannon teased.

Ianto shuddered. "I'd rather have the tea bags." He stopped and pulled her into a hug. "Thank you."

"Not a problem, it's what family's for."
"Ten quid says he's using the TARDIS to track them down if they're not back here in the next hour," Amy stage-whispered to Rose as they watched the Doctor pace back and forth in front of the window of the hotel.

"Sucker's bet," Rory chimed in over the top of the book he was reading on the sofa. "There's no way he'll even last half an hour."

"Twenty quid on fifteen minutes," Rose said, bumping Amy with her shoulder.

"Done," the red-head eagerly agreed as she and Rose broke down into a fit of giggles.

The Doctor turned on his heel to face the two laughing women. "I'm glad to see that the two of you find my distress so comical. Sabrina and Jenny could be out there hurt or in danger or worse..."

"Dad," Rory said, setting his book down. "Your distress is usually foremost on all our minds, but the girls are only shopping. This is a peaceful planet and both of them are more than capable of taking care of themselves."

"But they're late," the Doctor whined as he fiddled nervously with his bowtie. "And it never surprises me how easily you lot find trouble."

Amy giggled. "Oh, I like this bit, here comes the Oncoming Pout."

"Oi!" the Doctor yelled. "I do not pout!" He then grumbled something indiscernible and sagged onto the sofa next to Rory. "Jenny has only been back a few weeks and she's still adapting to human cultural norms. I don't want anything to happen to her, or Sabrina for that matter."

"We're on a planet in the 78th Century," Amy said, trying to hold back a grin. "One that's plenty used to non-alien customs. Did you see the loo in the first suite they tried to put us in?"

Rose shuddered and patted Amy's arm. "Besides, Doctor, Jenny is adapting very nicely to our family's abnormal 'norms'. And she took to tea like a proper Tyler should."

The Doctor couldn't help but smile when Rose called Jenny a Tyler. He'd been very happy, although not surprised, that everyone in the family had accepted Jenny as one of their own.

"Well," Rory said with a mischievous smile. "It may still take her a bit to get used EJ and Jamie. I've never seen anyone that scared of a toddler before."

Walking over, Amy thumped him hard on the arm. "Be nice! That was the first time she was around a little kid. And Princess EJ can be a bit overwhelming if you were born a fully grown adult."

Rory tilted his head thoughtfully for a moment. "It would be nice to skip the nappy changes."

"And the toilet training," Rose agreed. "Especially when you're trying to train a particularly stubborn little boy."

"Oi!" Rory exclaimed. "None of those stories!"

"I'd bet he was an adorable little baby," Amy said, looking fondly at her husband. "I mean, how could he not have been? Look at his parents."
The Doctor preened and Rose smiled. "Oh yes, my baby boy was adorable. And he was always running around completely starters."

"Mum!" Rory's cheeks blushed deep red.

Leaning over, the Doctor clapped the young man on the shoulder. "It's not much fun when they're ganging up on you, is it?"

"No, it's not," Rory agreed.

Amy and Rose continued to retell old embarrassing stories about Rory, much to the man in question's chagrin and the Doctor's growing amusement. It had the intended effect, though; it shifted the Doctor's attention away from Jenny and Sabrina's continued absence. In fact, it wasn't until twenty minutes later that the Time Lord even mentioned the girls again.

"I'm sure they're fine," Rose began but was interrupted by the door to the hotel suite opening.

"We're back," Sabrina exclaimed, setting an armful of shopping bags on the floor. "Sorry we're late. Got a little caught up and lost track of the time."

"Absolutely not a problem," the Doctor said, bounding up and hugging each girl in turn. He noticed that Jenny had cut her hair into a short bob. "We were just sitting about telling stories. Didn't even notice you were late." Behind him, Rose snorted. He ignored her and turned to Jenny. "The new haircut is very lovely, Jenny. Did you have a good time?"

"Oh yes, thank you." Jenny beamed. "Brina and I did all sorts of lovely shopping. Look, I got this bracelet." She held up her wrist to show her dad.

"That is very nice, dear," he readily agreed. Years of traveling with females had taught him to always admire their trinkets.

Lowering her hand, Jenny fingered one of the trinkets on the bracelet. "Well, one of the blokes that we met, Sironne, really liked it too. In fact, we're meeting him to go dancing later tonight." Over the Doctor's shoulder, Sabrina's eyes grew wide and she drug her hand across her throat, trying to get Jenny to stop talking. Jenny didn't. In fact, she launched into a detailed description of said blokes that they had met, completely unaware that both her brother and her father were growing more upset by the millisecond.

Amy slapped a hand over her mouth to stifle a laugh, while Rory stood up and rounded on Sabrina. Drawing himself up to his full height and looking down accusingly at his little sister, he began to rant. "You took her trolling for boys on an alien planet? I thought you had a boyfriend? And Jenny is too young to be looking a 'cute blokes'. Are the two of you just looking for trouble?"

"Calm down. We don't need the overprotective big brother act, thank you," Sabrina said in a low threatening voice. She refused to be intimidated by her big brother. "They were nice enough guys. It's not like they were trying to take advantage of us. Not like they could even if they wanted to. And every planet is going to be an alien one to Jenny."

"I will not calm down. The two of you could have gotten hurt or sold into slave trade or…" Rory's face turned red. "Most boys are only after one thing, you know."

The Doctor took this moment to cut in over the top of the younger man. "The pair of you could have gotten hurt or worse. You should have known better."

"So we can't even talk to a couple of nice people now?" Sabrina asked, venom in her voice. "Or is it
because we agreed to meet said nice people later tonight? Would we be having this argument if the people we had met were girls? The two of you need to back off. Jenny and I are adults and can make our own friends, thank you very much.”

Both Rory and the Doctor opened their mouths to speak again. Rose gently pulled Sabrina backwards and stepped between her and the two men. “That’s enough. The girls can do as they like.”

"Did we do something wrong?” Jenny quietly asked Amy. "Is that why Dad and Rory are so mad at us?"

"No, you and Sabrina didn't do anything wrong. Well, maybe you shouldn’t mention boys around the two of them. Keep the boy talk between the girls," Amy said softly to Jenny before turning around and practically yelling at the other two aliens in the room. "Because as primitive as they think humans are, right now they are far worse. Are the two of you just planning on locking these two away in a tall tower, maybe guarded by a dragon to protect their virtue?” Amy wrapped a protective arm around her sister.

"Come on, Sabrina," Amy called, holding out a hand. "Let's go see those pretty things that you bought and decide what we're going to wear when the three of us go out tonight."

Rory opened his mouth to protest but Rose cut him off. "Sounds like a great idea, Amy. I think I'll join you. Go on, I'll just be a minute with two."

Amy, Sabrina and Jenny picked up the discarded shopping bags and slipped into the room that Sabrina and Jenny were sharing. Rose simply stared down the two men in front of her. "Care to tell me what the bloody hell that was about?” Neither of them said anything so she flashed her anger through both of their minds. "We were having a wonderful time here. Great bit of family fun and the two of you just yelled at Jenny and Sabrina for what? Doing what young woman their age do?"

"It's just that they're so young,” Rory said lamely, completely withering under his mother's fury.

"Sabrina is the same age that you were when you and Amy got engaged. And before you say that's different, she's also the same age that I was when I first left with the Doctor."

She folded her arms across her chest and glared daggers at the Doctor. "Is this about what you think happened to Amy?" She sent her thoughts to him as well as a feeling of concern.

Hanging his head, the Doctor sent his confirmation back to her. In return, she sent him a wave of understanding. "Look, I understand that the two of you want them safe," she said, speaking aloud again. "But this is not the way to go about it. All you are going to accomplish is rebellion with Sabrina and confusion for Jenny. So stop the caveman act and apologize."

She started to leave but stopped and rounded on them again. "You know, I shouldn't compare you to cavemen. I was married to a caveman once and they actually respected the females in their clans."

Both the Doctor and Rory mumbled apologies to Rose as she left the lounge and stepped into the girls' room.

"So, Dad," Rory said, slumping back onto the sofa. "Welcome to the dog house."

Letting out a half snort, the Doctor leaned against the nearest wall, his eyes staring at the door through which Rose had retreated. "I am intimately familiar with the dog house, thanks. Had never even heard of such a place until I met your mother. Now though…”
Hours later, the four Tyler women were sitting around a table in one of this city's night clubs. The music was thrumming a heavy, inviting beat but none of them felt the urge to dance.

"Do you think they've been punished enough?" Amy asked, swirling the straw through her bright blue drink. "Or should we let them stew a bit longer?"

"It's been, what, six hours since we left them?" Sabrina asked, consulting her wristwatch. A gift from her parents on her 16th birthday, it automatically acclimated to the local time of whatever planet they were on. "I think it's been long enough."

"Why are we punishing them exactly?" Jenny asked, almost innocently. "They both had valid concerns about mine and Sabrina's well-being. Although I was born to be able to protect myself and those around me, so they shouldn't have been so concerned. Plus, I did survive four years on my own."

"It's not about the validity of their concerns," Rose said, swallowing her drink in one last gulp. "It's about them treating the two of you like property."

"But they just felt the need to protect us. Isn't that what elder members of a family are supposed to do?" Jenny gave them a small, tentative smile. "I've been trying to read up on Earth's family customs for the early 21st century."

"Oh, little sister," Amy said, patting her hand. "First rule in this family, well, second. The first one is 'Don't wander off'. The second is that we don't play by the rules that any 'normal' family might have. WE break just about every rule that's out there."

"And we don't let anyone treat us like we can't handle ourselves. Regardless of their reasoning," Rose agreed.

"Oh, and we never wait more than five and a half hours for anyone to rescue us," Amy added with flourish. Everyone apparently slightly tipsy and they were all laughing now.

Then it happened, just for the smallest fraction of a second. Jenny was looking at Amy, who by all appearance seemed normal. Then she wasn't, her face looked strangely waxy. Like someone was sculpting her face but hadn't carved in the details yet. And deep within the recesses of her mind, Jenny felt the brush of another telepathic mind.

Her dad had been working with her on honing her abilities, so she could easily discern who was who. She could tell by the smallest brush if it was Rory, Dad, Mum or one of the TARDIS' and this wasn't any of them, this was completely new.

Momentarily horrified, Jenny turned to her Mum. She had seen it too and met Jenny's eyes.

"Not now. We'll talk about it later. Just not now, don't let Amy or Sabrina know anything is wrong," her mum's voice said soothingly in her head.

Jenny nodded, trying to mask the horror that she felt. Luckily, Amy hadn't seen her reaction. She and Sabrina were continuing their bouts of giggles over the rules of being in this family.

"Alright girls, time to head to bed," Rose said, pushing back her chair. Sabrina and Amy half-heartedly protested but followed their mum out of the club and across the street to the hotel. "Dad is going to meet you in the lobby," Rose thought to Jenny after catching her arm. "I'm going to get these two into bed."

True to her word, the Doctor met them in the lobby. "Sabrina," he said softly. "I'm sorry for over-
reacting earlier. It's been far too long since I've had daughters and I just want the two of you safe."

"This time you are forgiven." Sabrina stood on her tiptoes and kissed his cheek. "Tomorrow you can take us on a smashing adventure to make it up to us. Goodnight, Dad."

"Amy..." he began to apologize.

"It's not a problem. Night, Dad," Amy said, heading to the lift.

"I'll make sure these two get in bed to sleep it off," Rose said as she followed Amy and Sabrina.

"Rose, I'm..." the Doctor started yet another apology.

She came over and pulled him into a hug. "Later, love. We'll talk later. Right now I think Jenny has something to tell you."

"Love you," he said, placing a kiss in her hair.

"Always," Rose whispered back before pulling away and stepping onto the elevator.

Once the lift doors closed, Jenny stepped forward. "Dad, what's wrong with Amy?" Her voice was demanding yet scared.

"Let's go for a walk," he said softly, looping his arms through hers and pulling her back outside. They had walked three blocks before he spoke again. "Mum and I aren't 100 percent certain what has happened to Amy yet. We have a few ideas. All of them very, very bad."

"Is she going to be okay?" Jenny asked, her body tensing.

"I believe so. Right now, we're fairly certain that she's safe, but for how long... we don't know. A few months at least. After that..." He trailed off lost in thought. "We will fix this. There is no way we are going to lose Amy."

"Does Rory know?"

"He suspects something is wrong with her, I'm sure of that, but we haven't discussed this with him." The Doctor let out a slow breath. "I have never felt so much guilt for keeping a secret in my life, and trust me, I've kept quite a few secrets."

Jenny stopped walking and turned to face her father. "What can I do to help?"

The Doctor gingerly laid a hand on her shoulder. "For now, I need you to show me what you saw tonight, May I?" His hand drifted towards her temple. She nodded, opening her mind to show him the memory of Amy's brief transformation and letting him feel the same presence that she had.

Closing his eyes tightly, he let his hand fall. "This is bad, very, very bad. Come along, Jenny, we need to discuss this development with your mother."
Chapter 22

Rory wasn't completely sure why his mum and dad had dragged him back to the Doctor's TARDIS so soon after the Tyler women had returned from the club. He'd had time to talk through what had happened with his beloved wife and make sure she was asleep before they had asked him to come. Judging by the expression on their faces it was serious and he hoped it didn't have to do with Amy. However, a sinking feeling in his gut told him this was all about the mystery surrounding his bride.

He was deftly maneuvered into the Library, and the ship had provided tea and biscuits for the three of them. When offered a seat he refused, preferring to stand and survey the room. Dad fidgeted uncomfortably a few feet away, so whatever news they had was sure to be unpleasant.

His mum set about fixing his tea just the way he liked it. Usually that would be comforting. Now, it made him feel like a child who was about to be told they had taken his dog to live on a farm when it had actually been hit by a car. Only this was going to be worse than a dead dog. "Can you tell me what's going on?" Rory asked of the TARDIS.

"I'm sorry, my cub, but my wolf and my thief will soon explain everything that they know. And please do not be angry that they have kept certain things from you. It was necessary to protect your family. Your path is going to be rough, but be strong. And when the time comes, the messages I gave to your sisters will be pertinent." She sent waves of love and compassion into his mind as Rose forced her son to sit down. Rory knew that Jenny had been told the 'the only water in the forest was the river', and he knew that Sabrina had been given a message too, though she hadn't told anyone what that message was yet.

"What's this all about?" Rory asked slowly as his mum seated herself next to him on the sofa and handed him the tea.

"It's about Amelia," the Doctor said softly, settling onto the chair across from them. "You are correct in assuming there is something wrong with her. It's worse than you have probably imagined. Or maybe not, you do have vast brain power and the ability to imagine countless scenarios…” He trailed off and waited for someone else to speak. When neither one said anything, the Doctor looked beseechingly to Rose. It was obvious that he didn't want to be the one who dropped the news.

With a squeeze to her son's hand, Rose said bluntly, "Amy was kidnapped, sometime before America."

Rory laughed a deep hearty laugh. This had to be a joke. He set the tea on an end table and tried to control his laughter. "But she's right there in the hotel room, sleeping soundly. How was she supposedly kidnapped months ago?" He managed to say between gasps for breath. "You know as far as jokes go, this one isn't very well thought out."

"Sweetheart, I'm sorry but it's not a joke," his mum said gently. The sincerity in her voice forced him to look at her. The dejected look in her eyes and the anxiety rolling off of her made him falter. Whipping his head around, Rory looked at the man he now called Dad. He was wringing his hands close to his chest, eyes downcast. It was his tell for when something was truly upsetting him, not just when he was trying to throw the enemy off balance. They weren't lying or joking or playing a prank on him.

And the realization that the 'something wrong with Amy' was the fact that she wasn't really here at all hit him like a ton of bricks. "No," Rory yelled, his arms and legs flailed and sent the table with the tea set toppling over. The china tinkled and it broke apart when it hit the floor. "Amy's fine, I just
saw her a few minutes ago. How could she be kidnapped? Why would someone have kidnapped her? I've been with her almost every minute since we got married, no one would have had a chance to take her."

His mind flew backwards to leaving for their honeymoon, trying to think of when Amy would have been alone long enough for someone to snatch her. Before America, they had been apart for an hour or so, here or there. No big prolonged stretches, but if someone had been organized, ready to swap her for some sort of double, it was possible. There would have been no margin for error. He looked up at his dad, silently pleading for a better explanation.

"It's a Flesh avatar in the hotel, not really Amy. Someone took her and replaced her with a copy of sorts. Someone that is connected to Amy, so it's like she's the real Amy, but the real Amy is still out there," the Doctor said as if that clarified everything. "We weren't sure until tonight how the Silence was pulling this off, but Jenny saw something. It was just a flicker of the Flesh's true form, but it was enough to fit the pieces together. Now we know what they are using but not how they are using it."

Nothing about this made the least bit of sense, and Rory felt ready to scream in frustration. He jumped to his feet and started pacing. They were being far too calm about all of this. Did Amy not matter to them? No, he shook his head; even in his grief he knew they both loved Amy. They had probably had similar reactions when they had found out. But then why hadn't they told him straight away?

"But I've been communicating with her telepathically. It's based on touch, since Amy's not telepathic. How have I been doing that then?" Rory demanded, still clinging desperately to the hope that one of them would break. That they would give in and say, well, we don't have an explanation for that so of course Amy's safe and here and not in the clutches of the same race that had killed his grandparents in an alternate universe. Amy couldn't be in the clutches of the same race that had almost killed him and his parents and had forced his family into years of hiding their true identities. The thought of that made him want to throw up.

Gruffly, he pulled at his hair. The sounds of the wolf howl echoed softly in the recesses of his mind. He tamped the sound down, not wanting to lose control, at least not yet. "Well, answer me!" His tone was vicious, but he didn't care.

He didn't care that his mother looked frightened of him or that he could feel the Doctor's own anger grow because he was lashing out at her. None of that mattered right now. He had to know everything that they knew, had to know if they had a plan to fix this. Because if he didn't get Amy back… Well, he didn't want to know what he was capable of if that happened.

His mum shot a glare at the Doctor as if telling him to back off. Then she schooled her face, ridding it of the fear and anxiety he knew she was feeling. "Rory, you have every right to be angry, and I promise that we will tell you everything that we know so far."

She chewed on her bottom lip before speaking again. "You're a very powerful telepath, more so than Dad ever anticipated. And from what we've been able to deduce, you've been able to using whatever connection that the real Amy has to the avatar to boost the telepathic connection you two share. They are feeding our Amy's emotions and memories and personality into the Amy in the hotel…"

"What or who is in the hotel isn't Amy. You said yourself that she's been kidnapped. And it's my fault." Rory bellowed. He felt hopeless, unable to save his father's life, unable to protect his wife. What use was he to anyone? A deep feral yell ripped from his throat.

Rose stood and cautiously approached her son. "This isn't your fault. You couldn't have known…"
"Really, not my fault? How can you say that? It's my job to keep her safe, to protect her and I failed."

Now the Doctor had risen and had come to stand beside Rose, an arm protectively going around her waist. "We'll get her back. Rory, we will get her back."

Rory snorted. "How is that then? Do we have any idea where she is? Do you have a brilliant plan to fix this? What if they've hurt her?"

"The Amy here with us is connected to our Amy." The Doctor kept his voice steady, only betraying the slightest bit of sadness. "Her mind, her thoughts, her feelings, everything that makes her who she is, is with us."

"It's just that it's not her. My wife is in danger. Someone took her out from under my nose, and I didn't even notice. I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE!" He picked up a vase of flowers sitting on a side table and hurled it towards the wall. It shattered and shards of glass flew into the air. Rose flinched, and Rory rounded on both her and the Doctor.

"She's gone, and what are we doing about it? Nothing. We're just sitting here casually discussing it as if it's no more important than the weather. The two of you don't act like you even care." Rage poured off of the young man.

"That's not fair! Of course we care," His mother protested. "I love Amy as if she was my own daughter. In every way that matters she is my daughter. But the Doctor and I need to keep level heads right now."

"Let's go and find her," Rory seethed. "She's been gone for months, and you've known about it for how long? We've wasted enough time as is."

Rose's arms trembling as she tried to explain the next step. "Listen, we haven't known for certain that she was kidnapped for more than a week at most. And before we can find Amy, we have to understand exactly how these signals are being sent into either TARDIS, and we need to know how to disconnect it without hurting her. We have a plan for that. The Doctor has tracked down the origins of the Flesh and once we better understand them we can understand the connection to Amy. But we need for you to play along and not give away that we know Amy's not really here."

"I'm just supposed to go back out there to that Amy and pretend that nothing's wrong?" Rory spat. His eyes flashed dangerously golden for a moment. "I don't know if I can do that. You should have told me. As soon as you knew you should have told me. Amy is my responsibility. I can't let anything happen to her. If they hurt her then this is on me and they will live to regret it." His fist collided with the nearest surface, a bookcase, and the pain in his knuckles helped to dull the pain in his hearts. The howling began again, slightly louder this time, and the temptation to give into it, to let that part of him take over was great.

Slowly, the Doctor came to stand next to his son. He spoke as calmly as he could. "This is why we didn't burden you with this earlier. In order to keep them safe, the Silence couldn't know we were onto them. But we are telling you now because it's almost time and as soon as we understand the connection we are going to shut it off. Honestly, I don't know what that will do the Flesh Amy. It will probably destroy her and you deserve to know before that happens."

Tentatively he laid a hand on Rory's arm and looked unfazed when Rory flinched away. "Look, I know it's difficult to see past your anger. I know that very, very well. Right now you are willing and able to quite literally tear the Universe apart to get to the woman you love. I've been there. But you can't let it overtake you. It's not the man you want to become. It's not the man that Amy or your
father would want to become."

Rory nodded almost imperceptibly, still angry but he had pulled back from the brink. "What do they want with Amy?" He was still seething so his words came out in a hiss. "Are they holding her hostage for some sort of ransom?"

"No, they want the power of the Bad Wolf," Rose replied and waited for the penny to drop.

Rory's brow furrowed. "Then why go after Amy?" He turned to the Doctor. "Idris told you that power is only passed down to the first born ch…" Rory's eyes widened. "You said keep them safe, not her, them! And Amy thought she was pregnant before America. Oh my god, Amy was pregnant, she is pregnant." He clutched a hand to his chest, his hearts were beating in overtime and all he could hear was the blood rushing through his ears. His anger had been keeping his fear at bay, but now that gave way to sheer unadulterated terror.

