The rift dumps Jack in the middle of a rather famous historical event, where he meets a familiar face.
“Hey, Mister. Are you alright?”

Blearily, Jack opened his eyes to see a young boy bending over him, his face about a foot from Jack’s own.

“Are you alright?” the boy asked again.

“I…I think so,” replied Jack, still not having a clue what had happened.

“Robert, give the gentleman some room.” This was a woman’s voice, and a second later her face appeared behind the boy’s, also looking worried. “Excuse me, sir, do you require assistance? I can fetch a steward.”

Steward? Where was he?

“No, I’m fine. Just felt a bit dizzy, that’s all,” said Jack, closing his eyes again as he tried desperately to get a handle on his surroundings. The surface he was lying on was wood, but he could feel a breeze on his face, so he was outdoors. The floor beneath him was vibrating with a deep rumbling hum, and underlyng that was a continuous swooshing noise. The two sounds seemed somehow to go together in a familiar way, but Jack couldn’t quite put his finger on it. And then there were the smells – smoke and salt and the faintest scent of chocolate on the boy’s breath.

Jack opened his eyes again. The faces of the boy and woman were still there, and still looking worried.

“I really am fine,” Jack assured them. “Would you mind helping me up?”

The woman looked doubtful, but took Jack’s outstretched hand, pulling as he propelled himself to his feet. Dizziness threatened to overwhelm him again, and he breathed deeply, willing himself to stay upright. Gradually the dizziness passed, but even then Jack was left feeling a little unsteady on his feet. However, when he finally raised his head and looked about him, he soon discovered the reason for that.

He was on a ship. One so big he couldn’t see the far end, but a ship nonetheless.

Jack had never been a good sailor. He could pilot any kind of spaceship through space and time, but as soon as he set foot on a boat he started feeling nervous and queasy. He had told himself many times how ridiculous this was, but he couldn’t seem to cure himself of it.

“It’s only a boat, and it’s massive, he told himself firmly. It’s perfectly safe, and it’s not going to sink.

Then his eye was caught by the lifebelt hanging on the wall nearby. At first he couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Blinking, he took a couple of steps closer. But the words hadn’t changed.

S.S. Titanic.

It was the bloody Titanic! Suddenly Jack’s queasiness returned in full force, and he stumbled blindly towards the deck rail, reaching it just in time to empty the contents of his stomach over the side.
After hanging there for a few seconds, he spat to rid his mouth of the sour taste, and then gingerly straightened up.

“Sir?” The woman was now looking as if she wished she hadn’t offered to help in the first place, while the boy was staring at him wide-eyed.

Jack smiled to reassure them. “Just a touch of seasickness,” he said quickly. “Never have been able to quite shake the mal-de-mer. Thank you for your help.” He smiled at them again, the expression this time clearly designed to make them go away.

The woman took the hint and began ushering the boy away. “The stewards normally come by every ten minutes or so,” she offered as a parting shot. “If you still feel ill you could ask one of them to fetch a doctor.”

“Thank you,” said Jack again. “I’ll bear that in mind.” He tried to prevent his face twisting at the mention of a doctor, but it was hard. There’s only one type of doctor I need, he thought, not for the first time.

As soon as the woman was far enough away, Jack slumped against the deck railing again, holding his head in his hands.

What the hell had happened here? One second he had been sitting in his office, reading a report on the latest Torchwood happenings, the next he had found himself lying on the deck of the most famously doomed ship in history.

Why was he here? Jack didn’t think for a moment that he was meant to stop the disaster that would soon befall the vessel. For one thing, his ego wasn’t that big. And for another, preventing the sinking of the Titanic would mean altering a major historical event, something which Jack knew was liable to have disastrous consequences for the entire universe. He had had it very soundly drummed into him, by several different people, that you never altered the established timeline.

Eventually, after examining all the angles, Jack concluded that there was no reason for him to be here, other than monumental bad luck. The only explanation was that the rift was acting up again, and he had slipped through without warning or agenda.

Jack grimaced. So, here he was, stuck on a ship destined to sink, with no way off. And he definitely didn’t fall into the category of ‘women and children’, so there was no way he was getting a place in a lifeboat when all hell broke loose. Jack wasn’t afraid of dying – because, of course, he couldn’t – but he didn’t particularly want to spend a night clinging shivering to a piece of driftwood in the freezing north Atlantic until he was picked up by a rescue party.

And besides, even if he did do the clinging and the shivering and the being rescued, the fact still remained that he would be stuck in 1912 with no foreseeable way of leaving, unless the rift decided to exert its contrary nature again and transport him home.

