



DOCTOR WHO

SHIT TRIPS VOLUME 2

A COLLECTION OF STORIES BY ANONS WITH TOO MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS

RATING WARNING:
ONLY MEANT FOR 18+ READERS

**THIS ANTHOLOGY CONTAINS ROUGH LANGUAGE, ADULT THEMES, AND
OCCASIONAL GRAPHIC SEXUAL CONTENT. YOU'VE BEEN WARNED**

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1st Foreword

Hello, readers. This is the second volume of Shit Trips, the /who/ Doctor Who fanfic anthology.

The first had a very good reception, so we decided to make another. In the unlikely chance you've never heard of Doctor Who, it is a sci fi show about a nigh-immortal alien time traveler who regenerates into a new form every time s/he dies. The Doctor always bring companions, and appears to have an uncontrollable need to help people, and defeat evildoers, wherever he goes. He travels in a time machine, that's disguised in the form of a police box, called the TARDIS.

(If you're confused by any of this, watch Doctor Who on Netfli—oh crap, BBC took it off Netflix. Well, then, watch it on Amazon Plus.)

Anyway, Doctor Who had a proud tradition of short story anthologies called Short Trips, featuring the Doctor, as well as his companions. Those were discontinued. However, they stay in our memory (and torrent websites.). The community of /who/, a group of Doctor Who fans from 4chan, came together to make a labor of love in this tradition, filled with stories about the Doctor and the universe of Who. And we've done it again.

There are funny stories, sexy stories, serious stories, and stories that barely have a plot. All of the Doctors shown in the show are represented, as are a few alternate Doctors.

Enjoy reading them, as we've enjoyed writing them.

Prologue: The Club of the Forgotten Ones

They will say the final days of the Time War was a glorious stand. They are wrong. It was pitiful. Men arguing with each other on who should die next, when it's becoming clear that we're all going to die. At least, that's the word on the street. Not that I care. That's not my job.

See, on Gallifrey, there are some people who refused to go to war. I know—it's silly. The Daleks are going to destroy us all, unless we fight. Some still won't kill. The Doctor used to be our patron saint, until he decided to join the war after all. We all have our reasons. Some are afraid of killing themselves by accident. Others remembered the last War, and swore it off. Others have even stranger reasons.

I used to be part of a special cult called Faction Paradox. You may have heard of them. Anyway, one time I came across the business end of a bad memetic weapon. Memetic weapons take away a piece of you. Sometimes your sanity, sometimes your memory. In my case I lost my ability to kill. I can't wield a weapon. If I pick up a knife to attack, I forget how to strike. If I try to punch someone, my arm will always miss. If I do kill someone, my mind shuts down for a week. I've become a pacifist, by force.

Obviously, I'm useless in war. Fortunately, the Time Lords found a place for me. See, in a Time War, reality tends to break up and reform, and people slip through. Whoever can be fitted for a war effort, the Time Lords use. But most of these people are simple civilians. They can't always be sent back, and the Time Lords can't just let them leave. These people might accidentally leak secrets.

So, the Time Lords keep them in a facility. And they left me in charge of keeping this people happy, and gave me a food machine to feed them with. And then carried on with the war.

I woke up today with a headache. I brushed my stark red hair, and then grabbed a matching pink pantsuit and shoes combination. I could already here the others walking around outside, probably getting food. Quickly leaving my room, I saw a blondewoman trying to work the food machine. Could be either Sam or Ellie.

"I thought I showed you how to work that machine first day," I said.

She turned around, showing her Pussy Riot! Shirt and dark, cynical eyes. "Yeah...I was just doing something."

"You weren't trying to get drugs from the food machine again, were you?"

"Listen," said Sam sharply, "it's a crime that the most advanced society of aliens don't have any form of mildly mild-altering substances beyond tea!"

"Gallifreyans aren't the most advanced by far. Else, we wouldn't be in this hell-hole," I said.