"She's pregnant and kidnapped. My wife and my… my…" He was gasping, tears burning his eyes as the enormity if what was happening swam into focus. "My wife and my child are in danger. I'm going to be a father and I may never get to meet my baby." His knees gave way and the Doctor caught him before he hit the ground.

"I promise you that we will find them," the Doctor promised. "We will turn over every corner of this Universe to find Amy and the baby. Do you understand me? There is nothing that we won't do to bring the two of them home safe to you, nothing."

Meekly, Rory managed to nod and his mum and dad helped him to the sofa. Rose wrapped an arm around his shoulder. It was an abrupt shift from how he had been reacting only a few minutes early. But knowing that he was going to be a father and that he might never meet his child had sent his mind into a free fall and he just couldn't process it right now.

"I'm sorry," the Doctor said in a low voice.

"You're sorry?" He snorted derisively. "What do you have to be sorry for? I'm the one who couldn't protect my wife. I'm the one who didn't listen to you in Utah when we talked about the Silence and the Time Child. This is my fault. I'm the one who should be sorry." Bile rose in his throat as he thought about how he should have been able to protect Amy.

Just days ago, he and his mum had tapped the power they held to destroy the 456. When the family had been threatened in Pete's World, his mum had cracked the wall between universes to keep them safe. And he hadn't even known that Amy and now their baby were somewhere in time and space.

"I know what you're thinking, Sweetheart." Rose tugged him closer to her and he let her. "This is not the same as what happened in Pete's World. I knew that they were after us, and I had just lost both of my parents. So I was on guard and what I did was instinct. It's not the same thing."

She was right, she almost always was. Still, he felt inadequate and terrified and angry and like he just wanted to give in to what was lurking in the recesses of his mind. Damn the consequences and rip the Silence apart atom by atom.

"You can't use Bad Wolf against the Silence the way you two did against the 456," the Doctor said, shaking his head. Either they were both really good at reading him or he was projecting his thoughts. To be safe Rory raised a few of his mental shields.

The Doctor continued. "We've met the Silence at a later point in their timeline. If you wipe them from existence now, no matter how justified you would be in doing so, the ramifications could be
horrific."

God knew what the Silence had planned for a child with the bad Wolf powers. He barely understood a fraction of them himself, but he knew that they could be dangerous in the wrong hands. What if they didn't get what they wanted from his child? Would they torture him or her? What would they do with Amy once she gave birth? He would give just about anything to swap places with them right now.

And that's when he finally understood why his dad had jumped in front of him when the gunman had fired. There was nothing that his dad wouldn't have done for him including giving his life for that of his son's. And there was nothing he wouldn't do for his family. Even if that meant he had to refrain from ripping the Universe apart to find them.

Mum and Dad had a plan, and he trusted the two of them with his life and with Amy and their baby's lives. Swallowing the last vestiges of that sick feeling, he nodded. "What do we need to do to cut the connection with the avatar so we can get Amy back?"

He felt the tension start to release from both of them. "Right," Dad clapped his hands together. "I thought that we'd go back to the acid production factory on Earth in the 22nd Century. That's where it all began and that's our best bet for understanding this... situation."

Again Rory nodded and tried to take an analytical approach to this. "Alright, but first tell me everything that you know about the Flesh and Amy's disappearance. Maybe if we figure out when they took her we can at least peg down a general time they would be in, and when the girls wake up we'll have a better plan to put into motion."
Chapter 23

Amelia Tyler-Pond tossed and turned, unable to sleep. She had waited far longer than five and a half hours to be rescued from this place. In the back of her mind she was constantly running through escape plans; when the guards did rounds she made note. But she knew that she couldn't escape on her own. The Silence kept them separate for all but a scant few hours a day for just that reason.

She knew she needed sleep so she could be wide awake for the few precious moment she would get tomorrow with her daughter. But she couldn't sleep. Every time she closed her eyes, she was overwhelmed by images of the past few months. Images seen by eyes that were not her own, of things that she had not personally experienced. No, she hadn't actually been to Utah or 1969. She had not been in London to deal with the 456 or even at the monastery in the 22nd century. She shuddered, thinking about the last adventure she'd had before realizing that she wasn't really with her family.

Her hand had ached from how tightly Rory had gripped it ever since she had woken up that morning. And when they had arrived at the acid factory, Rory had refused to let her out of his sight. Amy had known that something was bothering him. She had known that something was in fact very, very wrong. But when she had tried to call him on it, he just hugged her tightly, had told her how much he loved her and promised that everything would be better soon.

More than anything, Amy hated being placated. She was more than capable of handling whatever was going on. Or at least she thought that she was capable of handling everything this life could throw at her. Now she wasn't so sure.

But at the time she had felt very upset that her husband wasn't telling her everything. At first she had thought that maybe he was still upset about the family row about his and Dad's behavior towards Jenny and Sabrina. No, they had talked after she came back to the hotel, worked through everything. And if there was one thing they were good at in their marriage, it was communicating (Well, they were also very, very good at another thing, but she didn't want to think about the implications of that over the last few months.)

At the time, she had felt like he was shutting her out. In fact, he had been shutting her out and he had been keeping something from her. The four of them, Mum, Dad, Jenny and Rory, had been keeping a huge secret from her. She thought that she could understand why, really she could. The pain was still there, though. Maybe once she was back in Rory's arms and she could see her family again the dull ache that was now almost permanently settled in her chest would begin to ease.

She rolled over and her mind wandered back to the first time they had gone to the room that they used to create the Flesh Avatars. Dad had used the psychic paper to explain that they were a group of meteorologists there about the solar storms. Amy tried to hide a half smile, she'd always loved that a little bit of charm and a flash of whatever a person wanted to see and they were in.

At the monastery being 'in' meant being taken to the most secure part of the factory. The family and all of the staff, Jimmy, Buzzer, Jennifer and Dicken gathered in the room along with the leader of the acid factory workers, a woman named Miranda Cleaves. She had explained what the process of making the avatars entailed.

"Once a reading's been taken we can manipulate its molecular structure into anything," Cleaves explained in a detached manner. "Replicate a living organism down to the hairs in its chinny chin chin. Even clothes. And everything's identical. Eyes, voice—"
"Mind, soul," Dad swallowed hard as he spoke. Amy could see how hard this was for him, but she hadn't understood why at the time.

"Don't be fooled, Doctor," Cleaves sneered. "It acts like life but it still needs to be controlled by us. From those harnesses you saw."

"Wait," Sabrina said in confusion. "So you're a Ganger now?"

"No, love, I'm back in the harness. All of us are, except Jennifer here," Cleaves clarified. "This is just a bit like driving a forklift truck."

"Breathe, Amy," Mum instructed.

Amy felt perplexed but she agreed and Rory pulled her over to a control panel. He and Jenny set about examining the controls.

"Breathe, Amy," Jenny whispered.

"Why?" Amy asked.

Her sister-in-law squeezed her hand. "We'll explain later, when we're done here. For now, just trust us."

And Amy had trusted them. She hadn't known why they kept telling her to breathe, but every time they said it she did. It had made things slightly easier later.

The factory workers continued to explain how the Gangers were simply throwaway bodies. So it didn't matter if a Ganger got hurt or was destroyed. They could simply make a new one and keep on working. This was something that didn't sit right with any of the Tylers, if the expressions on their faces were anything to go by. Cleaves had then told Jennifer that she wanted her back in her ganger.

Dad pulled out his sonic screwdriver and began to scan the contents of the vat. Mum was peering over his shoulder. Amy somehow detached herself from her barnacle of a husband and came to stand near Sabrina. Then a bubble of the flesh matrix seemed to reach out towards Dad's sonic screwdriver. He began to tremble slightly. Mum grabbed his shoulder but he gently shook her off.

Then it just stopped the flesh matrix retreated back into the vat. "Strange," Dad said. "It was like... For a moment there it was scanning me."

"Are you alright?" Mum asked.

He kissed her forehead. "I'm fine, love. I just need to know more." And with that he placed a flat palm against the top of the flesh, letting it sink down ever so slightly. Then he started quivering worse than before.

"Doctor. Get back, Doctor," Cleaves demanded, "leave it alone!"

"I understand." Dad pulled his hand back and his eyes flickered between the vat, Mum and Amy herself. "Incredible! You have no idea." His eyes were wide as he spoke. "No idea. I mean, I felt it in my mind. I reached out to it. And it to me."

Mum had clenched his hand tightly.

Cleaves had rolled her eyes. "Don't fiddle with the money, Doctor."

"How can you be so blinkered? It's alive, so alive. You're planting your lives—your personalities—
directly into it." Mum sounded indignant as she spoke. "They are people and you keep sending them to their deaths. Over and over again, it's barbaric."

"That's enough, Mrs. Tyler." Cleaves snapped. "They cannot survive without the connection to us. Now watch as we build a new Ganger."

At that moment the flesh matrix began to bubble and then take a humanoid shape. The face started out waxy and without distinct features. Amy noticed Jenny grab Mum's arm. Then a fully formed exact replica of Jennifer sat up. Rory's hand tightened on hers, but when Amy tried to ask him something telepathically, she was completely blocked out.

"Well, I can see why you keep it in the church," Dad deadpanned, his knuckles going white as it gripped the edge of the vat. "Miracle of life."

Rory wrapped an arm protectively around Amy's waist at that point.

Amy understood now that Rory had been frightened for the safety of their own miracle, somewhere out there he was probably still frightened for her, their baby. The one that Amy knew about but that Rory had yet to meet. The baby he still didn't know was a girl.

It made her sick when she thought about their situation, that she still didn't know what was planned for her and the baby, and what if Rory never got to meet Melody? Would he like her name? Surely, he would love their daughter, no matter what. Where was he now? On his way for sure but she wondered what was taking so long.

She stifled a sob and turned to lay flat on her back. As much as it hurt to think of the family, it helped her to remember the ones that would come for her and Melody. Pushing away the thoughts of her current situation, she forced her mind back to the adventure in the monastery.

After that there had been a flare of the solar storm. Dad had tried to stop it. He'd taken Mum with him to the weather vane. Not that it had done much good; they had all still ended up unconscious for more than an hour. And when they had woken up they found out that the Gangers had, for lack of a better term, had gone walkabout.

Jennifer's Ganger had seemed to be quite attached to Sabrina and Sabrina had seemed to be very protective of her. Now, this seemed ironic. Since, other than Amy herself, Sabrina was the only other one who hadn't known the reason for this field trip.

After Jennifer and Sabrina had rejoined the group, Amy had seen the Eye Patch Lady that she now knew was Madame Kovarian. That face would haunt her nightmares for the rest of her life. But back in the monastery, Mum and Dad had somehow managed to convince the Gangers and the Humans to engage in peace talks.


"Now we help everyone to see what the Gangers truly are?" Mum retorted. "And there are no people in the Universe more qualified to understand the Gangers."

"And what exactly do you think that is?" Jimmy asked.

Mum stood beside Dad, as he sat down on a bench and began to talk. "The Flesh was never merely moss. These are not copies. The storm has hardwired them. They are becoming people."

"With souls," Jimmy said mockingly.
"Well, we were all jelly once. Little jelly eggs, sitting in goo," Dad said with a grin.

"Not me," Jenny replied with a cocky smile. "I was born just like this, a fully formed adult."

"Exactly," Mum agreed. "Being born from a womb doesn't make you real. It's the ability to think and act for yourself and the Gangers can do that."

"So exactly what is she?" Ganger Cleaves asked. "A clone?"

"Is she even real?" Buzzer asked eyeing Jenny up and down. "Or is she just a thing, too?"

"No," Rory growled. "She was progenated, and she's my sister and every bit as real as anyone in this room."

Dad nodded and smiled brightly at Jenny and Rory before turning back to the factory workers. "We are not talking about an accident that needs to be mopped up. We are talking about sacred life. Do you understand? Good. Now the TARDIS is trapped in an acid pool. Once I can reach her I can get you all off this island. Humans and Gangers. Eh? How does that sound?"

Jimmy grinned. "I can make it home for Adam's birthday."

"What about me?" Jimmy's Ganger asked. "He's my son, too."

"You?" Human Jimmy scoffed. "You really think that?"

"I feel it," the other Jimmy responded.

Before the Human Jimmy could respond, Mum cut him off. "Look, I know this is a right mess but this is exactly the point. If you give your thoughts, feelings and experiences over to someone else they become you." Dad's shoulders tensed and his jaw set. This must be such a touchy subject for the two of them.

In more ways than one, Amy thought a little bitterly as she punched her pillow trying to get comfortable. Dad's creation, the brown-eyed metacrisis Dad, had caused the green-eyed Dad heartache for almost two years. He thought that the woman he loved had been lost to another version of himself. And how difficult must that be to lose Mum to another you. Then there was the fact that at the time four of them knew exactly what had happened to her, and they loved her just the same as if she was really there. A tear slipped down Amy's cheek as she thought about what her absence, and the presence of her Ganger, must have done to her husband.

"Oh, and you would know all about that, would you now?" Dicken asked.

"As a matter of fact I do, more than you will ever know." Mum sighed. "It's a bit, okay, a lot more complicated than the creation of a Ganger, but the Doctor was split into two people once. Both had the same memories, same experience..."

"The same love for Rose," Dad murmured and Mum squeezed his shoulder.

"And I had to make the choice between this Doctor, the original you could say and the other one, exact same man just with a slightly different biology. I couldn't stay with both of them, I loved them both, but I only had a split second to decide." Mum wiped a tear from her eye. "It was tough, but I made my choice." Mum's smile faltered slightly and Amy knew that her heart was aching for Dad with the sticky uppy hair and the brown eyes, her husband.

"Exactly, you picked the original." Ganger Cleaves rolled her eyes. "Spare us the sob story, Rose,
Mum was furious now. "Don't you dare talk about my husband that way. I didn't pick this Doctor. I married the one created by the metacrisis and for more than twenty years we were happy. We raised three beautiful children, and we invited their friends into our lives. Before he died, life was perfect."

Dad stood up and wrapped an arm around her waist. "You don't need to do this."

Shaking her head, Mum said, "But I do. Look, to me there was absolutely no difference between the Doctor I married and the Doctor here with me now. It's going to be difficult to integrate two of you into one life, but we can find a way to make it work. I promise."

Pulling his arm out from around Mum's, Dad clapped his hands together. "Good. Right. First step is we get everyone together then get everyone safe. Then get everyone out of here."

"Cleaves and Jennifer are still missing," Jimmy said, looking around.

The Ganger Jimmy stepped forward. "I'll help you, if that's alright. Two sets of eyes are better than one."

Just then, the human Cleaves stepped into the room holding some sort of probe. "This circus has gone on long enough!"

"Oh, great. You see, that is just so typically me," her Ganger said with a roll of the eyes.

"Doctor, tell it to shut up," the Human woman demanded.

"Cleaves, no. No! No," Dad practically begged as he pushed Mum behind him. Sabrina blocked both Jenny and Jennifer with her body, obviously not sure if Cleaves had heard the part about Jenny's progenation. Rory, of course, kept Amy behind him.

Cleaves smirked as she held up the device in her hand. "Circuit probe. Fires about, oh, thirty thousand volts? Would kill any one of us so I guess she'll work on Gangers just the same."

Rory laughed. "You know what's interesting? You refer to them as 'it', but you call a glorified cattle prod a 'she'."

"When the real people are safely off this island then I'll happily talk philosophy over a pint with you, and your whole family." Cleaves advanced on the group again.

"What are you going to do to them?" Amy asked.

Cleaves tensed. "Sorry. They're monsters. Mistakes. They have to be destroyed."

What happened next was a blur of activity, Dad, Mum and Rory yelling at Cleaves, the Ganger Cleaves almost taunting her human counterpart. And when all was said and done the Buzzer Ganger lay dead on the floor. The remaining Gangers backed quickly out of the room. Sabrina had made to go after Jennifer but Rory stopped her.

Mum and Dad knelt beside Buzzer's body and had tried to make Cleaves understand what she'd done. But the woman had stubbornly felt justified in her actions.

"If it's war, then it's war," Cleaves stated tersely. "You don't get it, Doctor. I don't care what you and the rest of these people think you know about our situation. It's not the same. Right here, right now, it's us and them."
Dad's gaze hardened and he snapped his fingers. "The most fortified and defendable room in the monastery. Cleaves! The most fortified and defendable room in the monastery?"

"The chapel. Only one way in, stone walls two feet thick."

The Oncoming Storm raged in Dad's eyes. "You've crossed one hell of a line, Cleaves; you've killed one of them. They're coming back. In a big way."

Mum led the way with Amy, Rory and the factory workers following close behind. Dad brought up the rear herding Sabrina and Jenny along. They had almost made it to the church when somewhere in the distance, Jennifer screamed. Sabrina jerked in the direction of the noise.

Dad shook his head. "Sabrina Tyler, no way. Get in there."

"Jen's out there alone, Dad. The human one, I have to go and find her. If the Gangers get there first... I won't let them hurt her," Sabrina said firmly. "I can't just leave her alone out there, and I know you of all people understand that."

Dad nodded. "Jenny, go with her." He tapped his temple. "But let me know if anything and I mean anything goes wrong. You know what's at stake here."

"Got it," Jenny said and she pulled Sabrina along the passage. Just as they ducked out of sight the Gangers came into view. Dad hurried through the doorway and slammed the door shut. Jimmy, Cleaves and Dicken began to barricade the door.

A voice from the other side of the room moaned, "Why! Why!"

Dad stepped forward and said, "Show yourself. Show yourself!"

From the entry way, Jimmy laughed. "This is insane. We're fighting ourselves."

"Yes, it's insane," Dad agreed. "And it's about to get even more insaner. Is that a word?"

"'Fraid not, love," Mum replied.

Dad nodded and said, "Show yourself! Right now!"

"Doctor," Mum said clutching Dad's arm, "What's going on? We're stuck on this island and the only one not accounted for is Jennifer."

A figure stepped out of the shadows and while the features weren't distinctive yet the clothing was. "Correctively respect, Rose Tyler. It's frightening. Unexpected. Frankly, a total utter splattering mess on the carpet. But I am certain—one hundred percent certain—that we can work this out. Trust me. I'm the Doctor."

Mum shook her head in exasperation and then she smiled. "Are we really going to do this again, Doctor?"

The Ganger straightened his bow tie. "It seems we shall, love."
Heavy boots paced up and down the hall outside her door. Amy knew that the increased presence of guards outside meant that they would be bringing Melody to nurse soon. As much as that thought thrilled her, it also filled her with angst. She was only given a few scarce minutes with her precious baby a few times per day. Of course since they were both being held prisoner, she should be thankful to have at least that.

Now that she was fully awake, she stared out of the giant window in her cell. There were only a few soldiers roaming around since morning drills hadn't started yet. She had their schedule memorized, information lying in wait just in case there was an opportunity for her to escape with the baby.

Tears stung her eyes but she refused to let them fall. Never would she show the monsters that took her the slightest weakness. Amy laid a head against the cool glass of the window and forced her mind back to the acid factory and the Gangers, searching for some clue as to what Rory, Mum and Dad might want her to do next.

_Dad's Ganger was having trouble adjusting to his past regenerations. He had doubled over in pain as he rambled on about jelly babies, neutron flows and going back._

"Doctor, are you alright?" Mum called out to him, ready to rush to his side, but the fully Time Lord Doctor held her back.

"Give him a moment, Rose," Dad said quietly.

Amy looked between her parents and the new Ganger and thought about how difficult pronouns would be with two Doctors around. On the spot she had decided to call the Ganger version 'the Doctor' and the Time Lord one 'Dad'.

"Why? Why!" The Doctor screamed.

Mum took another step forward, trying to shake off Dad. "Why, why what? Doctor, look at me. It's going to be alright."

The Doctor looked up at her and smiled. "Rose!" he called delightedly. "Hello, I'm the Doctor." His voice sounded very much like his tenth self. "No! Let it go, we've moved on!"

Dad stepped forward and held out a free hand towards his doppelganger. "Hold on! Hold on! You can stabilize!"

"They've reversed the jelly baby of the neutron flow!" the Doctor rambled almost incoherently. "I'm the, would you like a... Doctor... I'm the... I'm the..." And then the man collapsed.

Wrenching free from Dad, Mum was at his side in a moment. She gently patted his cheek. "Wake up, Doctor. Come on, you can do it."

A moment later he shot to his feet, pulling Mum along with him. His face was now completely identical to Dad's. In fact, everything about him was identical, except for the shoes. The Doctor was wearing his normal shoes, but Dad had on a pair of borrowed boots. Dad had melted his original pair in an acid pool when he lost the TARDIS.

"Hello." The Doctor bounded up to Rory and Amy, hugging them both in turn.
Rory was quiet but Amy looked at him quizzically and then smiled. "Doctor?"

His face fell. "So not Dad then?"

Amy shrugged. "I made him earn it, same goes for you."

"Amelia Tyler-Pond, I am exactly the same man."

"First word I said to Rose," Dad cried from across the room.

Turning back to him, the Doctor rolled his eyes. "Do we have time for this?"

"We make time." Dad walked over and took Mum's hand. "I'd like more proof that you're me. First words."

Sighing, the Doctor came over and took Mum's other hand. "You want me to say 'Run' because those are the first words that we said to her. But that wasn't the first time Rose spoke to us. That was New Year's 2005 and I told you, Rose Tyler, that you were going to have a really great year."

"And I did," Mum chuckled and grinned. "Both times I lived through it."

After that Mum, Dad, Rory and even Amy herself had accepted that the Doctor was another Dad. Because what makes a person a person but the sum of their memories? And Mum and Dad rarely talked about the incidents surrounding his regeneration.

Of course with two Doctors around, both of them had been competing for Mum's attention. That meant that the intolerable flirting had been ratcheted up a few thousand notches.

"You know that anyone outside the family may not trust both of us," the Doctor said, rocking on his heels.

"Rose would. She trusts us implicitly. Don't you, my dear?" Dad replied.

The Doctor shook his head. "Don't start that. It's not a contest." He winked at Mum, who blushed furiously. "Because if it was, we both know she'd pick me."

Mum's eyes narrowed, and Dad huffed and just about lost his cool. "Oi, past behavior does not necessarily determine her future choices...Besides, Rose would pick me, no contest."

"Right now, I'm not picking either of you if you keep fighting over me like I'm some sort of prize." Mum scowled. Rory bit back a laugh and both Doctors looked apologetic.