Without really noticing, Jack pushed away from the railing and started pacing along the deck, trying to figure out what to do. He took no notice of anything going on around him until, suddenly, he was halted in his tracks by the sound of a very familiar voice.

“…so I persuaded them not to bother coming on this voyage. Told them they’d be missing out on a whole load of exciting stuff back at home if they did. ‘America’s not all it’s cracked up to be,’ I
said. And luckily for them they believed me.”

Jack looked wildly around, searching for the source of the voice. At first he couldn’t find it, but then he noticed a small group of men standing in the shadow of one of the funnels. The man closest to him was tall, thin, and lanky. He was dressed in smart trousers and a velvet frock coat instead of the usual jeans and leather jacket, but Jack would have known him anywhere, any time. As the man started talking again, his northern accent washed over Jack like the waves lapping at the side of the ship. He almost couldn’t believe it, but it was true.

It was the Doctor.

* * * * *

For a full thirty seconds Jack just stood and stared at the Doctor. His mind was a whirlwind of questions. Had the Doctor seen him? Would he recognise Jack? Had this Doctor even met Jack? Was Rose here? What was the Doctor doing here? And so on.

But none of those questions had answers yet, and abruptly Jack realised that he probably looked a little suspicious, gaping a group of men he didn’t know. Quickly he averted his gaze slightly, feigning glances out to sea, up and down the deck, but all the while trying not to let the Doctor out of his sight.

The Doctor was turned away from him slightly, so Jack could only see a small part of his face. But he could still tell that the Doctor was the same as he ever had been – his expression animated, words pouring out of his mouth a mile a minute. Even his stance was familiar to Jack – that barely controlled energy visible in every line of the Doctor’s body.

Suddenly, Jack became aware that the Doctor was making his farewells, moving away from the group of men towards the aft part of the ship. Jack immediately set off after him, keeping a suitable distance behind, but making sure that the Doctor was never out of his eye-line.

This worked until they reached the stern of the ship. As the Doctor disappeared behind the building at the end of the deck, Jack cursed and quickened his pace. He couldn’t lose the Doctor now, he just couldn’t.

However, as he rounded the corner, Jack found himself brought up short as an arm shot out into his path, blocking his way.

“What do you want?” said a low, menacing voice in his ear.

Glancing to his left, Jack saw that the Doctor was watching him intently, looking none too pleased.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” lied Jack, but to his own ears he sounded unconvincing at best. In the back of his mind he noted that the Doctor didn’t appear to have recognised him, but he left that revelation aside in the face of trying not to make his situation any worse.

Too late.

“Don’t play games with me,” said the Doctor dangerously. “Because I’m telling you – you wouldn’t win. I am not a person to be trifled with.”

Desperately, Jack fell back on the only excuse he could come up with at short notice. “You
reminded me of someone I met once,” he said, hoping that a little bit of truth would make the explanation more convincing. “But I didn’t want to make a fool of myself by introducing myself until I was sure you were the right person.”

“And…? Am I the right person?” The Doctor’s tone of voice now clearly said that if Jack didn’t give the correct answer, something very unpleasant would happen to him.

“No,” replied Jack quickly. It was still the truth…sort of. This Doctor wasn’t exactly the person he was looking for. This Doctor didn’t have a clue who Jack Harkness even was, let alone an inkling about the history they shared.

And suddenly, just like that, the Doctor’s mood changed. Even Jack, who had experienced the Doctor’s mercurial nature before, was slightly taken aback.

“Oh well, never mind. Mistakes happen. I’m the Doctor, by the way. And you are…?”

In the split second before he opened his mouth to reply, Jack realised that he couldn’t tell the Doctor his real name. In fact, he shouldn’t even be here, talking to the Doctor. He was polluting the timeline. The history of both their lives dictated that the first time they met was during the London Blitz, in Jack’s past and the Doctor’s future – not here, on board this doomed ship, in 1912.

“Er…excuse me?” The Doctor was looking at him suspiciously again, and Jack realised that he hadn’t said anything for nearly a minute.

Oh well, there was nothing he could do now with regards to meeting the Doctor – that had already happened. But he could at least do some damage control.


“Rank?” asked the Doctor, eyeing the badges stitched to Jack’s coat.

“Oh…Captain.”