Sam shrugged. Her green turtleneck hung loosely over her body, hiding her scars. I often wondered what her life had been like. Humans always packed so much pain in a short bit of time.

“Have you met the new arrival?” I asked.

“Beryl? Haven't gotten a chance. For a Victorian, she's rather cute. I think Ellie has a crush on her,” said Sam.

Ellie appeared in the hallway. She glared at Sam, and said “Everyone's ready in the main room, Karla.”

I walked into the main hall. Three of the usual people were here, plus a fourth.

Clive was in front of his computer, as usual. He used to be a conspiracy nut, tracing the hints in history that the Doctor existed. had been attacked by Autons, and had nearly died. Fortunately for him, the Doctor and a companion of hers called Rose Tyler had saved him. Unfortunately for him, he would later encounter the Doctor again, and get involved with a scheme involving mafia Cyber-men. He found himself thrown into a whirlpool, and got here.

Susie English was feeding the baby Rast. Susie was an interesting case. At first, the Time Lords had assumed she was an alternate version of Susan, the granddaughter of the Doctor, and tried to get her to join the War. Two problems became clear. Susie was a human, not a Time Lord, despite understanding TARDISEs and how to speak Gallifreyan completely; the second issue was that Susie was one of the most unruly teenagers in all of existence. The Time Lords quickly stuck her here.

(Rast was the toddler regeneration of some evil Time Lord. It just wasn't clear which one. At some times she claimed to be Morbius, at other times the Master, and once she said she was the Valeyard. Seeing as she wasn't even potty-trained at first, the Time Lords decided to send her here until she became of age. Rast enjoyed telling everyone how she would rule all of Gallifrey one day.)

Ace, the cheetah girl, was busy eating raw fish, and waved at me. Ellie and Sam sat at opposite sides of the room, as usual. Violin music emanated softly from April, who had become eternally bonded an entire race of shadow monsters, and had sacrificed herself for her friends. You would think April was the saddest person here, but her joy never left her face. Only the mournful music she played showed any hint of her sadness.

In the corner of the room was the newest resident, Beryl. She was still dressed in her Victorian costume, and looked somewhat uncomfortable. She saw me, and walked over.

“Are you Karla? I'm Beryl. I, um, don't really know why I'm here. Are you the one in charge? I'm looking for the Doctor. He has a bowtie--”

“The Doctor's out a war. Never seen him in a bowtie,” said Rast.

“My Doctor would never go to war,” said Beryl soundly.

"The Doctor you know isn't this reality's Doctor," said Sam.

"We're all from different versions of reality. We all know different versions of the Doctor," said Ellie.

Beryl looked from Sam and Ellie, and said "You're twins?"

"No, they're different versions of the same person, from different realities," said Desmond, our technology guy. He strolled into the room, head held back, and his posture was as straight as ever. He claimed he used to be royalty, though I didn't know whether or not he made that up. He nodded at me, indicating that the shields that kept the Time War from affecting this facility was still intact. Turning to Beryl, he said "The sooner you understand that, the better. We are rejects from time, lost from our original realities forever. And outside these doors, is the most terrible war in existence. All we can do is stay inside."

Beryl bit her lip, and thought. Her button nose crinkled, and her mind seemed to be racing. Finally, she said "What do we do to past the time?"

"We tell stories," said Ace, waving a paw in mock grandiosity.

"That's all?" said Beryl.

"Well, on Tuesdays. On Thursdays, we do orgies," said Susie, leering at Beryl. Rast laughed, dropping mashed potatoes on her bib.

"She's joking," cut in Ellie.

Beryl shrugged. "So, stories, huh? The Doctor told me some good stories. I've been on some adventures with him myself."

"Why don't we make all the stories Doctor-themed? I mean, we do all know the Doctor," pointed out Rast. "I've got some great stories to tell."

"Sure. It'll help ease Beryl in," I said. Beryl slowly smiled at that.

"I'll start!" declared Ellie. "The Doctor told me a funny one, about his first body."