"Rose, Sweetheart, we are both very sorry." The Doctor came over and kissed her on the cheek before turning back towards Dad. "Right then, back on task."

"You're thinking what I'm thinking—" Dad countered.

"Inevitably," the Doctor retorted.

"See, I'm glad we're on the same—"

"Wavelength. See. Great minds!" The Doctor turned towards Rory and Amy. "See, one man, same thoughts."

"What are you two nattering on about?" Mum asked.
"Just setting up some ground rules," Dad said with a nod towards his double.

"Deciding who's in charge," the Doctor added.

"I can save you two the trouble," Mum smirked. "I'm in charge."

The corners of both Doctor's mouths twitched. Dad spoke first. "And that's the conclusion that we came up with."

"We figured that Rose is in fact the boss of us and decided to make it official. We can make you a badge later." The Doctor bopped Rose on the nose and then both he and Dad told Amy to breathe.

"Why do you all keep saying that?" Amy hissed.

Mum shook her head. "Never mind that. Just please breathe, Amelia."

Clapping his hands together, Dad said, "Now we need to get out of here."

"Get the humans and Gangers together...That won't be easy," the Doctor retorted.

Amy snorted and said softly to her husband, "Can you imagine if bow tie Dad and pin striped Dad had met like this. Poor Mum, she’d never had a moment's peace."

Rory's hand gripped her even tighter. "If he stays, it won't be easy but if anyone could make it work, Mum could. But it wouldn't be the same if it was a Ganger that would still attached to the original because Mum or anyone else would find the non-Ganger. Not that the metacrisis or a free-willed Ganger or an attached Ganger are the same. It's not and I love you."

"Are you alright? Because that made absolutely no sense." Amy placed a hand on his forehead, feeling for fever.

Now of course, Amy knew that his rambling explanation had nothing to do with Mum and Dad at all. It was Rory telling his wife that he would find her no matter where she was, bumbling idiot that he was. But he was her bumbling idiot and she couldn't imagine never seeing him again. He had never been good at hiding the big stuff from her, at least not since he'd told her the truth about the family.

These past few years Rory had been an open book to her, therefore Amy knew that he couldn't have known about her kidnapping for very long or she would have figured it out. Well, sometimes he could keep suspicions from her but never anything concrete.

It now seemed evident to her that he must have found out about her kidnapping right before this adventure because his entire attitude had shifted the morning after the family argument. He had avoided talking to her about anything of consequence, blocking her mentally but also clinging to her physically. She would have thought it should have been the other way around, but maybe he thought that her captors were somehow reading her thoughts.

They weren't by the way. She'd probed just enough to ascertain that Madame Kovarian and her minions didn't know anything that went through her head.

Rory'd make a rubbish spy, she thought ruefully, Always ruled by his emotions, her husband, and that was one of the things she loved most about him. Her chest ached with how much she wanted to get back to him. She drug her thoughts away from Rory and back to analyzing their adventure.

After Mum had taken control over the two Doctors situation, Dad had found an escape route and
they had just made it out before the Gangers forced their way into the room. In the passageway, the choking gas created by the reaction of the acid and the stone had forced the group up to the evacuation tower. The Doctors worked together to restore the power.

Cleaves and Buzzer made snide comments amongst themselves. Amy bit down hard on her own tongue to avoid making snide comments of her own. With a great effort she managed to pull herself free from Rory and came to stand next to Mum.

She was watching the two Doctors with bemusement. Linking arms with her, Amy asked, "Do you have any idea what's wrong with your son?"

Mum spared Rory a look over her shoulder. "Do you mean in general...or just today?"

"Just today. He seems so not himself, and he's hiding something from me. I can feel it." Amy sighed. "He's shielding heavily. It's so unlike him. Something's about to happen and he can feel it, can't he?"

One of the Doctors, Amy couldn't tell which one since they were behind the control panel, looked up and gave Mum a very small nod. "Yes, Sweetheart, something's about to happen. Rory's felt it for a while, Dad and I have too, but we just discovered what that something is."

"And you can't tell me," Amy said, exasperated. "You know, you shouldn't tell him things that he's supposed to keep from me. Since he promised me there would be no more secrets, he can't keep his mouth shut."

Mum hugged her. "I promise, when we get out of here, we'll let you know what's going on...and I promise you that we will fix it."

A cryptic message, par for the course with this family but if Mum told her it would be okay, she had no reason to doubt her. "Speaking of getting out of here, what happens when we leave here and there are two of them? How are you going to handle that? I mean, you can't choose between them, not again."

"It would be insufferable for a bit, until they figured out a way to share, but in the end everything would be alright." Before Mum could say anything else, the Doctors got the power back on.

"Yes! Communication-a-go-go!" one of the Doctors exclaimed and both of them rushed around the console.

"Great. Now let's find the girls," Mum said, pushing a few buttons.

Rory was by her side in a second. "They're not registering, damn it." His fist collided with the metal.

"I just fixed that," Dad moaned. "Don't break it now. Here." He pointed his sonic at the machine to boost the signal.

Meanwhile, Cleaves had called the mainland and ordered an evacuation. When she had called for the Gangers to be wiped out, Amy could feel the tension in the room ratchet up a few notches. The Gangers could be listening in and that would make everything worse.

Cleaves gave a few final instructions to the mainland. "You'll need to airlift us off of the evac tower. And Captain, any further transmissions sent by me must come with the following code word. I'm typing it in case they're listening in."

A crackling voice confirmed over the communications relay. "Got it. We'll swing in, get you out and decommission the Flesh."
"Right, so while you all wait here for the rescue, I'm going to find my daughters," Mum said, clapping Cleaves on the back.

"We can't let you go out there. It's far too dangerous," Jimmy said, moving to stand in front of the door.

"If you think that we are leaving them, you are sadly mistaken," Mum retorted tersely.

Buzzer snorted. "I want them and Jennifer found, too, but it's about casualties, innit? Can't be helped."

"My children are not casualties." Mum made for the door, but the Doctor stopped her.

"They'll be fine," he said, pulling her into his arms and kissing her forehead.

Amy marveled at the fact that Mum could have such affection for two men at the same time. Granted, they were the same man, and she had done it before. But the whole situation must be heartbreaking for her.

A noise outside of her cell caught her attention, and Amy held her breath, waiting to see if they were bringing in Melody. Her heart sank when a harsh-looking young soldier walked in carrying her breakfast tray. A large part of her wanted to protest and refuse to eat, but she was nursing. Well, when she was allowed to nurse her daughter, she was nursing.

The guard grunted 'eat' at her before leaving. Cautiously, Amy walked over to the tray and tore apart the bread roll. Poking a bit of it into her mouth, she chewed thoughtfully.

At the Monastery, the events of the next few minutes had been a blur. She remembered Dad saying something to Rory about making a phone call on delay. Then she had seen Madam Kovarian again. For the first time she had told Rory about it. Panic had filled his eyes as her told her it was a time-memory, sort of like a mirage, and 'it's nothing to worry about'.

Git, it had been something to worry about, her being captive held by that mad woman. Just not anything they could do anything about yet. Her mind traced back to when they had caught a glimpse of Jenny and Sabrina on the view screen.

"We've got a visual on the girls," Rory yelled, looking at the computer screen. He took his wife's hand, and Amy knew his mental shields slipped for a moment because she could feel his relief... Until that moment, she hadn't realized she'd missed that comforting feeling since he'd shut her out.

"They're heading for the thermostatic room," Cleaves observed.

The Doctor stood and Dad threw him his sonic screwdriver.

Cleaves looked indignant. "You can't let him go! Are you crazy?"

Laughing, the Doctor asked, "Am I crazy, Doctor?"

Mum grinned. "Well, you did once challenge a dictator to a game of hacky-sack for the fate of three billion people."

Dad snorted. "I won, didn't I?"

"Only because I bent over and he was distracted by my bum," Mum retorted with a giggle and Rory groaned in disgust.
Leaning back, the Doctor raked his gaze up and down Mum's backside. "Well, it is a very nice bum."

"This is a serious situation," Cleaves ground out. "So stop flirting so we can go and find your daughters." The woman turned and pointed at the Ganger Doctor. "And just to be clear, this isn't going anywhere."

Standing up, Dad stepped right up next to the severe woman's face. The look he gave was cold and full of absolute authority. "Do you know what? I want him to go. And I'm rather adamant."

Amy had known the Doctor, in one shape or another, almost her entire life and knew deep down that he would always look out for her. So sometimes she forgot just how powerful and even frightening he could be. However, Cleaves and the rest of them now knew that her Dad was not a man to be trifled with. Cleaves agreed to let the Ganger Doctor and Buzzer go out and search for Jennifer, Sabrina and Jenny.

Now all there was to do was wait. Rory stood behind her and wrapped his arms around her. "You know everything is going to work out in the end, right?"

Leaning back, she rested her head on his shoulder. "It always is. No matter how bleak things seem at the time, we always solve it. Together."

"I love you, Amelia Tyler, never forget that." His voice trembled just slightly. "And after this is over and everything is sorted, we'll be together."

At the time, she had felt both comforted and confused at his words. She believed him, of course she did but she hadn't been able to mull over the deeper meanings behind his words at the time.

All hell had broken loose a few minutes after the search and rescue party had been dispatched. Alarm bells started going off, signaling a rise in temperature in the acid pools. Then the communications relay exploded, forcing the group to leave the evac tower. They made their way to the thermostatic room to turn the regulators back on, but it was too late.

"It's a chemical chain reaction now. I can't stop it. This place is going to blow sky high," Dad declared, throwing his hands up in resignation.

"How much time do we have?" Rory questioned.

"Minutes, hours, seconds, I don't know. We just need to get to the TARDIS and get everyone out of here." Dad's shoulders slumped slightly. He began to lead everyone out of the room and they ran straight into Jenny and Sabrina.

"Dad, Mum," both girls exclaimed at once. After a round of hugs, Sabrina explained that Jennifer had found a way out. There was secret tunnel beneath the crypt, one that wasn't on any of the maps, but it should run right under the TARDIS.

A voice from within her room pulled Amy out of her memories. "Excuse me, ma'am." A young, dark haired woman in a standard soldier's uniform spoke from just inside the door. "I was sent to let you know they will be bringing in the baby for her feeding soon. Is there anything I can get you?"

Turning to face her, Amy frowned. "Not unless you want to call my family and tell them where they can collect me and my daughter."

The solider bristled. "I'm very sorry, but I can't do that."
"Didn't think so." Amy crossed her arms and hugged herself. "Please leave now."

"Yes, ma'am." The woman turned on her heel and left.

Amy sat down on the edge of the bed and bit her lip to hold back the smile. They were bringing in Melody soon. Her heart ached again because she knew the time would pass way too quickly. And she'd be so wrapped up in her daughter's beautiful face, tiny hands and little baby fingers to try and mount an effective rescue.

Desperately she pushed her thoughts back to that last adventure before she woke up here. Her mind skittered over the details. The Ganger Jennifer tricked them into the acid room and locked all the non-Gangers save Sabrina and Jenny inside with acid about to boil over. Eventually, they had been rescued but it was too little too late for Jimmy. There was an escape through catacombs, Dicken giving his life to save them, finding the TARDIS, then... then Dad in Ganger form saving them.

The Doctor grabbed Amy by the arm and pulled her into a tight hug. "Push, Amy. But only when she tells you to."

"What?" She was completely confused and tired of everyone saying cryptic things to her all day.

"You'll understand soon enough." The Doctor pressed a kiss on her forehead and let her go, gently pushing her back towards Rory. Then he turned towards Mum and Dad. "Well. My death arrives, I suppose."

Mum threw her arms around the Doctor's neck. "Please, come with us. You don't have to do this."

He leaned down and kissed her. It was quick but meaningful. "You have bigger things to worry about than me."

Softly, Dad laid a hand on the Doctor's shoulder. "Your molecular memory can survive this, you know. It may not be the end."

"Yeah, well, if I turn up to nick Rose away from you, then you'll know you were right, won't you?" the Doctor joked.

Mum took a step back and squeezed his hand. "Always, Doctor. I love you always, in any way shape or form."

"I love you, too." He pressed another kiss onto her forehead and pushed her backwards towards Dad. "Now, all of you, go."

Mum and Dad pushed Amy and Rory into the TARDIS where Sabrina, Jenny, Cleaves and the Gangers of Jimmy and Dicken were waiting. Jenny flipped the controls and soon landed the ship near Jimmy's house, he had a birthday party to make. Cleaves and Dicken were left to deal with the cleanup. They were charged with convincing the government that the Gangers deserved life just as much as humans did.

Seeing the new conviction in Cleaves countenance and the determination in Dicken's face, Amy was convinced that they could do it. Suddenly, her stomach felt like someone was squeezing it in a vice, and Amy doubled over in pain.

Rory, Mum, Dad and Jenny all yelled 'breathe' at the same time.

"Why? It's just a stomach cramp," Amy yelled back just before screaming in pain again.
Raising a hand to her face, Rory's thumb stroked her cheek. "No, love, it's not."

"What the hell is going on here?" Sabrina insisted.

A muscle in Dad's jaw twitched. "Everyone inside the TARDIS right now."

Holding tightly to her husband's arm, Amy made it into the TARDIS.

Sabrina looked confused. "Rory, what is happening to her?"

"Contractions," Jenny said with a sad expression on her face

"Contractions?" Amy barely heard Sabrina's voice over her gasp of pain.

"She's going into labor," Mum said as if that explained everything.

Amy shook her head. "What did she say? No, no, no. Of course she didn't. Rory, um, I don't like this. I'm not in labor, I'm not even pregnant."

"Will someone please explain what the hell is going on? Everyone seems to know what's going on here except me and Amy. So start talking." Sabrina was trying to remain calm but Amy heard that edge of fear in her voice.

"Amy's having a baby." Dad's voice hitched. "We needed to see the Flesh in its early days. That's why I scanned it, that's why we were there in the first place. I needed enough information to block the signal to the Flesh."

"What signal?" Amy panted because of the pain.

"The signal to you," Rory whispered.

"I don't understand, Rory, and I'm frightened. I'm properly, properly scared." Amy was crying now.

"Don't be scared. We are coming for you and for our baby." Rory clutched her tightly. "I swear that we will find you."

"I'm right here, Rory. I'm right here," Amy cried.

"No, you're not. You haven't been here for a long, long time," Mum said softly and Dad told Rory to stand back.

Before Rory let go of her completely, he dropped his mental shields and pushed the words, 'Flesh Avatar' into her head.

"I love you to the ends of the Universe," Rory said, holding back his own tears.

"And back again," she replied earnestly. Behind her she heard the sound of a sonic and everything went black for a moment.

Then Amy had woken up in a tube, in the final stages of labor. That had been weeks ago, but she knew they were coming for her. It was only a matter of time.

"Good morning, Mummy," the shrill voice of her captor said from the door. "I think our little one is ready for breakfast."

Amy turned and sobbed as her daughter's cot was wheeled into the room.
Chapter 25

Madame Kovarian sauntered into Dorium Maldovar's shop with Colonel Manton at her side. Overall she was feeling pretty confident that everything was going to plan. In fact, leaving her base had set the final stage of her plan into motion. When they left here, Colonel Manton would return to their base. She and the child would not. First, though, she needed to find out how much this blue buffoon had known and had spread around.

"You appear to be closing down, Dorium. What have you heard?" She slid onto a comfortable sofa. The Colonel pulled out a small blaster and aimed it at the shopkeeper.

Unfazed by the apparent threat, the rotund, blue man stopped packing his bag momentarily to look up at his visitors. Dorium could barely suppress his eye roll. "That you pricked the side of some mighty beasts, Madame Kovarian, and entirely failed to run. I admire your courage." Gently he pushed the barrel of the gun away. "I should like to admire it from afar."

Madame Kovarian smirked. "We've been waiting a month. They've done nothing. I think we've bested them and they know it."

"You would think so. There are people all over this galaxy that consider the Doctor and his Bad Wolf their friends. People who would gladly lay their own lives down to help them and their family."

Manton lowered his weapon. "You think they're raising an army?"

With a snort Dorium replied, "You think they aren't? Not that they would even need to. His family and closest associates are enough to bring down dictatorships, armies and some of the greatest foes in the Universe." He paused. "And you've kidnapped the pregnant wife of an heir to the power of the Bad Wolf, God help you."

"I think you overestimate them," Manton spat.

Agreeing, Madame Kovarian stood to leave.

Unable to let them go without having the last word, Dorian said, "The asteroid. Where you've made your base. Do you know why they call it Demon's Run?"

Colonel Manton's hand clenched on his weapon. "How do you know the location of our base?"
The blue man waves a hand dismissively. "You're with the Headless Monks. They're old customers of mine."

"It's just some old saying," Kovarian replied dryly.

"A very old saying," Dorian confirmed. "The oldest. Demon's Run. When a good man goes to war. And you have just angered an entire family of 'good men.'" The shopkeeper didn't wait for a reply, he simply snapped his bag shut and left the room. He could only hope to stay one step ahead of the Doctor's family and the Headless Monks.

He had the strangest feeling that neither group would be very happy with him at the moment and he had zero desire to be part of any rescue party. When he had almost made it to his ship, he heard an all too familiar sound. It was more of a chant, one of the chants of the Headless Monks. In fear, Dorian turned slightly purple.

"No! No no! Please! Not me! You don't need me!" he cried as the first cloaked figure approached him. "Why would you need me? I'm old! I'm fat! I'm blue!" Before Dorian knew it, he was surrounded. "You can't need me!"

The flash of a blade was the last thing that he saw before his head was permanently disconnected from his body.

Amy cuddled her daughter close to her chest. "My darling Melody, I promise you that eventually everything will be alright. I know this to be true because you are a member of the best family in the Universe, in any Universe, and they love you so much already. Even if they haven't met you yet."

Across the room, Madame Kovarian said, "Two minutes."

Ignoring the woman, Amy continued to speak. "You are a Tyler and I need you to be brave, my love. But not as brave as they all have to be. Because they are coming for us. Your Dad, Gran, Granddad and the rest of the family are on their way. And they will never, ever let us down. Not even an army can get in their way."

Pressing a kiss into Melody's temple, Amy gently laid her precious daughter in the sterile glass cot. "And wherever they take you, Melody, however scared you are, I promise you, you will never be alone. Just close your eyes and reach out your mind to him and your daddy will always be there."

"Time to go." Korvarian waved at one of the guards to take the cot and another to restrain Amy.

The redhead struggled against the guard's forceful grip. "Please don't do this. Don't take her away; it's not too late for you. Just give her back to me and let the two of us go."

"Just be thankful for the time you had with her, Ms. Pond," Kovarian smirked and left the room.

"That's Mrs. Tyler-Pond to you, bitch!" Amy spat, finally able to wrench her arm free. The guard shoved her backwards and left the room himself. She let out a cry of frustration, the same way she did every time they took her baby away from her.

Twenty Thousand Light Years Away

The blaring sound of a claxon filled the cyber-ship's bridge. 'Intruder- level nine. Seal level nine,' the ship's computer announced. Rory Tyler pressed his sonic screwdriver against a control panel and the noise cut off. Pulling his shoulders back, he strode onto the bridge.
The Cybermen must have been stunned into silence because the sound of his boots on the metal grating echoed around the room. His dark blue denim-clad legs carried him across the room to the large viewing window. He may have seemed relaxed, even though he was tightly coiled. Crossing his arms in his tight, black leather jacket, he glared at the metal monsters.

"I have a message and a question. A message from the Doctor and the Bad Wolf, and a question from me." His jaw clenched. "Where is my wife?"

None of the Cybermen responded, and Rory felt his anger rise. "Oh, don't give me those blank looks. The twelfth Cyber Legion monitors this entire quadrant. You hear everything. So you tell me what I need to know. You tell me now, and I'll be on my way. No harm done."

The Cyberleader finally spoke. "What is the Doctor's message?"

Rory tapped down the urge to smirk, and he depressed the button on the remote hidden in his hand. Behind him, one by one the rest of the fleet exploded. "Would you like me to repeat the question?"

It turned out that he didn't need to repeat it because the Cyberleader was more than happy to give up the location of Amy's hiding place, Demon's Run. It had almost been too easy getting that out of them. They may not have any emotions, but they did have a sense of self preservation. Pity it wouldn't help save them now.

Rory made his way back down to the deck where the Doctor's TARDIS was parked. Along the way, he stopped at another control panel and attached a small black disk that he had taken out of his pocket. When he activated it, a different warning rang throughout the ship.

'Self-Destruct sequence initiated. Auto destruct will commence in 60 seconds.'

That should leave the Cybermen scrambling, especially since the ship didn't have a self-destruct designed into it. So much the better to just destroy the lot of them. It would save countless lives and heartache that the Cybermen would have caused.

At least they wouldn't be feeling panicked by their impending destruction because they didn't have emotions. They may have seen it as better to never feel. And sometimes, like this, when Rory felt his hearts might rip apart, he could see the appeal. But then, if he couldn't feel the hurt, then he also would never feel the joy. The joy and utter happiness he had felt on his wedding day or the elation he would feel when he held Amy in his arms once again.

An old story that Mum and Dad had told him numerous times about a bunker in Utah popped into his mind. And the words of another supposedly emotionless creature came to mind. 'What good are emotions if you cannot save the woman you love?'

'Auto destruct in 25 seconds.'

His emotions were all over the spectrum lately. Fear, worry, anger, love were all coursing through his veins. It was good that he felt them, helped him to tap into that all too human part of himself. But he also had to push them to the side in order to accomplish his mission, to bring his wife and child home safely.

'Auto destruct in 10...9...8'

Rory pushed open the doors of the TARDIS.

'7...6...5'
He stepped across the threshold and slammed the door behind him. The Doctor threw the ship into the Vortex mere seconds before the Cybership exploded. Looking up at his son, the Doctor's eyes held only one question. The younger man nodded in response.

"Demon's Run, that's where they have Amy and the baby. They even gave up the coordinates." Rory strode up to the controls; he punched in the information and studied the picture that popped up. Within a matter of moments, they had schematics and detailed recent scans of the area.

Father and son were alone in the console room. Mum, Jenny, Sabrina, Tony and Trisha were all waiting in the Library, waiting to hear if Rory had gotten the information they needed and to hear what the new plan was. "It's not very well defended," Rory said, astonished. "No real weapons array, very few ships. Long distance communications relay, few escape pods but not enough for their entire crew."