“Well, Captain James Harper, nice to meet you,” said the Doctor, his earlier suspicions apparently gone. “And what brings you on board…”

But he was interrupted by high-pitched noise, somewhere between a whistle and beep. Jack recognised it instantly as the sound of the sonic screwdriver, but kept his face blank. The Doctor, however, patted one of his pockets quickly and then looked back at Jack.

“Sorry, I’ve got to go. That alarm was telling me I’m late for something. Maybe I’ll see you around, Captain.”

And before Jack could form a reply the Doctor was gone, running back in the direction they had come. By the time Jack had gathered his wits and darted around the corner after him, the Doctor had disappeared through one of the many doorways lining the deck, and was nowhere to be seen.

“Crap!” spat Jack eloquently. Who knew if he would see the Doctor here again? For all he knew, the Time Lord was even now flying away in the TARDIS, leaving Jack and the Titanic behind to their respective fates.
Unable to do anything more constructive, Jack walked over to the nearest door and yanked it open, hoping to see the Doctor on the other side, talking to another group of unsuspecting passengers.

But the Doctor wasn’t there. Instead, Jack was confronted by the sight of an opulent foyer and staircase, complete with crystal chandelier and potted palms. Several people were looking at him oddly as he stood framed in the doorway, so he quickly stepped through it, closing the door behind him to cut off the draught that was rustling the palm fronds.

Lacking anything else to do, Jack wandered over to the balustrade surrounding the top of the staircase and looked down. He could only see clearly down to the deck immediately below him, but could tell that the staircase carried on downwards for several more decks after that.

Suddenly, Jack decided that he would explore the ship. After all, how often did one get a chance to experience such a potent historical symbol firsthand? And besides, it would take his mind off the Doctor, and off the fact that, for the foreseeable future, he was stuck on this potent historical symbol with no chance of getting off until it sank.
Chapter 2

After wandering the ship for a few hours, Jack eventually found himself in the first-class smoking lounge. His explorations had only covered the top four decks, and had turned up not only no evidence of the Doctor, but no reason why either of them might be on board the Titanic. So, frustrated and more than a little mystified, he had made a beeline for the one environment that he always felt comfortable in, no matter what the century – a bar.

Jack didn’t want to admit to himself how much seeing the Doctor earlier had thrown him. He spent most of his waking hours thinking about the Time Lord, wondering where he was, how he was, whether he was ever coming back. And now, when he finally did see him again, it was under the worst possible circumstances. The Doctor didn’t know him, and so the reunion Jack had fantasised about for so long couldn’t happen. At least, not in the way he wanted it to.

Still, he supposed that a pre-Jack Doctor was better than no Doctor at all. Although…Jack was a little ashamed of the lack of self-respect he was willing to show when it came to the Doctor. A stronger man would realise that there was no benefit, either pragmatically or emotionally, to spending time with this Doctor, and therefore walk away. But Jack wasn’t a stronger man, not in this case. He couldn’t walk away – he would take whatever he could get.

Propping himself up next to the bar, Jack ordered his customary glass of water and tried to project an air of not wanting to be disturbed. It wasn’t hard. He had already received one glare of disapproval at his fairly scruffy attire from the steward on the door, although a flash of his own scavenged bit of psychic paper, masquerading as a first-class ticket, had earned him entrance. But Jack could tell that he was getting similar glares from some of the other snobbish passengers scattered around the smoking lounge. Clearly none of them wanted to talk to the shabby ‘new money’ lurking in the corner.

Except one.

“Well, hello again.”

Jack jerked his head around. The Doctor was lounging against the bar next to him, watching him with an expression that was unreadable, but which nonetheless sent a tiny shiver down Jack’s spine. He was also looking a lot more like the Doctor than previously, owing to the fact that he was now wearing his standard jeans, sweater and leather jacket. Curiously, though, this didn’t appear to be earning him any odd looks from the other passengers.

“You changed,” pointed out Jack, slightly obviously.

The Doctor glanced down at himself, then shrugged. “Never could stand that stuffy Edwardian get-up,” he explained. “This is much more practical, anyway.”

“Well, it suits you,” replied Jack. “You look better that way.”

This earned him a sharp glance from the Doctor, but then the Time Lord appeared to forget it and move on.

“Sorry about running out on you earlier,” he said.

“That’s okay,” replied Jack. “I hope you weren’t too late for whatever your alarm was reminding you about.”
The Doctor looked confused for a second. “What?…Oh, no – it was fine. No problem.”

“So, why are you sailing on the Titanic?” Jack asked, hoping to find out what the ‘alarm’ had really been about.

“Just taking a bit of sea air, having a little adventure. I’m all about the adventures, me.”