"And then we'll keep on sharing stories. The more outrageous, the better. We need all the laughs we can get," said Clive.

Everyone look enthused. A new arrival always did that to the group.

"Are you comfortable with that, Beryl?" asked Desmond.

"Yes. I actually love stories. Always been good at telling them. Let's start now."

DOCTOR WHO AND THE MILD IRRITATION OF THE SLITHEEN: A CANON STORY

The Doctor lead the way back into the TARDIS, talking loudly.

“Seas of pure vinegar! Mountains of solid methane! Of all the wonderous places in the galaxy, Raxaforicpatorius is surely one of the most unique.”

“It’s Raxacoricofallapatorius, Grandfather,” corrected Susan, who followed close behind him.

“Raxacaricafolopakurius,” the Doctor tried, before throwing his hands up in frustration, “what does it matter! I prefer Clom, in any case.” He took off his winter ensemble of Astrakhan hat, scarf and thick opera cape, placing them over the back of the chair he kept in the console room. Raxacoricofallapatorian blizzards were notoriously punishing, as they had found out first-hand.

“Speaking of Clom, I think that will be our next stop, Susan. Both Clom and Raxaforic... Raxacorif... the planet we are now departing orbit the same star – Carvanox.”

Susan rolled her eyes. “Carnavox,” she mumbled.

The Doctor moved his gloved hands effortlessly between the controls of the TARDIS, and was about to shut the doors when a thought crossed his mind. “Odd. Where is Chesterton? And Barbara?”

“I don’t know, Grandfather. They were behind me just now,” Susan turned around and looked through the TARDIS doors. In the distant, she could make out two figures approaching from the Raxacoricofallapatorian hillside. “I think that’s them!” she pointed.

“What ever are they dawdling around for!? It is minus ten degrees centigrade out there!”

“Perhaps they were just taking in the scenery,” said Susan, “space travel is still quite new to them.”

The Doctor sighed. Humans. They could watch a Beatles concert occurring three thousand miles away on a tiny viewing screen in their living rooms, but the very notion of other planets with life and ecology was

unfathomable.

Ian and Barbara shuffled into the TARDIS, as apprehensive as their first time inside the ship those many months ago.

“Do not panic,” Ian said, “we have now arrived.”

“My dear Chesterfield, Susan and I were worried. What kept you?” the Doctor smiled.

“An interesting rock. Barbara and I found an interesting rock.”

Barbara elbowed him. “Ian, my platonic friend, that sounds ridiculous. Say something more human and believable.”

“Well,” Ian stammered, but just as he was about to offer another reason, he let out a meaty guff. It echoed pristinely within the TARDIS walls. “My apologies.” Then, as if nothing happened, they began looking nonchalantly around at the various instruments the TARDIS contained.

Susan was growing more alarmed. She crept over to her grandfather. “There’s something not right about them, Grandfather.”

“I know, child,” said the Doctor, sorrow in his voice, “they are humans. Impulsive, short-sighted, fragile, and most of all, stupid. But, that cannot be helped.”

“Not that! They are acting very strangely. Ian would never expel gas from himself so loudly, especially in the presence of two women and an elder!”

“I think this fancy is running away with you, Susan,” he placed a hand on her shoulder, “instead of inventing tales, could you go and take some readings from the unit back there?” Susan did as she was told.

Susan had been doing sums for a while before she noticed Barbara standing behind her. She turned around, slow and courteously.

“Are you alright, Barbara?”

“Very alright. May I ask what you’re doing?”

“Grandfather wanted me to take readings from the computer system on the TARDIS’ condition,” she said

plainly.

Barbara was enthralled, and expressed this with a meaty guff of her own. “That sounds exceptionally interesting. Please, tell me more.”

“Er,” Susan said, caught off-guard, “I was just comparing the half life of the Uridian-97 used to power the shields to that of the Tungsten-powered helmic regulator.”

“Why?” asked Barbara, with a child’s enunciation.