"It wouldn't be difficult to bring them down." The Doctor clapped a hand on Rory's leather clad shoulder. "I'm owed several favors all up and down the Universe. Can't think of a better reason to call them in; we could easily raise an army."

The younger man shook his head. "No, the fewer people's lives we risk in this the better. We can take Demon's Run with just the family. Maybe call in Jack and River. I just don't know who we can trust right now, and I can't risk that whoever took Amy hasn't corrupted one of those beings that owes you a favor."

"It's your choice, but I don't think a fleet of Judoon could hurt. I have a connection or two and the kidnappers are in direct violation of the Shadow Proclamation..." The Doctor's throat constricted and his grip on Rory's shoulder tightened. "Your child is one of the last Time Lords in existence and kidnapping a member of an endangered species..."

"Yeah... I know." Rory felt tears pricking his eyes "We can call in the Judoon. But first we need a plan of attack and we have to hope that they are still there." Rory felt his tough demeanor crumble. "What could they possibly want with my wife? With my baby?"

These were questions that he tried not to ask. Questions that he both did and did not want the answers to, because if he thought about them too hard, he started to hear the howling in the back of his brain. The howling that would help him tear the Universe apart to find his family. But this time he couldn't let himself do that. He couldn't explain it. With the 456 it had felt natural to let his wolf take over, but this was different, fixed and he hated that knowing that he couldn't just wipe the kidnappers out of existence.

The Doctor pulled him into a tight hug. "I promise that no matter what, we will bring them safely back to you."

Rory knew that this was a promise that his dad might not be able to keep, but for the moment he would let himself live in hope.

In the back garden of their home on the grounds of Luna University, Jack spun River around in his arms. Both of them were giggling like mad and neither cared that they weren't dancing in time to the music. Rory hated to disrupt the happy moment, but it couldn't be avoided. Time was running short.

He loudly cleared his throat and the happy couple turned to look at him. Jack grinned like the Cheshire cat, but River looked slightly alarmed. "Love the leather look, Rory," Jack declared. "Reminds me of my first Doctor."
"Oh, stop it, Jack," River chastised.

The younger man pulled on his jacket. "Sorry to intrude."

"It's my birthday," River laughed, squeezing Jack's hand. "You're always welcome to join us. We have a cake."

"I'm afraid I can't this time," Rory replied shaking his head. "I'm never sure where we are as far as timelines. Last time I saw you, Jack, was 21st Century, Earth... the 456."

"Ah," Jack's grin faltered slightly. "50 years or so ago for me. Not that I haven't seen you in between, but those are..."

"Spoilers." River cut him off. Slowly she walked up to stand right in front of Rory. She placed a hand on his arm. "What's wrong? Where's Amy?"

Rory couldn't understand why this was so difficult to say. He'd known River almost his entire life and of course she'd help, but she also knew his future. Probably knew the outcome already. "We need you, both of you."

"It's Demon's Run, isn't it?" Her voice shook ever so slightly.

"I figured you'd know. You always know." Rory gave her a tight smile before turning to Jack. "They've taken Amy. And our baby. We're going after her, after them. But we need you, both of you."

"Yeah," Jack agreed, walking over to them. "I'll help. Of course, I'll help."

"Come on then." Rory took River's hand in his and began to pull her back towards the TARDIS. "There is no time to lose."

Pulling her hand away, River shook her head. "I can't. Not yet anyway."

"I'm sorry? What?" Rory stopped and rounded on her. It took everything he had left in him to bite back his temper. "After everything we've been through, River? You can't?"

"Rory," Jack said in a warning tone.

"This is the Battle of Demon's Run." River's eyes shown with unshed tears. "The family's darkest hour. You'll rise higher than ever before and then fall so much further. And... I can't be with you 'til the very end. Please trust me on this."

"Why?" It was the only thing Rory could think to say.

"Because this is it, the day that changes everything. This is the day you find out who I am." A tear slipped down her cheek.

Suddenly, Rory flashed back to a conversation that he'd had with a future River. They'd been sitting by a fountain in Colorado and she'd told him that she wasn't Mum and Dad's daughter. But she had confirmed that she was a Time Lady. His blood ran cold at the implications of who she could be and possibility that maybe this adventure wouldn't end happily.

River pulled him into a hug. "It will be okay in the end. It won't be easy, but it will be alright." She squeezed him tightly and then quickly pulled away. "You should go. Amy needs you."

Without another word, Rory turned and headed back to the TARDIS. Jack stayed behind for a
moment or two longer, not speaking until Rory was safely out of earshot. "They aren't going to take this well, are they?"

"He's already figuring it out." River gave her husband a small smile. "My father is a brilliant man, and unfortunately this won't come as too big a surprise. Mum'll take it harder than all of them; blame herself, blame Dad, Granddad, Nan. But in the end, they'll be alright."

Jack leaned over and kissed her softly. "I'll see you soon. I love you."

"Love you, too." She wiped away an errant tear. "Take care of them."

"Always do." Jack quickly kissed her cheek and then jogged after his father-in-law.
From the window in her room, Amy had a prime view of the military operations this morning. Colonel Manton seemed to be in fine form today, no doubt rallying the troops against her family. Rubbish, if you asked her. There was nothing to fear from her family, unless you were a bad guy. No one in the family, to the best of her knowledge, ever went after anyone for sport. No, the members of her family were defenders of the Universe and certainly weren't dangerous. At least not if you were one of the good guys.

The door to the room slid open and Amy turned around to see a familiar face. It was the female soldier who visited her often, to let her know when they were bringing Melody around. She had seemed pleasant enough, even if she was working for her captors.

"Sorry. I shouldn't be here. I'm meant to be at the thing. I brought you something." The soldier held out a swatch of green fabric that had been embroidered with gold thread. "Your child's name in the language of my people. It's a prayer leaf. And we believe if you keep this with you, your child will always come home to you."

Reaching forward, Amy took the token with a polite thank you. Turning it over in her hand, she realized that the words weren't translating. Right, must be too far from a TARDIS then.

"There's not a word for pond in my language. I'm from the Gamma Forests and the only water in the forest is the river."

"Her last name is Tyler-Pond," Amy replied automatically. Kovarian had been purposely leaving off the Tyler part of their names. She knew that it shouldn't bother her as much as it did, but it felt like the mad woman was trying to ignore half of Melody's heritage, half of whom her daughter was. "What's your name?"

"Lorna, ma'am, Lorna Bucket."

Amy nodded. "You're not like the rest of them. You seem nicer. They're down there, right now, talking about my Rory, my mum, and my dad like they're dangerous."

"They meet a lot of people," Lorna replied with a far off look. "Some people remember them. They're sort of like dark legends."

Snorting, Amy asked, "Dark? They are the defenders of the Universe. They have saved planets and galaxies from the dark things out there. They are the most amazing, wonderful people you could ever meet. Have you met them?"

Lorna smiled softly. "Yeah, I met the Doctor and Rose. But I was just a little girl then."

"So was I," Amy agreed.

There was a slight sadness in the soldier's eyes. "You've been with him a long time, then?"

"Yeah, Mum and Dad, not this Doctor, though, another one... It's complicated, but they are the same man only in different bodies." Amy smiled, thinking of how confusing it could be to explain the nature of her Dad. "Never mind... They kind of took me in, loved me, took care of me and taught me the difference between right and wrong."

"You must be very special," Lorna whispered.
Amy knew that the young woman must be a little envious of the life that Amy led with her family. She knew what that felt like, she'd been green with envy when Sabrina had been adopted. "Hey, five minutes with them is more than enough to change your like. They are worth it, okay. The thing is, they're coming. No question about it. Just you make sure you're on the right side when he gets here. Not for my sake, for yours."

Lorna nodded. "Thank you, Amy. I have to go now. I'll do my best to let you know next time they're bringing the baby around."

Amy thanked her again before the soldier exited the room. Turning back around, Amy focused her attention once more on the activities below.

Colonel Manton stood before his men, knowing that they were on the cusp of Victory. "On this day, in this place, the Doctor and his Wolves will fall. Today we will bring down dangerous enemies." He moved to stand in front of several hooded figures.

He continued his well-planned speech, talking about aligning themselves with the Headless Monks and how today the true nature of their allies would be discovered. Today, those under his command would see under a Monk's hood. "Because these guys never can be persuaded." Manton lifted the Monk's cowl to reveal a stump of a neck and no head. The crowd gasped; the Headless Monks were truly headless.

"They never can be afraid." Manton pulled the second cowl. "And they can never ever be…" He reached up to expose the third Monk, but the man stepped back.

The Doctor removed the hood from his head. "Surprised! Hello, everyone! Guess who? Please, point a gun at me if it helps you relax. You're only human."

In the main control room, Rose and Sabrina overpowered the security guards. Sabrina secured the restraints on both men's wrist. "Go ahead, resist," Sabrina hissed. "Give a reason to make you pay for what you've done."

The guard cowered and Sabrina stood and then kicked one of the men in the side for good measure.

"Come on, Brina," Rose called from the control panel. "They aren't worth it. Now which of these buttons controls the lights?"

DWDW

Manton lunged at the Doctor. "You will come with me right now."

The Time Lord easily ducked out of the way. "Three minutes, forty seconds." He laughed and his eyes darted around the room. When he saw Amy standing above them behind a glass window, he beamed. "Amelia Tyler!" Get your coat!" The lights flickered and went out.

The Doctor's voice echoed around the room. "I'm not a phantom."

Colonel Manton oozed frustration. "Doctor?"

"I'm not a trickster," the Doctor's voice mocked.

Manton's irritation grew and he spun in a circle. "Doctor?"
There was a certain glee in the Doctor's tone. "I'm a Monk."

"Doctor, show yourself!" the Colonel demanded, the last of his patience evaporating.

"It's him!" one of the soldiers cried hysterically. "He's here. It's him!" In a panic, the young man shot the monk. Dim emergency lights flickered into life. Everyone stilled at the sight of the prone figure of the headless and now dead monk on the floor.

"Weapons down! Do not fire!" Manton cried, trying to reign in his horror. "Stop. Wait. Listen to me. I am disarming my weapon pack. Monks, I do this in good faith." He pulled the power pack from his weapon and slowly laid both parts on the ground. "I am now unarmed. All of you, discharge your weapon packs. The Doctor is trying to make fools of us. We are soldiers of God. We are not fools."

The other soldiers followed suit, everyone laying down their weapons. Above them, Rose smiled. Everything was going to plan. "The Doctor's in place. Let there be light." Rose depressed a few switches and Demon's Run was flooded with light.

An armed Judoon platoon had the now defenseless soldiers surrounded. Trisha was holding a gun to Colonel Manton's head, while Tony had one trained on the man's heart.

"This base is ours," Tony said, arming his weapon. A distinct hum of the blaster powering up filled the air. "Now, where is my sister?"

"How do you know we haven't killed her already?" Manton sneered.

"You're a man of faith. You believe in a higher power and an afterlife, yes?" Tony asked calmly. "And if you have harmed one hair on Amy or that baby's head, you'll soon find out if you're right."

"You wouldn't dare." The military man sounded a little too confident. "I have a fleet out there. If Demon's Run goes down, there is an automatic distress call."

From a catwalk, the Doctor laughed. "Not if we knock out your communications array. And you've got incoming!" He lifted a communicator to his mouth. "Dad to Jenny, Come in, Jenny."

"I'm locked and loaded, Dad." Jenny's voice came over the comm link. "Just say the word."

The Doctor smirked before saying, "Give 'em hell, Jenny!"

The base rocked as the Jenny took out communications array.

Madame Kovarian braced herself against the wall as the floor shook. They were under attack and everything was going according to plan. "I need to get off this station now. Bring me the child!" she bellowed to her escort.

"Yes, ma'am," the man replied before breaking away. It was a relatively short distance to her ship and Kovarian expected there to be trouble. In fact, she counted on it.

A few minutes later, Lorna Bucket pressed herself flat against a wall as she crept along behind the eye-patch lady. When they reached the ship's airlock, Lorna hid around a corner. Luckily for her, the guard was looking down at the pod containing baby Melody when he passed her.

Taking the pod from the guard, Madame Kovarian said, "Get back in there with the rest of them. Remember, the Doctor and the Bad Wolf must think they're winning. Right until the trap closes. I'll take my ship from here."
Lorna slipped away quickly and the nameless guard saluted Kovarian before turning to leave. The guard didn't even have time to react as a leather clad man knocked him out with a blow to the head.

Rory stepped across the man's unconscious body and pulled out a blaster. Normally he detested guns, but exceptions could be made for the monsters that dared to separate his family from him.

Kovarian was typing her code into the keypad when she felt the barrel on the gun press into her neck. "I have a crew of twenty. How do you expect to gain control of my ship?" she asked, completely calm.

The airlock door hissed open and Jack stepped out, wiping his hands. "The ship is already ours." He pulled out a set of restraints and quickly bound Kovarian.

Packing away the weapon, Rory dropped to his knees in front of the pod. With trembling fingers, he pushed the release button and it opened. Inside was his sleeping child. The newest Tyler and he didn't even know if the baby was a boy or a girl. A quick check revealed that he, in fact, had a daughter.

Gingerly, he picked her up and pressed a soft kiss into her forehead. His hearts swelled with love. He chuckled at how cliché that sounded, even if it was true. Opening his mind, he reached out for hers and he felt the briefest flutter of her consciousness. He poured his love for her into her tiny mind.

Jack's voice broke his reverie. "I think it's time you reunite that little girl with her mommy."

Rory didn't question how Jack knew the baby was a girl. Jack had intimated that they weren't traveling linearly. Rising to his feet, Rory held his daughter close to him and took off down the corridor in search of his wife. He let the pull of her mental presence guide him. The tension that had been building since Mum and Dad had told him of Amy's kidnapping and her pregnancy had started to dissipate. Until the three of them were safely back on board his TARDIS, however, he knew he would not be able to truly relax.

Roughly, Jack pushed Madame Kovarian towards the control center. "I know everything that you have done, you psychotic bitch," he hissed in her ear. "You have hurt and will hurt the people I love over and over again. For that, I will make you pay."

"You have no idea what my plans are, Captain," she said with a smirk.

"Really?" He shoved her harder, making sure to run her into the doorway. "I don't know that you and Melody are no longer on this base?" Kovarian hesitated for only a fraction of a second. "So why haven't you told your precious Doctor or the Bad Wolf?" Jack tensed but didn't respond and she started to laugh. "Oh, time travel is ever so fun. You know the truth and you won't tell them because you're from their future. And you can't tell them because I get away with it." She could hardly walk as she cackled. "This is perfect, not only will they have lost, they will have been betrayed by one of their most trusted friends."

Unable to stop himself, Jack slammed her into the bulkhead. Keeping his voice at a deadly whisper he said, "I would never betray those people. They do not deserve what is about to happen, and if I could do anything to change what happens without causing more damage to timelines, I would. But I can't, so I'll have to settle for revenge. And I'll warn you that my moral compass isn't nearly as steady as any of the Tylers'."

Before she could respond, he shoved her the last few feet into the control center. Sabrina, Rose and the Doctor were already there. Rose nodded but the Doctor didn't look up from the data from the
computer he was currently pouring over. After securing Madame Kovarian to a chair, Jack walked over to Sabrina. "I gotta run, kiddo."

"You're going now?" Sabrina looked incredulous. "There's still work to be done."

Wrapping an arm around her shoulders, Jack lightly kissed the crown of her head. "You'll understand why I can't stay soon enough. I have a little too much foreknowledge to be here any longer. Best skedaddle while I can. Besides, looks like the base is under our control and Rory is taking his daughter back to her mother."

"The baby's a girl?" Sabrina's eyes lit up.

"Yes, and you'll see her soon enough. Now I really need to go." Jack hugged her quickly and slipped out of the room just as Trisha and Tony brought in Manton.

The Doctor's lips curled into a sinister smile as he saw the newest arrival. "Sorry, Colonel Manton, I lied. Three minutes, forty-two seconds."

"Colonel Manton," Rose said, her eyes flashing with hatred, "you will give the order for your men to withdraw."

"No," the Doctor said standing to face the military man. "Colonel Manton, I want you to tell your men to run away." He laughed a little and nervously straightened his bowtie.

Manton's eyebrows shot up questioningly. "What?"

"I want you to tell them to run away. Those exact words, I want you to be famous for them. I want children to laugh at you and adults to ridicule 'Colonel Runaway'. That way when people ask you if trying to get to me through my family is in any way a good idea, I want you to tell them your name." He was yelling now.

Taking a deep breath, he composed himself and reached back for Rose's hand. She took it and squeezed it. "You have no idea what I am capable of when I'm angry."

"When we're angry," Rose added, her voice was filled with cold fury.

The Doctor squeezed her hand. "Yes, when we're angry. I'm not really sure what's going to happen now."

From her chair, Madame Kovarian said, "The anger of a good man is not a problem. Good men have too many rules."

In an instant the Doctor was in her face. "Good men don't need rules," he snarled. "Today is not the day to find out why I have so many."

Madame Kovarian still looked nonplussed but she turned to her second in command. "Give the order. Give the order, Colonel Runaway."

Rose grinned as she watched the Colonel give the order. "Right." She clapped her hands together and turned to her children. "Turn these two over to the Judoon for prosecution and Trisha, take a look at their computer systems. I want to know everything that they have done to Amy and the baby. The Doctor and I will be back in a few minutes."

"Where are we going?" the Doctor asked as he took her hand.
"Just want to check on someone real quick." Rose smiled and dragged him out the door. As much as she wanted to give Rory and Amy a proper reunion, she had to see for herself that her daughter was alright.
Chapter 27

Where the hell are they? Amy kept asking herself. She'd watched as Trisha and Tony take Manton away and watched the big rhino aliens cart off the rest of the lot. But they hadn't come for her yet. Okay, it had only been about 10 minutes since Dad had appeared.

Just as Amy was about to tear down the door herself to find her husband, she heard a series of bangs and scratches in the bulkhead. In a panic, she backed away and searched for something that she could use as a weapon. Her fingers wrapped around a long spoon looking instrument. Blunt, but she could still whack someone with it, really hard. "Who's there? You watch it, because I am armed and really dangerous, and... cross."

The most beautiful voice came from the other side of the door. "Yeah, like I don't know that."

Her heart stopped. He was here, just like she knew that he would be, because he would never let her down. But what about Melody? "They took her, Rory." Tears started to fall from her eyes at that confession. "They took our baby away."

The door opened with a hiss, and Rory adjusted his hold on the tiny baby in his arms in order to tuck his sonic screwdriver in his jacket pocket. "Now, Mrs. Tyler-Pond, that is never ever going to happen." He rushed over to his wife's side.

Amy cringed at him calling her Pond; it reminded her too much of that horrible woman. Pushing those thoughts aside, she focused on the two most important people in her life. "Oh my god," she cooed over her daughter. "Where has she been? What have they done to her?"

"She's fine, Amy, she's fine." He kissed his wife on the temple. "I gave her a quick once over physically and mentally. I'll do a more thorough one later, but she's fine. She's beautiful." He beamed down at his daughter again. "What's her name?"

Stroking her fingers down her little girl's face, Amy grinned. "Melody, Melody Rose Tyler-Pond."

His eyes shot up to meet hers. "It's perfect. Hello, Melody Rose. You are so beautiful, just like your mother." He kissed her the crown of his daughter's head, and a tear slipped from his eye. "Oh god, I was going to be cool. I wanted to be cool. Look at me."

Amy rubbed a hand up his leather clad back. "You're okay. Crying Time Lord with a baby: definitely cool. I love the jacket by the way, you should keep this."

Holding their little girl carefully between them, Rory leaned over and kissed his wife. Tears gently fell down both of their cheeks, and they celebrated being reunited.

"But Rose, they're kissing. We really should give them a few minutes alone," the Doctor stage whispered from near the door.

"Yeah, let's give them a 'mo," Rose replied softly.

Breaking away from the kiss, Rory turned to his parents. "Oi! You two! Get in here. Now."

Tentatively, Rose and the Doctor made their way down the stairs. Both were eager to see Amy and the baby but wanted to give the new family their space. Rory gently handed his daughter over to his mum while the Doctor fiercely hugged Amy.
Rory rocked on his heels almost nervously. "So, your newest granddaughter. What do you think?"

"Oh, sweetheart," Rose gushed. "She's so pretty. Does she have a name?"

"Melody Rose Tyler-Pond," Amy excitedly replied, happy to tell her mum that she'd named the baby after her.

Gently, Rose handed the baby over to the Doctor and enveloped Amy in a tight hug. "I'm so honored, my love, and I am so glad to have the two of you safely back."

The Doctor was concentrating on the little girl in his arms. "Hello, Melody, I'm your…" He trailed off, not quite sure what Rory and Amy would want their child to call him.

"Granddad," Rory cut in. "Melody, this is your granddad. He means well, but he will probably muck lots of things up and drive you batty trying to teach you all sorts of Time Lord things. Try and cut him some slack, yeah?"

The Doctor looked indignant and Melody cooed, blowing little bubbles of spittle. "Conspiring against me so soon? Well, you will fit into this family like a glove. And I heard that. Stop making fun of my bow tie. It's cool."

"Ah, so he thinks he can speak baby, too," Amy teased, remembering James talking to EJ after she was born.

The Doctor shot her a withering look and continued to speak to Melody. "I'm sure as soon as you can walk you'll be wandering off. You are probably going to be just as jeopardy friendly as your gran. Although your mum comes in a very close second in that." The Doctor kissed his granddaughter's head and passed her back to her mum.

He rubbed his hands together and wrapped an arm around Rose's waist. "Now, how about we get out of this sterile room and introduce this little beauty to all the eagerly awaiting members of her family."

Surreptitiously, Amy picked up a framed photo of her and Melody. She had no desire to leave a picture of her daughter behind.

"And of course they are eager to see you too, Amy," Rose added as they left the room.

Amy smiled a bright, genuine smile that was so wide it almost hurt. "Of course they want to see me. I'm amazing and they love me."

The four of them bantered as they made their way down to the main bay. It felt so normal, so much like being home, making their way through an enemy spacecraft, laughing and joking the entire time.

Except now she and Rory had a baby, a perfect, beautiful baby girl. They may have to slow down for a few years, raise her with weekend adventures the same way that Mum and Dad had raised Rory, Tony and Sabrina. She might miss some of the running but it would be worth it to show Melody the stars in relative safety.