Jack looked at him, letting his doubt show on his face. “Er, no offence, Doctor, but you don’t really seem to belong here. There’s more to you than meets the eye.”

The Doctor grinned. “Damn, busted! Okay, I’ll confess. I’m here to stop an evil plot that could change the whole of Earth’s future if it’s allowed to proceed.” He said this in a joking tone, as if hoping that Jack’s disbelief would make him drop the subject.

However, unfortunately for this Doctor, when it came to Jack Harkness he didn’t have all the facts. “Okay,” replied Jack seriously. “So, what is this plot, and what are you going to do about it?”

“Well, long story short – someone is going to try and stop this ship from sinking, and I have to stop them.” Clearly the Doctor was still testing Jack, waiting to see if he was going start laughing, or try and run away from the crazy man who was talking nonsense.

“Hang on, let me get this straight,” said Jack. “You want to prevent this ship from not sinking? You want it to sink?” Jack, of course, knew full well that the Titanic was going to sink – indeed, it had to in order to preserve history. But he thought he’d better display some incredulity. He didn’t want the Doctor to cotton on to the fact that he too was an impostor in this time period.

“Yes, I want it to sink,” confirmed the Doctor.


“Because history says that the Titanic hit an iceberg just after midnight on the 14th April 1912, causing her to sink. And if history is altered, then who knows what consequences that could have for the human race.”

Now was the moment for the stronger man to pretend to be freaked out, make his excuses, and leave. But Jack wasn’t going anywhere, not now. He might not be able to be completely honest with this Doctor, but at least he could help him.

But how to convince the Doctor that he believed him without making him any more suspicious than he probably already was?

However, right then, the sonic screwdriver emitted its strange trilling whistle once again, causing the Doctor to straighten up suddenly.

“Got to go. Sorry…again.” And then the Doctor was heading for the door.

But this time Jack was ready for him. Pausing only to toss back his last mouthful of water, he set off in hot pursuit.
“Hey, Doctor, wait up!”

Jack pelted after the Doctor as he clattered down the staircase outside the smoking lounge. The Doctor didn’t stop, and he didn’t slow down, but he did glance back at Jack briefly.

“Keep up, then!” Clearly, the Doctor had no problem with Jack following him to his destination, an advantage that Jack was determined to exploit to the full by not getting left behind.

They followed the stairs down for two decks, ran along a short corridor, then went down another two decks on a slightly smaller, dingier staircase. Jack had just time to work out that they must be on E-Deck before the Doctor dashed through a door labelled ‘Scotland Road – Staff Only’. Following him Jack found himself at the end of a narrow corridor that seemed to stretch the entire length of the ship. The Doctor was walking briskly down this corridor, and Jack hurried to catch up, which resulted in him nearly crashing into the Doctor’s back when the Time Lord suddenly halted outside a nondescript door and pointed the sonic screwdriver at the lock. There was a click, and the Doctor pushed the door open and slid through.

Jack followed, and thereby found himself squashed up against the Doctor in what appeared to be a very small, very dark linen cupboard. It was dark enough for Jack to be fairly sure that the Doctor couldn’t see the blush that had crept across his face. Being this close to the Doctor was awakening some feelings that were at once desirable and totally inappropriate. However, the two men were so close together that the Doctor could probably feel Jack’s heart going at a mile a minute. In fact, Jack could feel the Doctor’s hearts – both of them – beating in his chest. Although, strangely, they also seemed to be racing at the speed of sound.

“Cramped in here, isn’t it?”

Jack tried to decide if the Doctor’s cheerful tone sounded forced, or if he was just imagining it. “Yes,” he agreed. “I didn’t realise closets could be quite this small.”

“Oh, they’re not,” replied the Doctor. “This one just happens to be rather fuller than normal.”

And suddenly, just like that, Jack realised that he was leaning against something hard and upright. Then there was the sound of a key in a lock, and abruptly Jack was falling as the supporting surface gave way and the world suddenly flooded with light. Only the Doctor’s hand grabbing his arm stopped him from ending up on the floor, and as he recovered his balance, Jack suddenly realised that he had stumbled into the TARDIS.
Chapter 3

The shock was akin to that he had felt upon seeing the Doctor again. Jack could almost feel the TARDIS wrapping itself around him, as if it was welcoming him back. But, of course, it couldn’t be. This TARDIS had never met Jack before. It couldn’t know who he was. Could it?