“Then we know which is more efficient, and which needs more attention.”

“Very prudent of you, Sarah.”

Susan double-took her teacher. “I’m Susan.”

“That’s what I said, wasn’t it?”

“Are you sure you’re alright?”

“Oh, absolutely,” Barbara smiled, “now please, tell me some more about this TARDIS and its exact specifications, abilities and maintenance costs.”

The Doctor clicked a few more console buttons in quiet thought. Ian approached the console, hands behind his back innocently.

“A marvel, don’t you think, Chesterton?” the Doctor gestured to the machine.

Ian nodded vigorously. “I cannot dispute that.”

“It was already a relic when it came into my possession, you know.”

“You took it from the repair station in the Capital of Gallifrey,” Ian reeled off.

The Doctor stopped. “Why, yes. Yes, I did.” He looked at Ian with a searching glare. “How did you know that, hmm? I haven’t even mentioned what race I am, let alone which planet I originate from.”

Ian looked perturbed, as though he had just come home to find his mother had been replaced by a Chumbley,

but he was the only one who seemed to notice. After a protracted silence, he mumbled, “Just a lucky guess, I suppose.”

“An incredibly lucky guess,” the Doctor said, returning to the console.

“Anyway, Doctor,” Ian said, “completely unrelated, but how much would you say the TARDIS is worth? A rough estimate would suffice.”

“How much? The opportunity to explore the entirety of the Fourth Dimension in all its splendour far dwarfs any currency I care to name.”

“So, what, £250?”

“The ship is not for sale,” he said firmly, “under any circumstances.”

“I see.”

“Also, I must mention this, Chesterton,” the Doctor looked coyly to the floor, “your hair, it is quite different than usual.”

Ian felt at his forehead with both hands. His fringe was pushed down much lower than the Doctor had ever seen it. “Yes, my upper face area was getting cold in the wind out there.” On the cue of the word ‘wind’, Ian let out the meatiest guff yet.

“How resourceful of you.”

“If you’ll excuse me, Doctor, I urgently need to speak to my non-romantic acquaintance, Barbara.” He hurried away.

“Shall I go over it again?” Susan asked.

“No, let’s move on to advanced temporal manoeuvring,” Barbara muttered as she scribbled on a notepad.

Ian slithered up to them, looking very self-conscious. “Barbara, can we speak in private about something relatively normal, such as drinking a pint of beer or going to a park and watching a cricket game?”

“Certainly,” she replied, leaving Susan to continue her calculations in a state of unease.

“I think the Doctor is on to me,” Ian whispered, “I may have let slip a few clues.”

“You fool! We get this close to having a functional TARDIS and you do your very best to cock the whole thing up. What did you say?”

“I accidentally mentioned Gallifrey. It was in big letters on the Doctor’s file, so I thought bringing it up would make him trust me. That’s not such a big deal though, is it?”

“Gallifrey? By the fog of Clom, the two we picked up haven’t been told about Gallifrey yet!”

“Oh, Clom,” cursed Ian, “and I think he noticed the zip on my upper face area.” He then released another meaty guff. “Sorry,” he said loudly, “all the human delicacies I’ve consumed are repeating in me.”

“On me,” interjected Barbara.

“On me,” Ian clarified immediately, before returning to his hushed tone. “This blasted compression field. If we can’t get a simple compression field working properly, how can we expect to operate a TARDIS?”

“We have to earn his trust. He’s suspicious now, so we’ll have to play the long game. And when he least expects it...”

“The Slitheen will possess a fully operational TARDIS.” They grinned in unison.

The Doctor had listened in to this conversation with curiosity. All this talk of compression fields and upper face area zips and Clom. He grimaced. Humans get more peculiar all the time. It made him remember why he parked the TARDIS in an abandoned junkyard and not Leicester Square. Exhaling loudly, he imputed the co-ordinates for the nearest air-freshener dealership into the TARDIS, and contemplated applying for a Saturday job there.