Fifteen minutes later, Rose leaned against the side of the TARDIS. She watched as Sabrina, Tony and Trisha came back from scouring the base, making sure that everyone had been shipped off to the Judoon. They joined Rory who was studying a wall monitor, trying to shut down the nonessential systems before they left the base.
This had seemed too easy. Honestly, she had expected more of a fight. These people had kidnapped her daughter and granddaughter, not an easy feat, and yet they had simply held up their hands in surrender. Something didn't sit right with her.

"I don't like it," Jenny said without preamble as she came to stand next to her mum. "It was too…"

"Simple," Rose agreed.

"We need to talk to Dad." Jenny bit her lip. "It doesn't feel right. They left without a single drop of blood being spilt."

Rose snorted. "Unless you count the bloody nose Brina ended up giving that guard who mouthed off."

"Yeah, well they should have known better than to mess with my sister," Jenny chuckled but turned serious again. "This feels like a trap."

Rose nodded. "We should have everyone leave while we can." Before Jenny could agree, Amy came out of the purplish TARDIS holding a screaming Melody.

Quickly, Rory moved to his wife's side. "Hey, what's wrong?"

"She doesn't like the TARDIS noise." Amy made a soothing shhing sound as she rubbed Melody's back. "I asked Dad to turn something off, but he was all, 'But I don't want to punch a hole in the space-time continuum'. Git."

"He has a point," Rory replied without considering Amy's reaction, but he shrank back when she gave him a steely glare. "Maybe she's hungry?"

"I just fed her," Amy replied, shaking her head. "And can't you just ask her? What is the point of having a telepathic, part Time Lord husband if I still have to guess what's wrong with the baby." She winked at him and handed her to her dad.

Rose stepped forward. "She's tired. See the way she's scrunching her nose? Rory used to do that when he was tired. So did Tony and Jamie for that matter. EJ would rub her eyes."

"Aww," Amy cooed. "She is just like her daddy."

The Doctor burst out of his TARDIS holding an old wooden cot with Gallifreyan writing. With a flourish he set it down in front of Rory and Amy.

"What's this?" Amy asked, examining the stars on the mobile.

"Very pretty, according to my granddaughter," he preened. His obviously pride at having another grandchild was radiating off of him. For a man who had lost his entire family once, his new one was rapidly expanding and he couldn't be happier. "Give her here." He held out his arms expectantly and Rory handed Melody to him.

"It's a cot, an old one," Rory said, studying the inscriptions. The corners of his mouth twitched into a smile. "This was your cot."

"Yes, it was, a very long time ago." The Doctor grinned down at the baby. "Ah, I think she likes it." He raised a hand to his head. "No, it's real. It's my hair."
Rose giggled. "Sounds a bit rude, this one. She'll fit in around here."

"She's beautiful," Tony said, coming up and wrapping Amy in a hug. "Good thing she got your nose and not his."

"Oi," Rory protested. "You stupid ape."

"Oh, shut up, Cub." Tony grinned. "I guess I can't call you baby Time Lord anymore."

Trisha made a shushing noise and pointed to the now sleeping baby. "You don't want to wake her, do you?"

Quietly Sabrina and Jenny made their way over too. Both hugged Amy in turn but Sabrina kept an arm looped around the red head's waist. Their heads were tilted towards one another in such a way that their foreheads touched.

"Dad," Amy said quietly. "I still don't understand. I was here the entire time, but I remember being with you, all of you, traveling, or back in London. How..." Her voice cracked slightly. "How is that possible?"

The Doctor walked over and took her hand. "You were on the TARDIS too--your heart, mind and soul. But physically, yes, you were still in this place."

"And when I saw that face looking through the hatch?" Amy asked, already knowing the answer. "That woman, Kovarian, looking at me?"

"Reality bleeding through." He kissed her temple. "We figure that they must have taken you quite awhile back. Just before America."

"Your Flesh avatar was with us all that time," Rose said, coming up to Rory's side and taking her son's hand. "They were clever enough to project the control signal through the TARDIS to wherever you went in time and space. Dad and I figured it out but we couldn't say anything. We couldn't be sure they weren't listening."

"And we didn't tell Rory either," the Doctor added, squeezing Amy's hand. "Not until the very end. We couldn't let him keep this kind of secret. I'm sorry that this happened and that we couldn't find you sooner."

Amy swallowed a lump in her throat and nodded. "But what did they want? With me and with Melody?"

"That is what we still need to figure out." The Doctor squeezed her hand again, stepped back and turned to another one of his daughters. "Jenny, take everyone back to London. Your mum and I have some things to take care of here, but I want all of you away from here as soon as possible."

"No dawdling," Rose lightly chastised her son. "The Doctor and I won't be long and it will be nice to have all of my children and grandchildren under one roof."

Amy shuddered. "Trust me. I have no desire to stay here any longer than necessary."

"Right." The Doctor clapped his hands together. "Things to do. Rose and I still gotta work out what this base is for. We will see you all soon." He squeezed Rory's shoulder before taking Rose's hand. The pair slipped away swiftly, not wanting to spend any more time here than they needed to. When they were halfway back to the main control room, Rose told the Doctor of her suspicions. "They
gave up without a real fight. Why go to all this trouble and the elaborate hoax of the Flesh avatar just to hold up their hands in surrender. I have a bad feeling about this."

"I know what you mean. The sooner they get off the base and we figure this out the better." He smiled wolfishly down at her. "Run!"

Rose couldn't help but giggle as they reached their destination. "Right, so what exactly are we looking for?" she asked, heading to a nearby workstation. Over the years, she'd learned a lot about alien computers but she was nowhere near as good as Trisha, let alone Rory or the Doctor.

"We need to know what they did to Amy and Melody." The Doctor sat down at one of the terminals and his fingers flew over the keys. "Remind me later to run a full medical diagnostic on both of them."

Her heart sank. "You don't think that they ran experiments on either of them, do you?" She knew that the answer was most likely a yes and the only response that she got from the Doctor was a very slight nod of the head.

Uneasily she shifted from one foot to the other as she scanned the least encrypted files in the system. She was surprised to find that so many files had a low level of protection. Just as she was going to mention this the Doctor made a whooping noise; Rose was by his side in a heartbeat.

"I'm in." He looked delighted as he opened several files. "And I think I know what they were looking at." His face fell slightly.

"What?" She asked biting her lip.

"Melody's TNA, specifically her TARDIS genetics. Maybe a little bit of the part of her that's Time Lord. Nevertheless, it's what I feared; they want the part of her that can tap into the Bad Wolf." He roughly pushed his chair back and started pacing.

"But why? What do they think they can use the Bad Wolf for?" Rose turned back to the monitor and let him think out loud.

"Idris said that Bad Wolf only came out through an act of love," the Doctor mumbled. "Yet they couldn't know that."

"What if they meant to turn her into a weapon," Rose pondered. "If they've seen what Rory and I can do...they might think that Melody would be capable of it too."

The Doctor stopped and turned to face her. "A child is not a weapon!"

Her eyes softened. After all the things that he had seen, he still hated the mistreatment of the innocent. He hated people twisting and bending others to their will. After all this time, he knew what people were capable of and still was hesitant to believe it until they forced him to.

Behind them a screen flickered into life, and it was filled with the unmistakable face of Madame Kovarian. "I see you accessed our files. Do you understand yet? Oh, don't worry. I'm a long way away. But I like to keep tabs on what files are accessed, especially when it comes to the child. What do you think?"

"What did you want her for?" Rose ground out.

"She is our hope. Hope in this endless, bitter war." Kovarian smiled.
The Doctor looked confused. "What war? Against who?"

The evil woman sneered. "Against the two of you. Against the Doctor and his Bad Wolf."

"Melody is not some pawn in your chess game," the Doctor yelled.

Madame Kovarian sneered. "Oh, give us time. She will become our greatest asset."

"Except you don't have her anymore," Rose growled, the tiniest flecks of gold glowing in her eyes. "And we will never let you near her again."

"Oh, the two of you are so trusting." Kovarian laughed. "Fooling you once was a joy. But fooling you twice the same way? It's a privilege."

The screen cut out and the Doctor turned to Rose. His eyes were wild and she knew that he was putting it all together. She knew the moment he put all the pieces together because she felt the panic rise in him. "Flesh! No, no, no, no." He grabbed her hand and pulled her from the room.

A locked door stood in their way and both pulled out their sonic screwdrivers and set to work on the door. Both were yelling that it was a trap, reaching out with their minds to Rory, to let him know that Melody wasn't Melody.

But they could feel the sorrow emanating off their son and knew it was already too late.

*Demons run when a good man goes to war*

*Night will fall and drown the sun*

*When a good man goes to war*

*Friendship dies and true love lies*

*Night will fall and the dark will rise*

*When a good man goes to war*

*Demon's Run, but count the cost*

*The battle's won but the child is lost*

A chill ran deep through Rory's veins as he surveyed the carnage. It had all happened so fast. One minute they were happy and about to head into the TARDIS to go back to London. The next minute, they were under attack by the Headless Monks.

Overall, they were lucky. Sabrina had narrowly missed a swipe of one of the Headless Monk's blades. But Lorna Bucket, the brave woman who came to warn them that this wasn't over, was going to pay for her kindness with her life.

Tony was attending to her. Normally, Rory would be helping but right now he felt completely numb. It had been a set up, and as grateful as he was that Amy was safe, their daughter was still out there somewhere. The worst of it, though, was that he knew when and where they would find her and that made bile rise in his throat.

The sound of running footsteps caused him to look up. His mum and dad looked around in horror. "We know," Rory said in a resigned tone. He looked towards his wife, and the Doctor and Rose's gaze followed his.
Amy was perched on a box. Jenny sat behind her, rubbing circles on her back. "So they took her anyway. All this was for nothing."

Rose took a step towards Amy. "I am so sorry." The younger woman stood abruptly and skittered away.

"Amy," Jenny said softly, "it's not her fault."

"I know," Amy quietly replied, tears streaming down her face. "I know." Turning on her heel, she ran over to Rory and let him hold her.

"Mum, Dad," Tony called from the other side of the room. "There's someone who wants to speak to you. Her name is Lorna. She came to warn us, saved our lives."

Rose bent down and took Lorna's cool, pale hand. "Hello."

"The Doctor and Rose Tyler." Lorna gave a weak smile.

Taking her other hand, the Doctor said, "You helped our family. Thank you."

Lorna's breath rattled in her chest. "I met you both once. In the Gamma Forests." Her fingers tightened on theirs with as much strength as she could muster. "You don't remember me."

"Oh Lorna, 'course we remember." Rose brushed a free hand over the dying woman's brow.

"We remember everyone." The Doctor smiled encouragingly. "Hey, we ran, you, me and Rose. Didn't we run, Lorna?"

Shakily, Lorna nodded. "Yes, we did." The brave young woman took one last painful breath and stopped clinging to life. Leaning down, Rose closed Lorna's eyes and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead.

"Who was she?" Tony asked respectfully.

"Don't know. We haven't met her yet," the Doctor said, helping Rose to her feet.

"She was very brave," Tony told his parents.

"They're always brave, Tony." He clapped his son on the shoulder. "They're always brave."

"So what do we do now?" Rose sent her thoughts to the Doctor. "She could be anywhere in time and space."

The Doctor shook his head sadly. "No, they took her to Earth and it's already too late."

"What?" Rose was confused. "You're giving up? You never do that."

"1969, Rose. The little girl in the space suit."

"No!" She brought a hand up to cover her mouth. "It can't..." she whispered as the tears started to fall. The Doctor enveloped her in his arms and whispered empty promises that everything would be alright.

A flash of light alerted everyone that they had a new arrival.

"Well then," River Song said lightly as if she didn't know exactly what had happened here. "How
"Where the hell have you been?" Rose thundered. "After everything that we have been through. Everything that we will be through, you couldn't have warned us! Damn the laws of time, you should have told us."

River smiled sadly. "I couldn't have prevented this."

"You could have tried," the Doctor lashed out at her. "You could have stopped this from happening."

"No, she couldn't have." Rory pulled away from Amy and came to stand directly in front of River. "She couldn't have told us because she couldn't change her own past. No matter how much she wanted to."

Raising a hand, Rory cupped River's cheek. "You're Melody. Our Melody."

No one said a word. No one understood how River could Melody or how Rory could have possibly known.

"Yes, I am Melody." River wiped away an errant tear. "I am your daughter. Dad…"

Rory pulled her tightly to him. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry for what you've been through." Dropping his mental shields, he sent wave after wave of love and acceptance to his daughter.

"How?" Amy asked, confusion and disbelief filling her voice. "No, you're River. How could you possibly be Melody?"

Turning towards her mother, River took Amy's hand. It took a tremendous amount of effort for Amy to stop herself from flinching.

"The prayer leaf? Do you still have it?" River asked softly.

Amy reached a hand into her pocket and pulled out Lorna's gift. "My daughter's name, but I can't read it. The TARDIS hasn't translated it."

"The old girls have been hiding it from you," River calmly explained. "They'll translate it now. You have to concentrate."

Breaking her gaze away from River, Amy stared at the embroidered name.

"In the Forest, children take their mother's name and this in the language of the Forest." River continued. "Except, they don't have a word for pond, because the only water in the forest is the river."

Before Amy's eyes, the words changed. One side read River and the other read Song. River Song, Melody Pond… Melody Song… Pond River. Amy gasped. "Melody?"

River nodded. "Yes, Mum."

"Oh my God," Amy cried, dropping the prayer leaf and enfolding her daughter in her. "Melody, my Melody." Rory wrapped his arms around his girls.

"Come on," the Doctor said, motioning for everyone to follow him. "Let's give them some time alone."
Chapter 28

River had stayed with them for a week after Demon's Run. Thankfully she had convinced Amy to let
the Doctor and Tony run a full body scan on her. Kovarian and her gang had done serious damage to
Amy during her captivity. Luckily, the internal injuries had been found in time for them to be fixed.

River had sat by Amy's bed while she recovered. It became apparent that she was very protective of
her mother. Maybe it because River knew that living their lives in reverse she would lose Amy first.

When it came time for her to leave, Rory felt a myriad of emotions. Partially it was a relief, but it was
also very difficult to see her go. He was happy, distraught and resigned all at once. It was all just too
much to take. In the past few weeks Rory had learned that Amy and his daughter had been
kidnapped, they'd rescued Amy but still lost Melody. And then the kicker was learning River Song's
true identity.

And of course since River lived her life in reverse from them, there was very little she could tell
them. Oh, she left them evasive hints like she always did... Everything will work out the way it
should. Or things are going to get worse before they get better.

Before she left, she had hugged them and basked in her family's love, because for her, it could be the
last time she saw them and they knew who she was. It was one of the hardest goodbyes Rory had
ever said.

It was night, well, in relative terms since they were currently spinning through the Vortex. Amy was
sleeping. Rory was sitting in an armchair in the Library, Rose and the Doctor were curled up on the
sofa. Rory knew his mum had been trying to get him away from everyone else in order to grill him
on how he was feeling. He'd been avoiding that situation rather well until now. He couldn't run away
from her forever and just maybe he needed to talk about it.

"How long have you known?" the Doctor asked, breaking the silence.

"That River was my daughter?" Rory scrubbed a hand down his face. "Since I was fifteen."

"That long? Really?" His mum looked stunned.

"Yeah, well, I'd figured out pretty early that she was a Time Lady. Always thought that she was your
daughter." He waved a hand between the Doctor and his mum. The Doctor blushed slightly.

Rory continued. "Then when I confronted her about it, she told me that she wasn't your daughter.
Which left only three real possibilities. One, she was Dad's daughter. Not really an option since he
couldn't have children with Mum, and I couldn't see that happening.

"Two, she was just the Doctor's daughter. Again, without Mum, I didn't see that happening. I didn't
know Jenny was still alive so I assumed that she must be mine, daughter, granddaughter, great-
granddaughter maybe. But still mine. I couldn't figure out why she would be crossing timelines, but
she begged me not to question it. I promised her I would keep her secrets."

"Oh, love, I'm sorry." Rose came over and wrapped him in a hug. "That's a huge burden to keep all
this time."

"It's like Dad always said, it comes with being a Time Lord." Rory let tears fall down his face. "I
couldn't protect them. They took my wife, and they still have my daughter. And the woman that she
becomes is amazing, but somewhere out there is my baby girl. And then there's the Library. She
died. She was just born, and I know where and when she's going to die."

"Rory," Rose said, rubbing his back. "We'll find a way. I promise."

"And Amy knows about the Library. How can I face my wife knowing I can't guarantee our daughter's safety?"

"You've been working on a solution for years, love. I know you must have worked out some way." Rose said softly. The Doctor looked like he wanted to object, to say that he'd already tried to think of ways to save River, that it was a fixed point in time. But he couldn't bring himself to stomp out that last bit of hope.

Rory nodded. "Yeah, I think I have it figured out, but it may cost us our TARDIS and how could I choose between her and River? But that's not even the biggest problem right now, is it?"

"No," the Doctor agreed. "We need to try to find baby Melody."

"Where would they have her, though?" Rose asked.

"It's simple enough to figure out, isn't it?" Rory bit back another sob. "The Silence wanted a child of the Bad Wolf, and in 1969 they had a little girl in that orphanage. The girl in the spacesuit is Melody."

"No," Rose cried, shaking her head. "That little girl looked like she was six years old. Can't we fix this? I mean, we assume that little girl is Melody, but we could just be jumping to conclusions." She was grasping at straws and she knew it.

The Doctor let a tear slip down his face. "Don't you remember, Rose? When you felt the girl's presence in that warehouse, you heard the wolf howl. It's a calling card. I heard that same howl when you unlocked my memories of meeting you and James when I was in my Ninth body."

"We know that she went missing, and Jack told us she'd be safe." Realization dawned on Rose. "Someone goes back to save her. It would have to be one of us that could use a Vortex manipulator and who wasn't there the first time. Jenny."

"It's our best shot." Rory dug the heels of his hands into his eyes.

"I'll go get her," the Doctor said, standing up. "She'll bring Melody back. I promise. We'll have her meet us right back here." He clamped a hand on Rory's shoulder. "I'm so sorry, about this, all of it."

"Yeah, me too." Rory collapsed into Rose's arms as the Doctor left the room. He knew that in a few minutes he would have to wake his wife and tell her. Tell her that monsters had raised their daughter for years. There was no telling what kind of problems that would cause. It was very little comfort, but at least they knew she would turn out all right in the end.

A few minutes later, Rory reluctantly pulled himself away from his mum. "I need to talk to Amy, to tell her what Jenny is about to do." Rory stifled a sob. "Let her know that our baby isn't coming home."

"But she is Rory," Rose protested.

"No, Mum," Rory said sadly. "Our daughter may be coming home, but our baby is lost forever."

Unsurprisingly, Rory found Amy in their room. However, she was lying awake reading her diary instead of asleep, like she was when he left her earlier.
"Can't sleep?" he asked, sitting down next to her.

"I just keep thinking about the first time that I met River, on my first trip out." Amy shifted so that he could wrap an arm around her. "She hid it but there was this moment when I said that I didn't know who she was...she looked devastated. It must have been so hard to realize that her own mother didn't have any clue who she was. Her life..." Amy paused before speaking again. "I just don't understand. Why does she hop around our timeline?"

"I don't know, at least not yet." Rory stroked her hair. "We'll figure it out, though."

"Yeah..." She didn't sound like she believed him. "How old were you when you met River?"

"Six. She met us at a carnival. We were friends right from the start. I always knew there was something different about her. Felt connected to her. It's just, I never expected this."

"I know," Amy said, slightly more sure of herself. "I know that you, or Mum or Dad didn't want this..."

"But you think we should have been able to stop it."

"Part of my does, yes." Amy sounded resigned. "But I can't pass around blame. I have to be strong. I can't fall apart while waiting for our baby to come home."

A lump formed in Rory's throat; now he had to break her heart. "I need to tell you something. I need you to let me finish without interrupting. Can you do that?"

This grabbed Amy's full attention and she quickly agreed.

"We know where Melody is and Dad is sending Jenny to get her. We know where she is because we've encountered her before, in 1969. Melody was the little girl in spacesuit." He paused, wiping away a tear from his eye. Honestly, he was surprised that he had any tears left to shed. "I also think that she was the person in the spacesuit at Lake Silencio."

Neither of them said anything for a while. Amy was waiting to make sure he was finished and he was waiting for her reaction. Suddenly, Amy pushed herself off the bed and started frantically pacing up and down the room. "No! No! No! OUR DAUGHTER WAS NOT THE GIRL IN THE SPACESUIT! I refuse to believe it. We must have found Melody and that evil woman kidnapped another poor, innocent little girl." Picking up a vase from the table, she threw it against the wall. "You need to get our baby back, you need to be sure."

Rory stood up and moved in front of her. Reaching out, he held her in his arms. She punched and hit him. "Amy, I'm sure that the little girl in Florida was Melody."

"How? How can you be so certain that was our daughter?" Amy demanded, still struggling to get out of his arms.

Amazingly, he kept his voice calm. "Do you remember when Mum felt that mental presence? She heard the wolf howl. The same wolf howl that she and I hear in the back of our minds. It was Melody in that warehouse because she is the only other person who would hear the wolf."

Amy shook her head in protest. "Please don't let it be true. Oh Rory, what could they have done to her? Our baby, our baby..." She collapsed into his arms and they both sunk to the floor. Both were crying tears they didn't think they had left while Rory rubbed her back and made her promises that he wasn't sure he could keep about how everything would be all right in the end.
Jack had never felt as alone in a crowded bar as he did right now. He was sitting on a stool next to an attractive man in a sailor's uniform. At any other time in his life he'd have been chatting him up right from the start. But his leaving Ianto still stung in his chest. For the first time in his life, Jack Harkness wasn't interested in sex.

The bartender slipped him a piece of paper and told him that it was from the gentleman across the room. Looking up, he saw the familiar and yet out of time face of the Doctor. Not the current Doctor, but the one with spiky brown hair, pinstriped suit and Janis Joplin coat.

Jack’s throat constricted. This was the Doctor coming to say goodbye right before he regenerated into the floppy haired, green eyed, bow tie wearing one.

A broken man who would find what he was looking for, what he needed, in just a matter of weeks. Jack wanted that. He wished he could have had it with Ianto, but the thought of the other man's death was more than he could take.

The Doctor pointed at the piece of paper on the bar and then to the man sitting next to Jack. Opening it, he saw the words *His name is Alonso*, scribbled in the Doctor's slanted handwriting. Jack snapped a salute at the Doctor and he returned a two-fingered salute of his own. Without a single word, the Doctor turned on his heel and left.