Jack pulled himself together as he realised that the Doctor was talking to him, explaining about the TARDIS, asking if he was alright, telling him he’d get used to it in a minute. Jack nodded mutely, and took a few steps towards the central console, where the Doctor was rapidly pressing buttons and studying something on the screen in front of him.

“Ah ha – got you!” he suddenly exclaimed triumphantly. “My ship has identified the location of the person trying to prevent the sinking,” he explained to Jack. “Or, at least, it’s identified the location of the technology that that person is going to use to carry out their plan. Now all we have to do is get hold of that technology ourselves, and sabotage it so that the plan fails.”

“Er, exactly what kind of technology do you need to stop a ship from hitting an iceberg?” queried Jack. “Can’t this person just tell the Captain, or someone on the crew, that there’s an big lump of ice ahead, and that they should turn to avoid it?

“And why would the Captain or the crew believe them?” replied the Doctor. “They won’t be able to see or detect the iceberg for themselves. They’ll just think that they’ve got a crazy person or an alarmist on their hands, and ignore them. No, the simplest way for this ship to avoid an iceberg is to move the iceberg out of the way – transport it from one spot to another.”

“Oh, okay. But, if it is that simple, why haven’t they done it already? Why leave it this long, and risk having something go wrong? I mean, if something messes up, then the Titanic could hit the iceberg anyway.”

“Because they have to wait this long,” explained the Doctor. “An iceberg, being essentially made of water, is very difficult to pinpoint against all the water that it happens to be floating on. Also, icebergs move around, which again makes them difficult to find. No – this person, whoever they are, has to wait until the iceberg is at a close enough range that their instruments can differentiate between it and the sea around it. Then they can move it. Luckily, this gives us enough time to find them, or their device, and put a stop to their evil plot.”

The Doctor was grinning victoriously, and Jack couldn’t help but grin back. “Okay, so what are we waiting for? Let’s go.”

Abruptly, the Doctor’s grin vanished, to be replaced a penetrating stare “Hold on a minute,” he said. “Before we go anywhere, don’t you think it’s about time you told me the truth?”

For a full second Jack’s brain refused to function. He couldn’t think, he couldn’t breathe, he couldn’t even blink. Then years of honed conman instincts kicked in, and he felt his mind unfreeze.

“Er, excuse me?”

The Doctor walked up to Jack, not stopping until he was barely two feet away. “I’ve already told you once: don’t play games with me. I am well aware that you are not who you appear to be.”

“I really have no idea what you’re talking about.”
“Well, let me remind you, then. One, your name isn’t James Harper. Two, you’re not a passenger on the Titanic. Three, you’re not even from this time period. Any of this sound familiar?”

For a few seconds Jack considered uttering another denial. But he couldn’t. He knew he couldn’t. There was no way he could fool the Doctor. He probably never had.

He sighed. “What gave me away?”

“No enough shock and disbelief,” replied the Doctor. “You barely batted an eyelid when I told you that someone was planning to sabotage the Titanic’s sinking. And just now, when you stepped into the TARDIS – you didn’t have the look of someone surprised to see a ship that’s bigger on the inside than the outside. You’ve seen odd things before.”

Jack nodded mutely, not really sure what to say.

“Oh, and you’re also wearing a military uniform that won’t be in vogue for at least another twenty years.”

Smiling ruefully, Jack shrugged his shoulders. “I was hoping you wouldn’t notice that.”

“So, what time period are you from?”

“The twenty-first century. At least, that’s where I’ve come here from. I kinda hail from lots of times and places, really. I’m a bit of traveller.”

“I know you are,” said the Doctor. “You have the look. I should know – I’m a traveller too.” Then he cocked his head, as if listening for something. “But there’s more to it than that, isn’t there?” he said abruptly. “You didn’t just hide who you are from me, you hid something else too. You know me, don’t you?”

Jack tried desperately to think of something to say. He really didn’t want to get into this. He couldn’t rehash his and the Doctor’s history, not with a Doctor who didn’t know anything about that history.

But the Doctor must have seen something in Jack’s eyes, because he suddenly offered a reprieve. “Don’t worry, I don’t need to know details. That clearly wouldn’t help either of us. But we have met, haven’t we – sometime in my future and your past?”

“Yes,” Jack whispered. “But you have to believe me – I didn’t come here to search you out. I don’t know why I’m here – it seems to be just a random accident.”

“Not much about time is random,” mused the Doctor cryptically. Then he grinned. “I wondered why my ship was so welcoming of you,” he said. “She normally takes a while to warm to people – especially flashy conmen.”

“Hey!” Jack protested. Then he frowned. “But how does the TARDIS know me? This is technically before I stepped on board the first time.”

“This ship lives in the time vortex. It can see the past, present, and future all at once. It knew you and it trusted you. Which probably means that I trusted you too.”

Jack swallowed. He didn’t want to think about just how much the Doctor had come to trust him,
not with this Doctor standing right in front of him.

But again, the Doctor demonstrated that he could read emotions perfectly. One cocked eyebrow told Jack that the Doctor had worked out at least some of what was going on in Jack’s head, and was intrigued.

But apparently not intrigued enough. Just as Jack thought he was going to lean that little bit closer, the Doctor stepped back and began studying his readouts again.

“Well, Captain James Harper – can I call you James? I guess I’ll have to since you haven’t told me your real name.”

“It’s…” began Jack.

“No, don’t tell me. The less I know the better. Who knows, perhaps by the time we meet properly I’ll have forgotten all about you, and this accident won’t even matter. Anyway, the TARDIS is telling me that the technology we need to find is in the forward cargo hold of the Titanic. Good place to hide it – hardly anyone goes down there once the ship has set sail. Let’s see, it’s just after eleven o’clock now. That means we have about an hour to find the technology and sabotage it, before settling back to witness one of the greatest disasters of the twentieth century. Easy.”
Jack and the Doctor stood in the Titanic’s cargo hold, surveying the rows of cages that held all the cargo, both commercial and personal, that the ship was transporting. Jack held a torch, and was occasionally sweeping the beam of light across the cages, looking for clues. Actually, the torch wasn’t really necessary, since the Doctor’s sonic screwdriver would be able to tell them exactly where to go, but Jack had always felt that torchlight in a dark place added an extra sense of drama.

The Doctor was busy fiddling with said screwdriver, tuning it to the right frequency so that it would be able to find technology capable of detecting and transporting an iceberg.

“Ah, got it!” he exclaimed eventually. He strode quickly down the cage-lined corridor in front of them, taking a left, then a right, and finally halting in front of a cage that looked exactly like all the others. A quick flick of the sonic screwdriver disabled the lock on the door, and the two men stepped into the cage, Jack shining his torch in front of them.

But he didn’t really need to. It was obvious straight away that they were in the right place. In the centre of the floor, surrounded by crates and bundles, was a machine that definitely didn’t belong in the early part of the twentieth century. It was small and square, and was made of a silvery metal that glinted in the torchlight. It was also covered in blinking lights, and had something that looked like an upside-down Newton’s Cradle mounted on the top.

Jack checked his watch. It was 11:35pm – they didn’t have much time left. “Er, Doctor, hadn’t you better do something?” he asked hesitantly.

But the Doctor didn’t appear to be listening. He was crouched down in front of the device, examining it from every angle and muttering to himself.

“Looks to be from the thirty-seventh century. Yep, definitely thirty-seventh. And from…let me see…Archon Seven, I do believe. Oh, this is fantastic! You don’t see technology like this any more.”

“Doctor!” repeated Jack urgently.

“Oh, okay,” said the Doctor, looking a little disappointed. “But it seems almost a shame to destroy it. I could have hours of fun taking this to pieces. But I suppose I’d better do what I came here to do.”

Pointing the sonic screwdriver at the device, he flicked it on and it started producing its normal shrill whine. But almost immediately that whine began to get higher and shriller as the Doctor ramped up the frequency. Jack raised his hands to his ears – the noise was ear-splitting, and he could feel the beginnings of a headache starting to pound inside his skull.

Apparently the sound was also unpopular with the alien device as, just when Jack thought he couldn’t stand the noise any longer, it abruptly exploded in a shower of sparks, pelting him with bits of twisted metal.

The Doctor lowered the sonic screwdriver. “Well, that takes care of that!” he announced cheerfully. “This ship will now sink, right on cue.” Turning, he left the cage, heading back in the direction of the door leading up to the deck. Jack hurried after him.

“Doctor, aren’t you going to wait for whoever did this? I mean, they could still be lurking around,
“Don’t need to,” replied the Doctor. “That device wasn’t just intended to transport the iceberg, it was also intended to transport whoever was behind the plot. Which means I’ve either just stranded them here on the Titanic, with no way of getting home or carrying out their plan, or they’ve already transported away, in which case, I’ve got no idea where to start looking.”

Bouncing up the spiral stairs towards the open air, the Doctor appeared to think that this was all the explanation that was necessary.

Jack smiled. Same old Doctor.

He followed as the Doctor made his way back to the boat deck and sat down on a bench on the port side.