Waving down the bartender, Jack ordered a bottle of the strongest stuff they had. When handing over the bottle, the bartender had warned that too much of that stuff could kill a man stone dead. With a mutter of 'I wish', Jack took the bottle to a secluded table, without even saying hello to Alonso. What was the point? He was here to drown his sorrow and maybe drink himself into yet another death.

Just as he was pouring himself a third drink a feminine hand stilled the bottle. "Might want to lay off that stuff, Captain. I know the last few days have been rough, but that stuff is pretty potent," a familiar voice said with a tinkling laugh.

"Don't care, *sweetie*," Jack grumbled, trying to steal back the bottle. "And if you don't mind I'm not in the mood for company and I'm really not looking for a shag tonight."

"Like I'd ever shag you." River smirked, put the bottle to her lips and took a huge gulp.

"Hey, watch it. That stuff could actually kill you." This time Jack pulled the bottle away.

"Nah, regenerate maybe if I didn't metabolize the stuff in time, but not kill me." She managed to pull the bottle back while Jack gaped at her and took another swig.

"Who are you? And why are you here?" he demanded.

"You know, all these times we've met, you've never once asked me my name." She was smiling but it didn't reach her eyes. Instead they looked haunted.

"I know your name, River Song."

"My name is as much River Song as yours is Jack Harkness." She steeled herself for what she was about to say next. "As to why I'm... There are a couple of reasons. First, after the 456 you need a friend and that is who I am, Jack, your friend. Secondly, I need to tell you a story and ask for your help."

Jack looked at her a little confused. Yes, after leaving Earth and Ianto behind he did need a friend. He wasn't sure if he actually considered River a friend. However, Rose trusted her completely so he did too. But something wasn't making sense. "Alright. I'll play along." He grabbed the bottle back
and took a drink.

River swallowed and said in the softest voice he had ever heard from her, "My name is Melody Rose Tyler-Pond and I need your help."

Mels lay in bed, watching the rays of the early morning sun dance off the ceiling. Today was the day, the day her family found out the truth of who she was.

Today's date had been written by her mother's own hand in the file given by her granddad to Hannah. Her mum had also written a time and a location. Mels wasn't sure why they were meeting in a cornfield outside of Leadworth instead of Uncle Tony and Aunt Trisha's house in London. Still, either way, today she would be back with her family where she belonged.

Well, she would be with them, and they would know who she was. Yes, today was going to be the best day of her life so far. Swinging her legs over the end of her bed, Mels stepped into the en suite of her hotel room to get ready for the meeting. Her mind wandered to how different her life would be when her family knew the truth. Yes, they loved her as she was now, but soon she would be able to fully embrace being a Tyler.

When she was ready, she opened the door back into the bedroom only to find it filled with creatures with large bald heads wearing suits. And in the middle of the group was a severe looking woman with a metal eye patch. "Who are you?"

The woman tutted. "Dearest Melody, I see you've regenerated." The woman stepped closer. "And I'm saddened that you don't remember the ones that raised you through those early formative years. I'm really very hurt."

"I don't remember anything before my regeneration, least of all you." Mels' eyes darted her eyes around the room, looking frantically for an escape route.

"That is a pity," the woman replied coolly, and one of the creatures grabbed Mels' arm.

Mels twisted and tried to free herself. "Who are you? What do you want?" Keep them talking, that's what Pops had always taught her, but apparently this woman had a different idea.

"I'm Madame Kovarian, and what I want is you." Kovarian grinned evilly. "You didn't really think you could get away from us that easily, did you?"

Another creature brought a hand to Mels' temple, and all she could do was scream as it broke through her defenses and into her mind.
Chapter 29

Several hours after Rory had broken the news to Amy that their daughter was the little girl from 1969, he, Amy, Rose and the Doctor stood in the console room. Jenny had gone to rescue Melody using her Vortex Manipulator. They would then meet up at Tony and Trisha's in order to give young Melody a safe place to acclimate to her family.

"Do I look alright?" Amy asked, quietly pulling on the hem of her blouse. She had spent time carefully doing her hair and makeup for this meeting. Less than a week ago she had been holding a baby in her arms. Yesterday she had been hugging her daughter who was technically older than she was and today she would be getting a little girl back. A little girl who had been raised in isolation by monsters.

"You look beautiful," Rory whispered, taking her hand and sending her feelings of love and comfort through their bond. This was difficult for Rory as well and not just for the obvious reasons. Something wasn't sitting right about River just coming out and saying she was their daughter.

Not that he didn't believe her, he absolutely did. But that kind of revelation seemed like it too much foreknowledge to give them. Maybe it had been a clue? A warning? He really had no idea, but it didn't sit right.

The Doctor cleared his throat. "Are we ready?" Amy nodded and everyone began the synchronized routine of piloting the TARDIS to the correct coordinates in time and space. With a soft thump, the ship landed in what they thought was the spare bedroom at Tony's London house. It still amazed the Doctor that the addition of Rose and Rory as pilots tended to make their landings less bumpy.

Hesitantly, Rory and Amy made their way over to the door. Pushing it open, they stepped out... into a cornfield. Rose and the Doctor were only a few paces behind them. "What the... where are we?"

"I know that Dad's a bad driver," Amy joked lightly. "But I figured that with the two of you helping we wouldn't be this lost."

"Where are we?" the Doctor asked, spinning in a slow circle.

Rory snorted. "Outside of Leadworth, in the Miller's corn field. That grove of trees over there..." he pointed into the distance, "is where Amy and I would spend our afternoons growing up. The real question is, why are we here? Why did the old girl bring us here?"

Before anyone could answer, the sound of car engines and distant sirens broke through the quiet countryside. There were no roads close to here, but that engine was definitely getting closer.

Very soon, they saw a sleek, black sports car tearing across the field, the police in close pursuit. Screaming, the four of them scrambled out of the way. Within less than a minute it was only a hundred meters away and on a collision course with the TARDIS. At the very last moment, the car turned and ended up only a few inches from hitting the time ship. The door opened and out slid...

"Mels!" Amy yelled. "What do you think that you're doing?"

Their friend grinned. "Coming to find you, of course. Today's the day."

"The day for what, exactly?" the Doctor asked at the same time Rose spoke.
"Where did you get the car, young lady?" Rose crossed her arms, looking stern.

"Nan!" Mels exclaimed, turning to Rose. The younger woman flinched and brought a hand momentarily to her head. "It's mine... ish."

Amy sighed. "Oh, Mels. Not again."

"I thought that you were passed this." Rose shook her head. "You're gonna end up in prison."

"Nope," Mels replied, popping the p. "Today is the last day that I'm going to be stuck on this stupid rock." With a smirk, she pulled out a revolver. Her hands trembled slightly as she held them at gunpoint.

"Mels!" Amy screamed.

"Put it away," Rose admonished.

Rory sighed, not really in the mood. "For god's sake!"

"I don't understand," the Doctor said, surveying the scene. "Why exactly are you doing this?"

Mels shrugged. "I need out of here now."

Stepping forward, Rose pushed the weapon down. "Sweetie, all you had to do was ask. Anywhere in particular?"

There was a twinkle in her eye as Mels replied. "Well. let's see. You've got a time machine; I've got a gun. What the hell, let's kill Hitler."

**Berlin, 1938**

The crew of the Teselecta, a shape shifting, time traveling machine, had selected its newest form. Herrick Zimmerman was a loyal member of the Nazi party and guilty of category three hate crimes. He was the perfect form to take in order give justice to one of the most ruthless men of 20th century Earth, Adolf Hitler.

Teselecta Zimmer stepped into the Führer's private office. "What do you want?" Hitler demanded. "Who let you in here?"

"Do not call for help," the Teselecta said calmly. "This room has been sound screened. You have been found guilty. Justice mode activating." A beam of light shot out of the open mouth of Zimmerman, trapping Hitler. The man's body convulsed in pain.

Inside the machine, the captain leaned forward in his seat. "Hang on. This is 1938. We're too early. We need to go later in his time stream."

"Something else," a woman at the console interjected. "We've got incoming."

Thick, billowy clouds of smoke filled the console room. The fumes were noxious and burned at the back of Mels' throat. She worried for her mum and Nan since neither one of them had respiratory bypass.

"You shot it!" the Doctor exclaimed, bustling around the controls. "You shot my TARDIS! You shot the console!"
"It's your fault!" Mels yelled indignantly and heard a tinkling laugh in the back of her mind. Looking all around, she couldn't find the source of the laughter, but it soothed the pounding headache she had.

"How is it my fault?" the Doctor demanded.

"She didn't do it on purpose," Rose defended. "Something's off here. This isn't like you, Mels."

The throbbing in her head increased. Her mental shields had been weakened by the attack by Kovarian and now her mind was battling itself. Part of her was wanting, needing to complete the task that had been implanted in her head. Another part felt such an intense loyalty to a family that didn't even know who she was that she didn't think that she could do it.

The only thing that she could do right now was argue. "You said guns didn't work in this place. You said we're in a state of temporal grace."

"He was lying," Rory replied, half laughing over the ridiculousness of the situation.

The Doctor was indignant now. "Oh yes, I was lying and that was a clever lie, you idiot! Anyone could tell that was a clever lie!"

"Don't worry, my love. I'll be perfectly alright," a voice in her head said and filled her mind with a haunting yet familiar melody.

Mels stared at the time rotor in awe. She had heard that song before, or at least a similar one. It had comforted her when she had been sad and lonely growing up in Leadworth. It had been the strongest those times she had been at Pops and Nan's house and now she knew what it had to be their TARDIS. And now she could hear her voice.

"Everything happens for a reason," the ship said enigmatically.

"And what's that supposed to mean?" Mels thought back but the ship simply went back to singing.

Unfortunately, the TARDIS' voice wasn't the only voice in her head today. The other was a near constant thrumming. Several words repeated over and over again. *The time is now. Time to bring them to their knees. They are stronger together. Kill one, weaken the other. Kill, Kill.* The harder Melody pushed these thoughts away the more her head throbbed.

Every time she opened her mouth to tell her family what was happening, her head throbbed again and no words came out. It was as if someone else had taken over her mind and body. She had some level of influence, but ultimately she wasn't the one calling the shots.

With a heavy thud, the ship landed.

"Out! Out! Out!" Rose screamed, ushering everyone towards the doors.

The Doctor placed a hand at the small of Rose's back and pushed her in the direction of the exit. "Everybody out! Don't need to be smoked to death. Get out!"

Once outside the door, Mels took in lungs full of clean air.

"Where are we?" Amy asked.

"When are we?" Rose asked, turning on a slow circle, stopping when her eyes fell upon a red banner emblazoned with a Nazi swastika. "Oh no," she whispered.

Mels felt something palpable in the air. This must be something that her time senses were picking up.
She'd read so much about these types of things but had yet to experience anything like this. It was heavy and unmoving and part of her wanted to run away from it. Instinctively, she made a move towards the TARDIS door.

The Doctor turned in her direction. "Mels, don't go in there. Bad smoke, don't breathe the bad, bad smoke. Bad deadly smoke. Because somebody shot my TARDIS!"

Rory leaned over someone who Mels thought looked like Henrick Zimmerman. Mels had an eidetic memory, and they had studied World War Two. Well, she had a photographic memory for almost everything that had happened post her first regeneration.

"Mum, this guy. I think he's hurt," Rory said, checking for a pulse.

Coming closer to her son, Rose tugged on his arm. "Rory, just leave him alone. We need to get out of here."

Across the room a man stood up from behind the desk. The Doctor turned to greet him, not yet realizing where they were "Oo! Hello. Sorry. Is this your office? Had a sort of collision with my... vehicle. Fault's on both sides, let's say no more about—" His face fell as he realized just whose office they were in. "... it," he finished lamely.

"No way," Amy breathed.

Adolf Hitler straightened his uniform. "Thank you. Whoever you are. I think you have just saved my life."

The Doctor swallowed and sounded slightly disappointed. "Believe me. It was an accident."

"Oh shit," Rose said a little too loudly and Mels snickered. She'd rarely heard her Nan curse. Rory shot her a reprimanding look and she clapped a hand over her mouth. It really was a little funny.

Her head throbbed again, and she only just managed to keep herself from doubling over in pain. It was getting harder to fight the urges that were bubbling up from within.

"What did he mean, we just saved his life?" Amy's eyes darted between Rory and Hitler. "We could not have just saved Hitler."

Letting out a low growl, the Doctor turned towards Melody. "You see? Time travel. It never goes to plan."

There was an anger in his eyes that Mels had never seen before. Certainly, Pops had never looked at her this angrily before. Well, he'd been angry with her plenty of times, but Mels had never messed with timelines before.

"This box, what is it?" Hitler asked, laying a hand on the TARDIS. Everyone in the room shuddered.

Smirking, the Doctor said, "It's a police telephone box from London, England. That's right, Adolf. The British are coming."

Behind the Doctor, Zimmerman stood up. Hitler drew his service revolver and fired. The Doctor barely managed to avoid being hit. Zimmerman took two of the three bullets fired. The other found a different mark.

The searing pain in her abdomen was the first indication the bullet had struck her. The second was
the growing stain of blood on her blouse. Damn, this was not how today was supposed to go. It was supposed to be 'hi, Mum and Dad, I'm your long lost daughter'. No, instead it was 'let's have monsters implant things in your head to try and make you do things you don't want to do'. And now, 'oh look, I get shot as payback for what I did to the TARDIS and now I may have to regenerate.' Mels could feel that the bullet had done some major damage.

Looking up, she saw her father punch Hitler and disarm him.

"He was trying to kill me," the German explained, holding up his hands.

Rory pulled back the hammer on the gun. "Shut up, Hitler."

"Take Hitler and put him in the closet," the Doctor said, waving his hand in the direction of a cupboard.

"Come on, here you go." Rory roughly pulled the man to his feet and pushed him into the small space. The Furher protested but Rory wasn't listening. Slamming the door shut, Rory pulled out his sonic and secured the door. Mels smiled despite the pain. Her dad, the hero.

Zimmerman was caught as he fell by Amy. "Oi, mate, are you alright?"

"Oh, yes," the Tesselecta replied.

---

Inside the Teselecta, the woman, Anita turned to the captain. "Sir, what do we do now?"

Another man, Jim, raised his hand. "Suggestion. We should go into surveillance mode."

"Agreed." Carter, the captain, nodded. "Let's faint." And the Tessalecta fainted dead away.

While Rory, Rose and the Doctor were discussing their fainting friend, Mels took in a large gurgling, rattling breath.

Amy turned to her friend, full of concern. "Mels?"

Somehow, Mels was managing to keep herself upright. With the pounding words in her head and the searing pain in her abdomen, this was not turning out to be an ideal day. "Hitler," she managed to whisper.

"What about him, love?" Rose asked, coming closer to her.

Mels lifted her hand to reveal the bloodstain. "Lousy shot." Falling backwards, she collapsed onto the remains of a broken table.

Back inside the Teselecta, Jim studied his screen. "Sir, that blue box. I've got a match. If we're trying to bag war criminals, we've got the biggest one ever right under our noses. Forget Hitler. We take this one down, the Justice Department will give us the rest of the year off."

Carter came up behind him to study the information. "You sure?"

Nodding, Jim replied. "There's no question. It's her."

Rory and Amy each took one of Mels' hands while the Doctor applied pressure to her wound. Rose gently stroked her hair. "This isn't how today was supposed to go, Nan."

"How was it supposed to go, sweetheart?" Rose asked softly.
Mels tightened her grip on each of her parent's hands. "It was supposed to be a happy family reunion." She grimaced in pain. The TARDIS song was louder in her head. Not loud enough to drown out the other, more sinister voice.

"Why do we need a reunion, Melody?" Rose continued to stroke her hair. "We are family. We have always been family, blood related or not."

"Oh, Nan," Mels sighed. "None of you ever figured it out. My brilliant grandmother, my genius grandfather and my clever father never put together the pieces."

"Mels? What do you mean, figure it out?" Amy sounded almost desperate.

"Oh, Mum," Mels squeezed Amy's hand, delighted at being able to say it, to call Amy her mum. "Penny in the air." The TARDIS's voice echoed in her head. "Let go. Give into the warmth. Give into the light."

Four sets of eyes widened in shock, disbelief and just a little sadness. "Penny drops." Mels began to shimmer with a faint but unmistakable golden glow.

"What going on?" Amy asked in disbelief.

"Back, back, back!" the Doctor yelled. "Get back!" Everyone scrambled backwards.

"I'm running through these rather quickly." Mels painfully hauled herself to her feet. The pain was already starting to dissipate. Regeneration energy had started to heal the wound. It burned deep within her. She held up a hand and watched the glow starting to grow brighter. "I don't even remember the first time it happened."

"Melody," Amy sobbed. "You're Melody Rose, our Melody." Mels nodded. "I named my daughter after you." Amy made a sound that was half laugh, half sob.

"You named your daughter after your daughter," the Doctor said, sounding slightly bemused and more than a little horrified.

Mels smiled. "I had to wait years until I could be placed in a foster home near you. I'm so glad I did. There, you see? It all worked out in the end, didn't it? You got to raise me after all. And I got to know Pops. How many people can do that, eh? Get to get to know a grandfather who died before they were even born."

"Time travelers," Rose said softly. "I got to meet my dad, and he died when I was a baby."

"Exactly, Nan." Mels nodded. "And how wonderful that must have been."

"You're Melody," Amy repeated lamely.

Rory looked back and forth between his parents, his wife and his daughter. "But if she's Melody, that means that she's also--"

"Oh shut up, Dad. I'm focusing on a dress size." She burst into golden flames and burned. Her features bubbled and reformed.

"Well, I guess this effectively ends the debate over whether I can regenerate or not," she heard her father say through the roaring noise in her ears. Almost as soon as it had started, it was over.

It felt, well, it felt weird. New teeth, new legs, new everything, oh, she needed to find a mirror. The
"There's just so much of it, and it's so curly. Look at these curves!" She actually squealed. "I'm all sort of... mature." She clicked her teeth together. A manic sort of energy coursed through her veins. She only wished it would still the pounding in her head. "The teeth. The teeth! The teeth! Oh. look at them!"

_Time to act. Time to kill._ Echoed around in her head. Turning around, she faced them. "Excuse me, you lot. I need to weigh myself." She ran out of the room, waiting just on the other side of the door.

"Wow, I just… after everything, I just can't believe it." Rose's voice came through the open door.

"That's Melody." Amy sighed.

"That's River Song." The Doctor sounded flummoxed.

"That's our daughter," Rory replied and Mels could swear that she could hear more than a hint of pride in his voice.

Wait, what had granddad just referred to her as? Mels poked her head around the corner. "Who's River Song?"

"Spoilers," Rose said, trying hard not to giggle.

Something about hearing her Nan's voice was both comforting and grating. It made her simultaneously want to give in to those urges implanted into her brain and to push them away. "Spoilers? What's spoilers?" Mels tilted her head to the side as a raging tidal wave of pain overtook her. "Hang on, just something I have to check."

Once around the corner, she leaned heavily into the wall. With trembling fingers, she retrieved a small pouch from around her neck. She was fighting a losing battle as she removed what looked like a large thorn and positioned it between her fingers.

Please no! She wanted to scream. But she couldn't, although she could hear and feel the orders of that evil woman burning through her brain, she was helpless against them. If she could verbalize what was going on she would. And then Mum, Dad, Nan and Granddad could save her and they could stop what was inevitably about to happen.

_The Captain of the Teselecta drummed his fingers. That's her all right. Melody Tyler-Pond, the woman who kills the Doctor and the Bad Wolf._

Once the poisoned thorn was in place, Mels (she wasn't sure that name fit any more) continued to fight an internal battle. Mentally she felt drained and she closed her eyes for just one second and the battle was lost. The commands that Kovarian's henchmen had implanted took over and wouldn't let go until the job was done.

A wild, possessed gleam now shone from River's eyes. With a flourish, she whipped around the corner and back into Hitler's office in time to hear the end of one of the Doctor's speeches.

"This isn't the River Song we know yet. This is her right at the start. She doesn't even know her name."

"Well, enough of all that." Mels smirked. "Down to business."
"Yes, exactly," Rory replied. "Do you mind telling us how you ended up as a child in Leadworth?"

Mels shrugged. "I don't know many of the details. Honestly, I don't remember a thing before my first regeneration. May want to ask Hannah; she always seemed to be the one with the answers, when I was growing up. I only know what was in the file and that one book."

"Hannah?" Amy's eyes narrowed. "Trisha's mum?"

"One and the same, Mother. Gold star." Mels made her way closer to the group.

"Alright, another mystery to solve," Rory said, shaking his head.

Rose stepped forward and looked Mels straight in the eye. "What I don't understand is why you felt the need to point a gun at us in order to get into the TARDIS. Or why you felt the need to steal a car."

"Oh, Nan." Mels raised the hand with the thorn to Rose's arm. She brushed it lightly across her Nan's skin. It barely broke the skin, but it was enough to seal her fate. "I did it because they made me."

The pressure in her head dissipated slightly. She dropped the thorn to the ground and crushed it beneath her heel. "I'm sorry," Mels sobbed, clutching her head. "I didn't want to, please believe me. They made me. I'm sorry, but it's too late." She dropped to her knees.

Amy rushed over and wrapped her arms around her daughter. "What is she talking about? Who made her do what?"

The pressure on her head eased slightly but was replaced by a maniacal laughter.

"What she's programmed to," the Doctor said sadly. "Demon's Run. Remember? This is what they were building. A weapon."

"But she hasn't done anything yet." Rory looked frantic. "Well, she has at Lake Silencio, to Dad, but we're going to stop that."

"What are you talking about?" Rose asked, taking an unsteady step.

"I don't have time to explain that right now," Rory said a little harshly. "River, I mean Mels, please, what do you mean it's already too late?"

"I wouldn't have done it if they hadn't made me. It hurts, my head, what they did." Mels buried her head in her mother's shoulder. "It's done, and I've killed her."

Rory was next to his daughter in an instant; his fingers went to her temples. "Oh sweetheart, what did they do to you?"

Mels felt him inside her head. She knew he'd never harm her, knew that he was there to help but after the earlier invasion she wanted to get away. A wolf howled somewhere in the deepest recess of her mind.

It was all too much. With all of her might she pushed away from her parents. She had to escape. She had just brought about her grandmother's death. Nan meant so much to her and with the slightest graze of a thorn, she had done the unthinkable.