“Might as well see the show, now that we’ve made sure it will happen,” the Doctor announced.

The bench was on a raised part of the deck, next to one of the enormous funnels, and Jack stood behind the Doctor, leaning against said funnel and watching the Time Lord.

Now that disaster had been averted, or more accurately, not averted, he had time to think a little more about his predicament. He couldn’t deny that he had been overjoyed to see the Doctor again, even if the circumstances weren’t ideal. But even though he was happy, he was also sad. He couldn’t say to this Doctor everything he wanted to, and he knew that, now he had no reason to stay, he should leave the Doctor and try to find a way home.

Suddenly the Doctor rose from the bench and walked around to stand in front of Jack. The two men were no more than a foot apart, and Jack had to exert every ounce of willpower he possessed not to reach out and touch the Doctor.

“Look at me,” said the Doctor.

Reluctantly, Jack raised his eyes to meet the Doctor’s, trying desperately not to give too much of himself away.

Apparently, however, he was failing, because something flashed across the Doctor’s face that Jack couldn’t quite read. Was it pity? Compassion? Or something more?

“I know there are things about you and I that you can’t tell me,” the Doctor said quietly. “Things that I shouldn’t know about until they actually happen. Things that you desperately want to talk to me about, but you can’t because I’m not really the person you want to talk to.

You’re telling me, thought Jack miserably. He was suddenly sure that the time had come. The Doctor was going to do what he couldn’t, and walk away. He was going to abandon Jack all over again.

Part of Jack knew that wasn’t fair. This Doctor had to leave – they couldn’t stay together, not if they wanted to preserve the timeline. And even in the future – or the past…whichever it was, the Doctor hadn’t abandoned Jack – not on purpose, at any rate. At least, that was what Jack told himself.

Still, it didn’t change the fact that the Doctor was obviously going to do the right thing and leave. Jack steeled himself, preparing for the inevitable.
Which left him utterly unprepared for what happened next.

The Doctor leaned in and kissed him. It was over so quickly that Jack thought he must have imagined it, and he wasn’t sure what to do next.

“I see you,” whispered the Doctor. “I see how lonely you are, and I know what that feels like. I know that I’m not exactly the person you want, that you’re waiting for…well, for someone else, I suppose, but there’s no need to spend your whole life just waiting. You don’t have to be lonely all the time.”

Suddenly, Jack couldn’t hold it back any more. The Doctor was right – for once he could choose not to be lonely, to put aside his waiting, if only for a little while.

Reaching out, he pulled the Doctor to him, crushing their lips together in a desperate kiss. He slid his hands beneath the Doctor’s leather jacket, pushing them under his sweater, wanting to touch the Doctor’s body, to feel that connection as much as he could.

The Doctor, for his part, was not inactive. His own hands were roaming Jack’s body, trying to find their way through the clothing to bare skin. However, this was not an easy task, what with overcoats, braces and shirt buttons all to be negotiated. Eventually, and with a growl of frustration, the Doctor gave up on that approach and turned his attention to Jack’s trousers, fumbling with the button and zipper until they came open.

When Jack felt the Doctor’s hand on his cock, he stilled momentarily, and then instinctively arched into the Doctor’s touch, moaning incoherently. Using his last shred of rational thought, he pushed his own hand into the Doctor’s jeans until he felt hard flesh in his palm, his touch making the Doctor hiss with pleasure, his eyes half closed and his head thrown back.

The two men stroked each other, thrusting together in time to the rhythm of their hands. Jack lost himself in the sensations, experiencing what he had almost given up on ever experiencing again. But still, in some tiny corner of his mind, he knew it wasn’t enough. This could never be enough. But for the moment it was all he had, and he would accept anything he could get.

Seconds later, Jack came with a stifled cry, his shudders pushing the Doctor over the edge, so that the two men clung together as their orgasms rippled through them.

Afterwards, when clothes had been rearranged and hearts had stopped beating quite so fast, Jack and the Doctor sat together on the same bench the Doctor had occupied earlier, staring out over the ocean.

“The next time you see me I won’t know you,” stated Jack quietly.

“But I’ll know you,” replied the Doctor.

“Don’t think too badly of me, Doctor,” said Jack. “I was a different person back then – I hadn’t been taught what it was to be a good man. I hadn’t met you.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t judge you too harshly,” promised the Doctor. “I know that you’re a good man, even if you won’t know it yourself.”

Suddenly the ship lurched, and then seemed to vibrate beneath them. Jack jumped to his feet.
“What the hell was that?”

“That,” said the Doctor, “was history playing out as it should. The Titanic has just become rather closely acquainted with a very large lump of ice.”

Jack looked sheepish. “Oh, of course. You know, I’d almost forgotten where we were.”

The Doctor grinned, and then nodded his head at something behind Jack. Jack turned to see the iceberg that was the cause of the Titanic’s downfall sweeping serenely past the port side of the ship, with no idea of the havoc it had just caused.

The Doctor stood up. “Well, now that that’s all sorted out, I think it’s about time we got you home. Unless you fancy a freezing cold dip in the Atlantic?”

Jack shivered theatrically. “I think not. Although, it has it be said, I’m not that bothered by the cold.”

The Doctor raised an eyebrow at this rather cryptic comment, but then appeared to decide that he wouldn’t – or rather, shouldn’t – ask.

“Oh, okay, then!” he said cheerfully. “We’d better get back to the TARDIS before she fills up with water. Time dilation circuits are murder to dry out.”
Chapter 5

The TARDIS set down on a windy hillside about fifteen miles outside Cardiff. Jack had recommended that he not be taken straight back to the Hub, not wanting to place the Doctor in any danger.

“You’re not very popular with the people I work for.”

The Doctor snorted. “Like anyone on this silly little planet could stop me from going when and where I want.”

But eventually Jack had persuaded the Doctor that it would be best to keep a low profile, and so he directed the TARDIS to a point some distance away from the city.

Stepping out into the bleak welsh scenery, Jack found that he couldn’t turn back and look at the TARDIS. He had to face forwards, towards his future, and, for the moment anyway, that future did not include the big blue box with its enigmatic inhabitant.

The Doctor came to stand beside Jack. “Well, I guess this is good-bye, then. At least for the moment.”

Jack’s lips twisted into something that could have been a smile or a snarl. “It must be nice to have something to look forward to.” He knew he sounded bitter, but he couldn’t help it. This was the right thing to do, but that didn’t make it hurt any less.

The Doctor tugged Jack around so they were standing face-to-face. “Look, even I don’t know what’s going to happen in your future. I can’t promise that you’ll find what you’re looking for. But don’t give up hope, okay? Because, the moment you do, everything becomes worthless. And you don’t want that. You don’t want to become worthless.”

Jack looked at the Doctor. “No, I don’t,” he agreed.

“Okay, then,” said the Doctor. He pulled Jack into an affectionate hug, holding him for a few seconds before pulling back.

“I’ll be seeing you,” he said softly.

Then he stepped back and re-entered the TARDIS. Shortly afterwards Jack heard the engines start up, and he watched as the blue box gradually faded from view, leaving him alone on a welsh hillside.

For a few seconds Jack just stared at the point where the TARDIS had disappeared. Then, taking a deep breath, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

“Gwen? It’s Jack. Don’t worry, I’m fine. The Rift has just being playing tricks again, that’s all. For some reason it thought it would be funny to remove me from my nice warm office and dump me out in the wind and rain. Can you come and pick me up?”

*   *   *   *   *

Sometime in the future – or the past, depending on your point-of-view – the Doctor stood and watched as a man in an RAF uniform wandered around his ship, looking at but not touching all its
many gizmos and gadgets.

Jack Harkness. So that was his name. And he had been right about himself. He was a different person. More arrogant, more confident, more superficial. But the Doctor could still see that, underneath it all, Jack Harkness was a good person.

Which was why he hadn’t kept his promise to the other Jack. He had been harsh with this Jack. He had been strict, and stern, and unforgiving. Because he knew that Jack needed him to be. As Jack had said to him, back on the Titanic, he needed to be taught to be a good man. And the Doctor was determined to be that teacher.

The Doctor still didn’t know what it was that had happened to Jack to make him so desperate and downhearted when they had met on board the doomed ship, and he knew that, whatever it was, he probably couldn’t avoid it happening. But that didn’t mean he couldn’t help Jack while he was here, and if that meant he had to be a harsh teacher, then so be it. Although he suspected that he wouldn’t be able to keep up that harshness for very long. This Jack had a way of breaking down defences without even trying, and his experience with the other Jack had hinted at a deeper relationship than just teacher and pupil.

But, whatever was going to happen in the future, the Doctor knew that he had to begin by teaching Jack Harkness what it was to be a good person.

Starting right now. As Jack’s hand reached out towards one of the TARDIS’s main directional controls, the Doctor took a couple of swift steps forward.

“Hey! Don’t touch that!”

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