Mels was at the window the TARDIS had crashed through in a flash. "I'm sorry. I waited so many years for today. To tell you who I am and to rejoin the family. It just couldn't work out like that. I am
never going to get a happy ending. All I have done today is ruin the family. Mum, Dad, don't follow me. I'm dangerous."

"Well, I don't care if you think you're dangerous. You are still a member of this family, always have been." Rose replied, taking a step forward and losing her balance.

The Doctor barely caught her before she fell to the ground. "River, what did you do?"

"I'm not River. I don't know who River is, and I'm not even sure who I am anymore." Mels turned and bolted out the open window.

"Mum, what's wrong with you? What has she done to you?" Rory knelt down beside Rose.

"I think she was poisoned," the Doctor replied, examining Rose's arm. "River, Mels scratched her with something. See?" He turned her arm so Amy and Rory could see the scratch that was now blistered and bright red.

"Why would she do that?" Amy asked, a tear escaping from her eye.

"Because someone brainwashed her," Rory answered quickly. "They broke through her mental defenses and they made her do this. I was in her head; they did some damage. Nothing that can't be repaired but they hurt her."

"And she's your daughter," the Doctor said softly. "Go after her. I'll take care of Rose. Your mum will be fine. Go get your daughter."

"Yeah," Rory agreed, standing and pulling Amy to her feet. "We'll be back. Keep her safe, Dad." Rose made a gasping sound and all eyes turned to her.

"On my life," the Doctor promised.
Once Amy and Rory had left, Rose smiled up at the love of her life. "You are such a liar. I'm dying and rather quickly."

Clutching her tightly, the Doctor kissed her forehead. "I am not lying, Rose Tyler. If I lose you now... I don't... I can't... I will fix this."

"I believe in you," Rose whispered, and he picked her up and carried her into the TARDIS.

The Doctor shifted Rose in his arms as he opened the TARDIS doors. "Extractor fans on!" he pleaded and the fans kicked into gear. "Oh. That works."

"She's more apt to do what you want if you ask her nicely instead of hitting her with a hammer," Rose murmured softly.

"Oi, still so cheeky." He smiled and continued straight through the console room to the med bay. Thankfully the TARDIS had moved it closer. He sent his ship a mental thanks.

"That's me, your cheeky Rose. Even as I'm dying." She winced in pain.

"Don't talk like that. I'm going to fix this." He gingerly set her down on the examination table.

"Then stop panicking and figure it out." Rose tried to prop herself up on her elbow but fell backwards.

"You lay down and rest and stop telling me what to do." He grinned at her, trying to make her smile. Thankfully, it worked.

Rose giggled. "I'm in charge, remember? You still owe me a badge."

"Survive today and I will have 'Property of Rose Tyler' tattooed on my bum, if you like."

"Oh, can we have it done on Renpar 5? They have the glittery tattoos." Rose smirked an evil little smirk.

"Your wish is still my command." He kissed her forehead and went back to examining her. Pushing down his panic, he pulled out some diagnostic instruments. A few short minutes later, the Doctor had his answers and they weren't good.

"Tell me," Rose demanded. "I know how sad and upset you are. I can feel it. It's bad, isn't it? I'm really dying, aren't I?"

The Doctor stepped over and took her hand. "It's fatal. She infected you with the poison of the Judas tree. It's dangerous enough that it would kill me and disable my ability to regenerate. You aren't immortal, Rose."

"Not that we know of," Rose joked. "You'll think of something. How long do I have?"

He brought her hand to his lips and spoke reverently. "You will be dead in thirty-two minutes."

"Better get cracking then, love." Rose moved her hand to cup his cheek.

The Doctor sighed and leaned into her palm. "Right. I think I may have a solution, but I'll need
Rory's help."

Rory's day was really not going to plan, not that anything every really went to plan. Today, however, was particularly bad and getting worse. Since leaving his dying mum with his dad in a room that had Hitler locked in a cupboard so that he could go and find his newly regenerated daughter, he'd assaulted a Nazi and stolen his motorbike.

Yep, today might just be the craziest day of his life, and it wasn't even time for tea yet.

Amy clung to his back as he maneuvered through the streets of Berlin. He had no idea where he was going and with a sigh of frustration he pulled the bike to a stop. "Okay, all of Berlin. How do we find her?" How do we find her?"

"I don't know." Amy sounded frustrated. "She's telepathic and you're telepathic. Do your Time Lordy, TARDISy, Bad Wolfy thingy and find her."

He shifted so he could turn to look at her. "Time Lordy, TARDISy, Bad Wolfy thingy? It doesn't really work like that. It's not magic, Amy."

"Oh, shut up!" She smacked his arm. "And just concentrate on her."

Huffing, he readjusted himself in the seat and was about to do exactly as Amy suggested when another motorbike pulled up next to them. The man astride it stared at Amy almost as if he was scanning her. Then the man and the motorbike began to morph into a replica of Amy.

"Not again," Rory moaned as a blue beam shot out of the mouth of another doppelganger of his wife.

Almost instantaneously, Rory and Amy found themselves in a long corridor. "Hold on, this looks familiar," Rory said, spinning around. "Why does this look familiar?"

"No idea," Amy replied, looking around herself. "Where are we? And how did we get here?"

"I would say that we were miniaturized and are now inside a robot replica of you." Rory laughed. "And I thought this day couldn't get any stranger." He took her hand and began to pull Amy down the hall to investigate. "I think I know where I've seen this place before."

Before he could explain, something that looked like a floating, metal jelly fish blocked their path. "Welcome," it greeted them. "You are unauthorized. Your death will be implemented."

"Damn," Rory swore, backing away while trying to fish his sonic screwdriver out of his pocket. "Where's Jenny and her Vortex manipulator when you need them?"

"What is that?" Amy asked, stumbling as they tried to get away.

"I don't know. Just give me a mo'." Rory adjusted the settings on his sonic and aimed it at the machine. It sparked and fizzed before falling to the ground. "Run!"

The two of them ran at top speed down the hall, now being chased by two more of the metal monsters. Finally they reached a closed door. Amy banged on the door. "Get it open," she screamed.

"Hold on," Rory yelled, aiming his sonic.

"Please remain calm while your life is terminated," the nearest machine instructed, reaching out a tentacle towards them.
"I don't think so." Rory soniced the first one and the second one advanced.

"Please cooperate in your officially sanctioned termination. It is normal to experience fear during your incineration."

The door behind them slid open, and a young man held up two fingerless gloves with a large disk. "Here, put these on so you don't have to destroy another one of our antibodies."

"Well, if you didn't want them destroyed, then you shouldn't have sent them to kill us," Amy snarked.

The young man rolled and pressed the disks now adorning Amy and Rory's wrists. Holding them up to the antibody, he said, "See, they're authorized."

The disks glowed green and the Antibody halted it's assault. "Thank you and have a nice day," it said before docking itself into the bulkhead. The doors slid shut on what was now obviously a lift.

"Hello, I'm Jim. This is Justice Department vehicle 6018. You're not guilty of anything. Welcome aboard the Teselecta."

Mels or Melody or whatever the hell people were going to call her now, she still wasn't sure, stood in an the window of an empty apartment overlooking a park in the center of the city. So much had happened today, so much that she had brought about herself. Even if she hadn't wanted to, it had been her hand that had dealt the fatal blow. And then she had run away when things got tough. Much more like the Time Lord side of the family then.

The door creaked open, and Mels turned to see her mother walk in. "You killed the Doctor and the Bad Wolf."

A sob escaped from the Mels' mouth. "$I've never hurt Granddad or Pops, but yes… I killed Nan."

"You killed the Doctor and the Bad Wolf while under the control of the movement known as the Silence. In spite of the fact that you were pardoned by the Shadow Proclamation, do you accept full responsibility for your actions?"

Anger flared inside of her, and she lashed out at the being she believed was her mother. "$I have never, to the best of my knowledge, done anything to Granddad. But who knows! I have zero memories from before my first body, not a single one. Why don't you check with the people who took those memories away?"

"But yes, I hurt Nan. I could have fought harder against the instinct, but I was too weak. The fault of her death is entirely my own."

"Thank you," Teselecta Amy said just before opening its mouth and engulfing Mels in a beam of red light. Mels writhed in pain. Her eyes were forced open and every cell in her body felt like it was individually being ripped apart.

"Hello!" the Doctor called from across the room. "$Sorry. Did you say she killed the Doctor? And the Bad Wolf?" He turned to Rose, who was leaning into him for support. "$The last time I checked, that was us and we are both alive and kicking."

"Maybe not kicking." Rose grinned. "$Dancing, I'd say." She did a shaky twirl in his arms, stumbling slightly. Gracefully, he caught her and turned her fall into a dip.
"Nan!" Mels cried. "You're alive."

"Can't keep me down, sweetheart." Rose winked and let the Doctor gently maneuver her in chair.

He then turned to the Teselecta and scanned it with his sonic. "A judgment Death machine in the form of Amelia Tyler. That is a first."

"Are you serious?" Mels asked, inching closer to Rose.

"Never knowingly. Never knowingly be serious." He grinned at her and then studied the scan results from his sonic. "Oh Rose, it's a robot."

He grinned cheekily at her. "With four hundred and twenty-three life signs inside. A robot worked by tiny people. Love it. But how did you all get in there, though? Bigger on the inside?" He checked the sonic again. "No. Basic miniaturization sustained by a compression field."

"Oo!" Rose giggled but it seemed to take a great deal of effort. "Watch what you eat. The gas is a really unpleasant side effect." She winced and held on tightly to the table. Her knuckles turned white, and Mels moved to help her grandmother.

Another red beam shot out of the Teselecta and trapped Mels in that beam of red light. Her mouth moved as she screamed silent agony.

"Don't you touch her! Do not harm her in any way!" Rose screamed, pushing herself into a standing position.

On the bridge of the Teselecta, Rory was angry. "Stop it! You're hurting her."

"She killed your parents." Carter stated nonchalantly. "Why do you care what happens to her."

"Because the Doctor and the Bad Wolf are not dead, and Melody is my daughter. So either you stop this now or I will stop you," Rory growled.

Jim turned around from his seat. "He is family; he has privileges."

Looking rather annoyed, Carter pushed a few buttons on Rory's wrist device and then terminated the beam torturing Mels.

"Now who wants my parents dead?" Rory demanded.

Both on the bridge and through the robot's mouth the computer answered, "The Silence."

"What is the Silence? Why is it called that? What... what does it mean?" Rory questioned.

"The Silence is not a species. It is a religious order or movement. They were formed to silence the Doctor and the Bad Wolf from their reign over of tyranny over the Universe."

"Tyranny?" Amy scoffed. "It's not tyranny to help right the injustice."

The computer answered again. "The Silence believe that the interference of the Doctor and the Bad Wolf in the absence on the rules formerly enforced by the higher species known as the Time Lords is causing damage to the fabric of time."

"And they think they know better?" Rory laughed. "Earlier you said that Melody had been pardoned why?"
"Melody Rose Tyler-Pond was pardoned of her crimes, in absentia, due to her being under mind control from members of the Silence and her young age at the time that she killed the Doctor."

Amy surged forward and slapped Carter across the face. "You. Bastard! She was a child at Lake Silencio and she was forced to do what she did, both times. Melody is a victim and was pardoned. You Mother Fucking Bastard HOW DARE YOU?"

Rory grabbed Amy and pulled her away before she could strike again. "He's not worth it." Keeping an arm tightly around her waist, he glared daggers at the captain. "And just who the hell do you think you are? Who made you judge, jury and executioner of my daughter?"

"We have a certain responsibility, now that we have developed time travel," Carter growled cupping his injured cheek. "So we extract people towards the end of their timeline and give people the justice they escaped." He flipped a button on his control panel and locked the red beam onto Melody. "We give them hell."

"Rory! Stop them!" Amy screamed.

Without thinking, Rory pulled off his screwdriver and soniced the control panel. Sparks flew and the punishment ray stopped. But so did all of the wrist devices. Antibodies came from every direction. "Shit," he exclaimed, aiming a sonic blast at the nearest one.

"All privileges have been revoked," another Antibody said, advancing on a crewmember.

Carter grabbed the comm link. "Mother ship, come in. Emergency beam out now."

Each member of the crew of the Teselecta disappeared in the telltale flash of light of a transmat beam. Amy and Rory were left alone to run for their lives from the antibodies. "We could use a little help getting out of here!" Rory thought to his parents.

Outside of the ship that looked like Amy, Mels' eyes widened. "I heard that. I heard Dad in my head."

"Of course you did," Rose said softly. "You're telepathic." The Doctor, who was now kneeling beside her, squeezed her hand.

"They need help," he whispered and raised her hand to his lips. "But I can't leave you."

"Yes you can, love." Rose took a shaky breath. "Our children need you and if I have any chance at surviving, I need Rory."

Solemnly, he nodded and turned to Mels. "I need you to stay with her, Melody. Please don't leave her alone. Can you do that for me?"

Mels shook her head. "You shouldn't trust me. I did this. I'm the one who poisoned her. They were right to punish me."

Moving beside her, the Doctor pulled her into a hug. "This is not your fault. You weren't in control. They hurt you and made you do this. I trust you." He pressed a kiss into her hair. "Please stay with your Nan. I'll be right back with your parents."

Nodding, Mels pulled away and went over to take Rose's hand. The Doctor sprinted towards the TARDIS and a moment later the ship dematerialized.
Rose's hand was almost limp in her granddaughter's. "Please don't die, Nan. I'm..."


"How?" Mels asked. "How do I do that?"

"Just think it and push the thoughts towards me. Oh, love, there is still so much for you to learn. And I promise that we'll teach you, but right now you need a crash course in something," Rose thought.

"What, like this?" Mels smiled at her newly found ability. "I'm doing it!"

"Very good. Now pay attention. In the back of your mind, do you hear it?" Rose asked.

Mels shook her head. "Hear what?"

"The wolf. It's a part of who you are and right now it may be my only hope. Let it find you." The grinding noise of the TARDIS rematerializing interrupted Rose's thoughts.

The door to the TARDIS banged open and Amy, Rory and the Doctor flew across the room. "Mum!" Amy and Rory called. Rory dropped to his knees at his mother's side. Amy made to join him, but the Doctor held her back.

"Wait, Amy, stay back," he said wrapping an arm around her shoulder. "If Rose is going to survive this, we have to let Rory and River do this on their own."

"What are they going to do, Dad?" Amy's voice trembled slightly.

"It's the Bad Wolf. The Silence wanted to use it against Rose and me, but they don't understand it." The Doctor's arm tightened around Amy's shoulder as Rose, Rory and Mels began to be enveloped in a now familiar golden glow. "Love. It's what they didn't know that they needed. They tried to have Rose killed today. But they didn't count on the love that is shared between them."

The glow grew brighter and brighter. Rory took one of Mels' hands and moved it to Rose's temple. He moved his hand to Rose's other one. Rose arched out of the chair, her eyes golden and wide. After a moment she opened her mouth and a cloud of smoke escaped. With a heavy sigh she collapsed back into the chair.

Thinking it was over, the Doctor stepped forward but Rory turned to him. "Stop." Rory's voice had a slightly ethereal quality to it. He moved his hands and placed them on his daughter's temples. "The damage done can be undone, young wolf." Rory's hand glowed even brighter for a few seconds.

Melody smiled and then she too, collapsed. The glow from all three of them faded and Rory joined his mother and daughter in a state of unconsciousness.

The Doctor sat somberly on the windowsill near Rose's bed. Amy was sitting in a chair between Rory and River's sleeping forms. Her head was resting on her daughter's bed and her hand clasping her husband's tightly.

After the events in Berlin, he and Amy had brought Rory, Rose and River here to the Sisters of the Infinite Schism. It was the greatest hospital in the universe, save the TARDIS. He could have easily taken care of all three of them. But he'd come so close to losing Rose today. A few minutes could have meant the all the difference.
But it wasn't just about Rose. It was about River too. They had found out a week ago that River was Melody and had resigned themselves that they wouldn't be able to bring her home as a baby. Now though, they wouldn't be able to bring her home at all. Both of his hearts felt crushed by that particular revelation.

Rory and Amy would apparently never get to raise their daughter. It was already far too late for that.

Before leaving Berlin, he'd downloaded everything that the Teselecta had on him and Rose. He'd also adjusted the robot's memory banks to show that Rose died there. Hopefully whoever was after his Rose would believe that they had succeeded and they wouldn't come after her anymore.

They would, however, still be coming after him.

Both Amy and Rory had seemed unsurprised by the accusation that Melody had killed him. As soon as they got back to London, he would devote all of their resources to solving this mystery and to trying to find a way to fix this, if he could.

"How are they doing?" The familiar voice of Jack Harkness came from the doorway.

Somehow he was never surprised anymore when Jack showed up. "They're resting, but all of them will be perfectly fine. Though, I think that you knew that."

"River, a future version of her, asked me to come. She told me her story, asked for my help." Jack held up River's trademark journal, only this one was brand new. "She has a lot to learn and needs someone familiar with time travel to help show her the ropes. I would never turn down the chance to help out someone who is so important to you and Rose."

"She has us," the Doctor protested. "We can help her. We will help her."

Jack smiled sympathetically. "I know that, Doc. And I also know that right now a younger version of Melody is on her way back to Tony's house. That little girl needs you very much and Amy and Rory are going to need time to heal."

"We can't just leave her. We can't abandon her when she needs us the most." The Doctor shook his head.

"You won't be. River just needs a friend and that's what I am, just a friend." Jack clapped a hand on the Doctor's shoulder. "It's not like we'll be more than a phone call away. She needs independence, too, and she doesn't need to see how hard this is on her parents, how hard it's going to be on her entire family. Besides, this is how River remembers this happening."

The Doctor sighed. "I don't like it. I mean, I really don't like it, Jack."

"Didn't think you would, Doc."

"You'll take care of her? Respect her?" The Doctor's gaze was hard.

"Cross my heart and hope to die," Jack replied with a cheeky grin.

The Doctor raised an eyebrow and pointed a finger at the former Torchwood agent. "Mess this up, Harkness, and I will drop you into the heart of a supernova."

"I promise to protect her, Doctor." Jack looked very serious. "You have my word."
"Penny for your thoughts?" the Doctor asked, coming up behind Rose and wrapping his arms around her. They were standing next to the TARDIS, outside the hospital, three days after the events of Berlin. Amy and Rory had, understandably, not been ready to leave Mels yet. Jack had surprisingly been a big help in helping with aftermath. But he was still tight lipped as to why Melody was raised in foster care, telling them that everything would be clear in a few days’ time.

Finally, Rory knew he had to pull Amy away from Mels in this time period. They still had Jenny bringing Melody home from the orphanage and while they did travel in time, Rory, Rose and the Doctor could feel those events pulling at them. It was time to go and face yet another bit of reality.

"Am I adding that penny to your tab, love?" Rose turned around and gave him a small smile. "Because with all those bets you keep losing to me, I'm not sure there would even be enough in your UNIT account to pay what you owe me."

"What's mine is yours, Rose." He tightened his arms around her and dropped a light kiss on her lips. "What's on your mind?"

A soft sigh escaped her lips as she watched Rory and Amy take turns embracing Mels. She and the Doctor had already said their farewells. "How many more times are we going to have to say goodbye before things settle down? First it was River, now it's Mels and I just know it's going to be little Melody next. When did she regenerate? How did she end up in Leadworth?"

He tensed. "I don't know, but I know someone who would have those answers."

A minute later Rory and Amy came walking up. She was keeping her distance from her husband. "Let's go, yeah," Amy said, wiping a tear from her eye. "We need to get back to Melody. She needs us."

"Of course," Rose replied, opening the door to the TARDIS.

Amy walked straight through the console room. "You three fly us to the right place this time. I'm just gonna freshen up."

Once Amy was out of earshot, Rose turned to her son. "How's she doing?"

"How the hell do you think she's doing, Mum?" Rory slammed a fist into the console. "She's devastated already. And who the hell knows what's coming next." He ran his fingers roughly through his hair and let out a long slow breath. "Let's just get back to Tony's, get back to Melody and go from there."

"Rory..." Rose started but he stopped her.

"Not now, Mum." He threw levers and spun dials and the time rotor began to slowly move up and down. "I just don't want to talk right now."

The console room fell into an eerie silence; even the hum of the TARDIS sounded muted. When then they came to a stop with a soft thump, Rory turned and went down the corridor presumably to find Amy. It was hard for Rose not to follow after them, not to try and fix things for them. They were her children, and they were hurting very badly.

"I wish I could fix this," Rose said as she bit her lip. "We can travel all of time and space. I can build
a dimension cannon, destroy Daleks and the 456 but with this… I just feel so useless here."

The Doctor came up beside her and took her hand. "I know, my love. I know. But we can't play god and go back and change things, not without causing irreparable damage. There is something we can do though, warn the rest of the family."

He pulled her towards the doors of the TARDIS and out into the unfurnished spare room at Tony and Trisha's house. The other time and space ship was parked there as well, but since Jenny had taken her Vortex Manipulator that was no indication that she was back with Melody.

The Doctor continued to lead Rose out the door and into the kitchen. Tony, Trisha and Sabrina were sitting around the table, probably anxiously awaiting the expected family reunion. When they saw the Rose and the Doctor enter the room they were on their feet and hugged their parents.

"Blimey," Tony said, hugging his mum. "You must have come in on silent. We didn't hear a thing."

"Good thing too, Dad, because the kids are down for a nap and if you would have woken them…” Trisha joked, hugging the Doctor.

Sabrina studied both of them; they looked tense. "Jenny's not back yet, should be any minute though. But there's something else, isn't there?"

"Yes, there is." The Doctor kissed Sabrina's forehead. "You might want to sit down. It's a bit complicated."

Rose made another pot of tea while the Doctor explained the events of the last few days. There were questions etched into the faces of all three of the children, but they held off until the Doctor had finished.

"So, all the stuff that they did to Melody, to her head? Was Rory able to fix it?" Tony asked.

"He says that he did," Rose replied, leaning back onto the counter top. "He also says that he bolstered her mental shielding so they won't be able to do it again."

"And Mels, I mean River." Sabrina looked confused as to what to call her. "She has the Bad Wolf thing too?"

"Apparently. It's passed down to the first born child. So from Rose to Rory, Rory to Melody and if Melody were to have a child then that child would be a part of the Bad Wolf as well," the Doctor answered.

"But how?" Trisha looked between Rose and the Doctor. "How did Melody regenerate into Mels and end up in foster care in Leadworth?"

"That's what we don't know yet," Amy said from the doorway. She was standing next to Rory but they still weren't touching. "And for some of those answers, I think we need to talk to your mother, Trisha."

"My mum?" Trisha asked, confused.

Rory nodded. "We think she's the key to knowing what happens."

"Amy, Rory?" Jenny's voice called out from the lounge. "I think there's someone in here who wants to meet you."
Hurriedly, Amy and Rory went to see their daughter and Trisha excused herself to ring Hannah.

Amy felt her heart clutch when she got her first look at Melody. This was in fact the girl in the space suit that she had seen in the orphanage. "Melody?"

The little girl had tears pooling in her eyes. "Mummy?" She turned her head towards Rory. "Daddy?"

Amy dropped to her knees and embraced the little girl. "Oh my love, it's us. We're here. You're safe."

"Thank you," Rory said, catching Jenny's hand just before she left the room. "Can you get Tony for me, please?"

"Yeah, anything you want," his sister replied before leaving the new family alone.

Rory knelt down next to his wife and daughter. No matter how much Amy blamed him for this, when they were with Melody, they would be a united front. Because she mattered so much more than their problems.

Wrapping his long arms around both Amy and Melody, he began to cry. It seemed par for the course these days to be crying. But right now in this moment all the hurt they had been through in the past few weeks and all the pain they were inevitably going to go through didn't matter. These tears were tears of joy at holding his little girl in his arms.

Several minutes later Amy pulled away, cupping Melody's cheeks and studying the little girl's face. "Are you alright? Did they hurt you?"

She nodded in response and looked terrified. "Mummy, they made me… at the lake. They made me. I didn't want to hurt him. I never…"

"Shhh." Rory gathered her in his lap and stroked his hand up and down her back. "You didn't do anything wrong. It's all right, love. I promise it's alright."

"I killed Granddad," Melody sobbed. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I'm sorry."

"He's fine, Melody. Your grandfather is fine. I promise you that he didn't die at the lake. Daddy fixed it, don't you worry." He kissed her hair. "Daddy fixed everything. Don't you worry."

Amy rejoined in the cuddling, and the three of them sat there silently rocking and soothing for a long while. It had been over an hour according to Rory's internal clock. When Rory looked up he saw Tony waiting patiently in the entryway. Rory nodded to his brother and shifted.

"Melody, love, are you hungry? Tired?" he asked, stroking her hair.

"Both." Melody snuggled into his chest.

"Mum's in the kitchen; she made soup," Tony said with a shy smile. "And Dad took everyone else out for chips. We didn't want to overwhelm you, Melody."

Amy wiped a tear from her face. "Yes, come on, Melody. Let's go and meet your gran."

Rory hung back while Amy took their daughter's hand and led her out of the room. He scrubbed a hand down his face and leaned heavily against the nearest wall.

Uncomfortably, Tony shifted from one foot to another. "I know this is a crap question, but I'm going
to ask anyway." He moved closer to his brother. "How are you holding up?"

A short laugh escaped from Rory's throat. "Ask me that in about a week, after I've had to, yet again, say goodbye to my daughter."

"You don't know how long you'll have before you have to give her up. She could be here for months or years," Tony replied, clasping his brother's shoulder.

Rory snorted. "Like that would make it any easier. Today, tomorrow, a year from now, it'll end the same. With us having to hand our daughter over to foster care, handing her over to a stranger."

"Can't you, I don't know, change it? You are a Time Lord. Aren't you able to change things like this, yeah?"

"I haven't had the opportunity to track the time lines, but Dad and I can do that later." Rory took a deep breath. "Look, that's not why I wanted to talk to you; I need you to examine Melody. I'm afraid that they hurt her when they forced her into that space suit and god only knows what kind of experiments they ran on her." His fists clenched.

"Yeah, I can do that." Tony pulled his little brother into a tight hug. "She'll be okay. Melody is strong, she's a fighter. She'd have to be. She's your daughter. She's Amy's daughter. That's some tuff stuff there."

"Yeah, but at some point she regenerates." Rory held back a sob. "And we don't know why."

The brothers stood there in a tight embrace for several minutes before Tony asked another question. "What did Melody mean? About them making her hurt her granddad at the lake."

"It's a long story," Rory let out a long breath. "I'll explain everything later when Hannah's here. I really don't want to waste more time than I have to."

"Come on," Tony said, shifting so his arm was still around Rory. "Let's go and see your daughter."

Forty-five minutes later, Tony was finishing up his examination of his niece. They had moved her to a bedroom on the family TARDIS. There was no doubt that she was exhausted and not in the best of health. After much debate, Rose stayed by her bedside while everyone else including the newly arrived Hannah adjourned to the library. Amy had fought to stay at with Melody, but the Doctor had insisted that she needed to hear this too.

Tony stopped Amy and Rory in the hallway. "I don't really know how to say this... But Melody isn't doing well. Both of her hearts seem to be failing as well as several other major internal organs. If she were fully human I would give her hours at best. With her unique biology, I'd be guessing, but I still would give her less than a week, maybe, before she starts to regenerate."

"There's nothing you can do? No medicine or treatment from some planet a million years in the future that you can use?" Amy asked desperately.

"We can give her something to keep her comfortable but the damage is extensive, and we haven't even done a neurological assessment yet." Tony rubbed the back of his neck. "I'm sorry, Amy."

"They took my baby, and they hurt her," Amy spat. "They took my little girl and experimented on her and now she's going to die. If I ever get my hands on them..." Rory tried to wrap an arm around her, but she quickly moved away. "I can't, Rory, not right now. I know it's not your fault, not really but you still could have..." Grinding her teeth, she didn't finish the thought, instead she turned and
stomped into the library. She strode right up to where Sabrina was standing and sobbed on the younger girl's shoulder.

"I'm sorry, Rory," Tony said, making a move to comfort his brother.

Rory held up a hand to stop him. "Don't." He balled his fist and punched the nearest wall in frustration.

"Did that hurt?" the Doctor asked, coming out of the library.

"Yes," Rory hissed rubbing his bruised knuckles. "And before you ask, yes, it was worth it."

The Doctor nodded and turned to Tony. "Can you give us a minute please?"

"Of course," Tony replied, slipping through the door and shutting it behind him.

"I don't want to hear your empty platitudes right now, Dad. Not when my wife will barely talk to me and my daughter is dying." Rory felt like the wind had been knocked out of him. "My daughter is dying, and I could lose the two most important people in my life."

The TARDIS groaned as his fist made contact with the wall again. "Do you have any idea how much this hurts?"

"Yes," the Doctor whispered and Rory whipped around to face him, wide eyed.

The younger man shook his head. "I don't think I can handle this. With everything that's happened, I can't walk in there and face what I know is about to happen. What has to happen."

The Doctor wrung his hands and looked everywhere but in his son's eyes for a few moments. "You take it one moment at a time." He forced himself to meet Rory's eyes now. "Because we have a responsibility to preserve timelines and we bear the burden of the Universe. And sometimes we push forward without stopping because if we slow down and look at what's really going on around us, we'd never be able to do what we need to do."

"Maybe it's time to slow down. Not to stop entirely but be less visible." Rory frowned. "Because look where the running has gotten us."

The Doctor nodded and clasped his hands behind his back. "I think you're right. The running that we do isn't always safe. Especially not when there are children involved."

"We don't have to stop exploring," Rory said quickly. "But we've gotten careless since Dad… since Dad died."

In three steps the Doctor crossed to where Rory stood. He hugged his son. "This isn't your fault. You didn't wish for this to happen, and there is nothing that you could have done to prevent it."

"I know that… But Amy…"

"Amy is stronger than you think. She's hurting right now, rightfully so." The Doctor pulled out of the hug. "Right now she's grieving the loss of her child, but the two of you will heal. It may never be the same between you, but it could be better."

"Yeah." Rory rubbed his knuckles and tilted his head towards the door. "We should get on with it. Amy and I need to get back to our daughter."
The TARDIS had rearranged the room so that everyone was sitting in a circle with EJ and Jamie playing quietly in the middle. It was a tense twenty minutes while Rory explained the events that Melody was responsible for at Lake Silencio. He didn't go into details about how the Doctor would be saved but assured everyone that he wasn't killed that day.

The Doctor's jaw clenched as Rory finished his explanation. "They used her as a weapon against her family. She thinks that she killed me." His voice echoed angrily in Rory's head. The Oncoming Storm was brewing in his eyes. Plans for revenge flashed through both of their minds and Rory, feeling overwhelmed, looked away first. This wasn't the time to entertain those thoughts.

He turned to Hannah. "What I don't understand is where you fit into all of this," Rory said, shifting in his seat on the sofa. His knee bumped Amy's and she moved closer to Sabrina.

Taking a deep breath, Hannah pulled back her shoulders. "In 1993 along with my duties as UNIT liaison with Torchwood Three, I was made personal assistant to Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. Growing up around the organization I had heard all of the stories about the Doctor."

Her eyes met the Doctor's and she pursed her lips. "I never actually expected to meet you. People spend their entire careers at UNIT hoping for a glimpse of our most notorious scientific advisor. One day when the Brigadier was away the TARDIS appeared in his office. At first, I thought it was a mistake, that you had gotten the date wrong and had meant to meet Alistair.

"But out you came, telling me that you needed my help. You needed me to help protect your granddaughter." Hannah took a deep breath and handed a file she'd been holding over to the Doctor. "You gave me this. Well, you gave me two files, one for me and one to give Melody when she was old enough. You explained how she needed to be kept safe and how I needed to arrange for her to be in specific foster care at specific times.

"And that it was vital that I thwart any and all attempts for James and Rose Williams to adopt Melody. Lastly, I was sworn to secrecy. To not tell a single person of Melody's true identity until today." Hannah turned to her daughter. "And I kept that promise, even if it made our relationship suffer. I'm sorry."

Trisha smiled at her mother. "I just… I can't believe that you knew this whole time. I mean, thank you for protecting her, but wow…. Did you know? Back then that they would adopt Sabrina and I would marry Tony?"

Hannah shook her head. "I was only told information pertinent to Melody. I wasn't even told Amy's maiden name and the file listed Melody's last name simply as Tyler. I figured everything out in the end, but I didn't know."

"Why, though?" Amy asked, biting her lip. "Why do we have to send Melody back? She's here with us now. We can raise her in a safe, loving environment. Why can't she just stay?"

"From birth to death her entire life is a paradox. One great big circular paradox," the Doctor replied softly. "I've studied the possibilities and if we keep her with us, Melody's timelines showed that they would never lead her to the Library. If we tug on the thread that River sewed through all of our timelines, it would cause everything to unravel. In the end it is River who bound us all together."

He stood up and came to kneel in front of Amy. "If she doesn't tell me my name in the Library, I would never have forced myself to give up Rose. Then Rory would never be born and even if he was, Mels and River wouldn't be there, pushing the two of you together. The family would have never moved to Leadworth." He reached up and cupped her face. "Rose never would have cracked the Universe to bring everyone back here, and we never would have met you."
Amy took a shaky breath. "I would have been all alone. No one… No family, no Mels… No Rory at all. Dad, I can't… please tell me there's another way."

He shook his head. "I wish there was. But that's the choice, Amy. That is the decision that needs to be made. Either you keep her with us and reality as we know it unravels, or you give her up and we get to have her in our lives. Just not in the capacity that we'd hoped. Amelia Tyler, the choice is yours."
Chapter 32

Four days later, Rory and Amy sat on opposite sides of Melody's bed. Half an hour ago, Rory had unhooked all the monitoring instruments. There was no need for them anymore; it was only a matter of time before their daughter regenerated. Everyone had already said their goodbyes and the family had left Melody alone with her parents.

"I've made my choice," Amy said, brushing a strand of hair out of Melody's face. "After her regeneration, we'll take her to Hannah. Together."

She reached over and took Rory's hand. It was the first time she had purposely touched him since Jenny had brought Melody back to them. It felt good, it felt comforting and it felt like eventually everything would be alright. That maybe in the end their relationship would turn out to be stronger for it, eventually.

"We can't keep her here. If we did, she wouldn't exist… You wouldn't exist. The Universe needs you both." She squeezed his hand. "I need both of you, even if it takes me awhile to work through this. I know that you or Mum or Dad couldn't stop this and would have changed it if you could...it's just... I need time.

"Take as much time as you need," Rory said softly. "I love you, Amy."

"I love you and your stupid face, too." Amy gave him a small smile and looked back at Melody's face. "Mels and River have both said that they don't remember anything from before their first regeneration. It's probably for the best, yeah?"

"Yeah." Rory picked up his daughter's hand and kissed her knuckles. "I'll do it. After she regenerates and before we leave her with Hannah, I'll erase everything. Leave her with the knowledge of who she is and that we love her and that unfortunately this had to happen but it's not that we didn't want her."

Amy took a shaky breath. "She won't understand why until she's older. I wrote her a letter for Hannah to give her when she's a teenager. I think she'd like that." She paused for a minute before speaking again. "Are you going to leave something with her?"

"A book, one that will help her to know who she is as a Time Lord. All the things I wanted to teach her but can't."

"Mummy," Melody murmured, starting to wake up. "Mummy, it hurts."

"I know it does, baby. It's time to let go." Amy touched her face and thought about what the Doctor had told her to say. "You can feel that warmth, yeah? See the golden light in the back of your mind?"

Melody nodded and turned to her daddy. "What do I do?"

"Let go, love, just let go and all the pain will stop." Rory squeezed her hand. "You are a Time Lord, Melody Tyler-Pond, and it's regeneration."

They had talked to her about regeneration in the last few days. Had showed her pictures of all of her granddad's faces (once they had calmed her down and convinced her that she had in no way harmed him). Had convinced her that this was a good thing, and it was. It was infinitely better to have their little girl regenerate then to have her die.
"Will it hurt, Daddy?" Melody asked, her voice betraying the pain she felt as her internal organs shut down.

"No worse than it does now, sweetheart." He kissed her forehead. "And when it's over, the pain will be too. You just have to let go."

Melody's hand began to glow with an all too familiar golden glow. "It's started," she said, letting go of her dad's hand and holding it up in front of her face.

Amy kissed her cheek before stepping away. "We love you, Melody, so very much."

"I love you too, Mummy. Love you, Daddy." Melody breathed out the golden light. Rory helped her to her feet before moving to Amy's side. A few moments later, Melody exploded with regeneration energy. Amy buried her face in Rory's shoulder. He kept his eyes trained on his daughter's bubbling and contorting features. Her limbs shortened, her hair and skin darkened, every feature she had changed.

She was a younger version of Mels, a face he remembered from his childhood. A face he had known as a friend, not as his daughter.

When it was over, Melody lay sleeping soundly in the middle of the bed. Dad had warned them that regeneration in someone so young would be even harder on Melody than on someone even a few years older. Tenderly, Rory placed his fingers on Melody's temples. With great care he pushed into her mind and saw all the terrible things they had done to his daughter.

Yes, they had run experiments her, forced her to do things and they had broken her body. But they had also isolated her, kept her locked away from any human contact except for Kovarian or Dr. Renfro. They had taunted her with stories of her family and how they wouldn't find her until it was too late.

All of that hadn't broken her mind or her spirit. She had known they would come for her, take her away to a happier place. Their little girl was so strong, yet she was so burdened at such a young age. She didn't deserve that.

Carefully, Rory extracted her memories of her time of imprisonment. Not bothering to lock them away, just erasing them. Her memories post rescue, he locked away. He was careful to bury them deep enough that they would resurface on their own.

He also made sure to leave the knowledge of who she was. That she knew she was Melody Tyler, daughter of Rory Tyler and Amelia Pond. He left Tony, Mum and Dad in her memories as well. Sabrina, Jenny and Trisha were hidden from her and she would discover them on her own, in her own time.

When he was done, he gently pulled out of her mind, breathing heavily from the exertion. Melody would sleep for hours as her mind and body recuperated.

"Is that it?" Amy asked softly. "Her memories are gone?"

"Yeah." Rory nodded. "Can you hand me the earrings?" Amy handed over a box that had been sitting on a nearby table. The earrings worked like Rose's necklace had, as a perception filter. They were made from pieces of the Tyler family TARDIS, not the Doctor's, to bolster her connection to the ship she would be near when she was growing up.

They would help to shield her unique biology from prying eyes and help keep the family from figuring out her identity too soon. Rory affixed the jewelry to Melody's ears (luckily this regeneration
had come with pierced ears) and he kissed her forehead.

"I'm coming with you," Amy said. "To take Melody to Hannah, I'm coming with you."

"Amy, you don't have to, if it's too hard..." he started.

"Of course it will be hard, but I am her mother. I have to be strong, for her." Amy stood tall, defiant. "I have to do this."

Rory nodded and scooped a blanket wrapped Melody into his arms. Amy grabbed the suitcase they had packed for her and followed Rory to the console room. The Doctor and Rose were waiting for them. His arms were around her in a hug and her face was buried in his neck. They were lost in their own world, their own grief, but turned immediately when they heard the other two enter the room.

"Are you sure you're ready," the Doctor asked, still keeping one arm around Rose. "If you need more time, we could..."

"No," Amy said, cutting him off. "It won't hurt any less to wait. As long as you have the files ready, then we should be off."

Solemnly, Rose and the Doctor piloted the TARDIS to the Brigadier's office at UNIT headquarters in 1993. When they landed, Rose went over to her granddaughter and placed a kiss on her cheek. "Be brave, we'll see you soon, love."

The Doctor led the way out the door holding the two blue folders containing all the information that Hannah would need to guide Melody. Amy gave a small wave to her mum and followed Rory, holding Melody, out the door. Taking their little girl onto the next stage of her life, one that was full of happiness and love, just not the way they wished it could be.

Six weeks later Amy sat on a bench in a park outside of London. No one knew she was here, except for Jenny who had left her alone to give her some privacy. Jenny had given her a sad smile the first time she'd agreed to chauffeur these trips. Amy needed some time apart from Rory and needed to make sure that her daughter was alright without them.

The year was 1994 and there was a group of children playing on the swings. Amy was being careful to stay far enough away to see the achingly familiar little girl laughing by the swings but to not look like a creepy stalker. It wasn't stalking if you were actually keeping an eye on your own daughter was it?

"Is this helping?" A familiar person asked as she sat down next to Amy.

"Somewhat," Amy answered vaguely, keeping her eyes focused one little girl as her foster mother called for her to leave. The pair on the bench were quiet until Mels Jones and her caretaker were out of sight. "Did you know I was here? The times I've come to watch?" Amy asked, turning slightly towards River.

"I knew." River closed her eyes and tapped her temple. "I could feel you, in here. Back then it hurt sometimes knowing that you couldn't say hello."

"I'm so sorry, Melody. If I could have changed it..." Amy's voice broke. "I could have changed it, but I didn't. I'm so sorry, love."

River reached over and took Amy's hand. "If you had changed things, if you had chosen the other path, you would have changed everything, not just who raised me. Nan and Pops would have never
had Dad, nor would they have adopted Aunt Sabrina." She squeezed her mother's hand. "And what about you? You would have had a lonely childhood raised by a selfish woman who would have done anything to keep under her thumb."

"Sacrificing your happiness for my own, what kind of mother does that make me?"

"There would have been no happiness for me if it would have gone the other way, Mum. Do you understand that, I mean really understand that?" Rivers eyes were pleading for her to understand.

"Maybe it just hasn't sunk in yet. Still, I'm sorry, Melody."

"I know. But don't think I haven't had an amazing life overall." River smiled. "I have an amazing family, a good career. I've had some fantastic adventures, and I have Jack. And there is still so much left out there for me to see."

Amy couldn't help but giggle. "You and Jack, you're so cute together but Dad's face when he realized that Jack was involved with his granddaughter... Oh, that was priceless. It was one of the only things that have cheered me up these last few weeks."

"It was as big of a surprise to me as it was to you." River grinned. "It was complicated and it happened slowly, over almost two decades, actually. Sure, I knew him from when he visited everyone in Leadworth, but it was when he came to help me, after Berlin, that things changed. Now we've been together over a century."

"I can't imagine Jack Harkness being with only one person for that long." Amy giggled again.

"Who says he has?" She gave her mother a wicked grin and winked. "There's nothing wrong with being a little flexible in your marriage."

"River!" Amy swatted her daughter's arm. "That is not the kind of information that you share with your MOTHER!"

River shrugged. "You wanted to know if I was happy and I am."

Unable to control herself, Amy continued to giggle for a minute, and River joined in. To Amy it felt like it had been so long since she'd even had the urge to laugh.

"Where are you at, River, in your timeline?" Amy asked once she was able to control herself again.

"I'm going to do something I never do, Mum," River said in conspiratorial whisper. "I'm going to give you a spoiler."

"Oh yeah, and what's that?" Amy leaned in so the other woman could spill her secret.

"Promise you won't tell anyone?"

Rolling her eyes, Amy agreed, "I promise, now tell me already."

"The Library," River smirked. "I didn't die, for a moment I thought I would. But Dad... That was three years ago for me. So don't you worry about me, Mum. I'm always alright."

Amy stood up and dragged River to her feet. She then threw her arms around her daughter and hugged her so tightly, she feared that River's respiratory bypass might kick in. "Oh that is the best news I've heard in weeks. How? How are you saved?"

River managed to loosen her mother's grip. "Now that's a spoiler I can't tell you. But if you want to
tell Aunt Sabrina to pass Dad the message Idris gave her, it couldn't hurt."

Unable to control herself, Amy began to laugh and jump around in celebration. A smiling River joined in. They were laughing, dancing and giggling; they didn't even notice when the slightly purple TARDIS materialized behind them. Jenny stepped out and observed the mother and daughter. "Am I interrupting something?" she asked, beaming at seeing Amy so happy.

Amy ran over and hugged her sister-in-law. "Everything is going to be alright, Jenny. It's all going to be alright, molto bene to quote Dad."

"It's so good to see you smile again." Jenny squeezed Amy tightly and then reached out a hand to River. "We need to go, but River, I know everyone would love it if you joined us for tea."

"At Uncle Tony's?" River asked, joining her mum and aunt in a group hug.

"Every Saturday night," Jenny replied with a nod.

River smiled and pulled away, taking hold of Jenny and Amy's hands. "Then I'm in. There's nothing more important in the Universe than family."

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!