END.

Smith and Jones

by McGanon

It's about Martha Jones meeting a John Smith. Though, maybe not the Smith you were expecting.

The foyer of the office building was stuffy and cramped, dreary in all its everyday simplicity. In the corner, a cardboard box stacked with papers had split its sides at some unknown cosmic joke, spilling a few sheaves across the cracked and dirty tiling below. A water cooler warbled opposite it, looking far from inviting, its water supply running low and pooling stagnant. *There really isn't much special about this place*, Martha thought, picking her way across the dirtied flooring, mindful of a few slack tiles that shifted under her boots, *not exactly somewhere you'd expect an alien invasion*. Still, in this line of work, you quickly came to realise that the important part of the word “extraordinary” wasn’t always the beginning. She shifted the bag slung over her shoulder in a motion that might’ve seemed borne of nerves to an outside observer, but in truth, the multitude of gadgets she’d stuffed inside it were just digging rather insistently against her thigh. It was an annoying burden on a mission she’d have preferred to have employed a little bit of subtlety with, but she knew that what she had brought was ultimately necessary. Some sort of fissure had apparently opened on one of the upper levels of this insipid office block, and according to the reports received by UNIT, its origins weren’t exactly... terrestrial. She’d received the mission statement this morning: *get in, seal the breach, get out*. All in all, easier said than done.

She cast her gaze around the foyer once more, cataloguing its occupants with brief, innocuous appraisals. A middle-aged security guard, lingering by the doorway, half-asleep and eagerly counting down the minutes to clock-off with every glance at his watch (he’d waved her forward with all the eagerness and intrigue of a damp sponge, barely acknowledging the very official-looking ID badge she’d brandished at him), and a strange man in a green velvet coat. The latter was perched quite precariously on the edge of a faded leather settee, poring rather intently over a stack of worn brochures in his hand. For all it would seem to the average person, the eccentric-looking individual was rather intrigued by the concept of cheap health insurance; to Martha Jones, he might as well have been on his feet, yelling “I’M SUSPICIOUS!” at the top of his lungs. But for all that he sparked her curiosity, with his shoulder-length tangle of hair and piercing blue-green eyes, she couldn’t, for the life of her, work out what about him had captured her attention. *He’s attractive*, her mind offered helpfully, and she scowled. True or not, there was something else, something—oh. *Anachronisms*, a voice in her head that was certainly no longer her own stated, quite matter-of-factly, *everywhere you go, that’s what we are. Little pieces of the universe that don’t... quite... belong. Anomalies in the fabric of space-time, just passing through. You’d think the locals might learn to notice us for once*. That was what the man was: an anachronism. As he shifted, she finally got a proper view of the clothing that lay beneath that garish coat: ill-fitting slate-grey trousers; a Paisley-patterned waistcoat, neatly buttoned; a green-grey cravat, fastened with a diamond pin, and a pressed shirt so crisp in its whiteness that it almost hurt her eyes under the fluorescent office lighting. The chain of a

pocketwatch dangled loosely from one of his pockets, and she noticed his fingers trailing idly along it as he stared at the brochure—no, wait... stared at *her*. She quickly turned, her eyes widened and her pulse quickened, even though she knew in her heart that the man was no threat. Still, dangerous or not, this was a mission she understood required a certain level of discretion. It wouldn't do any good to be noticed by a local who's evidently just stumbled out of a comics convention... or something.

The whole dilemma had taken a mere few seconds, so by the time she opted to resolutely stare ahead, her feet had taken her to the front desk perched at the relatively far end of the tiny room. A withered old lady sat on a squeaky office chair, carefully tapping something out onto an ancient keyboard and squinting awkwardly at a buzzing computer screen. As Martha approached, she caught the briefest glimpse of some sort of online shopping website, before the window minimised and the frail woman turned to observe her with milky eyes.

"Yes? How can I help you?" she croaked, folding her tiny little hands neatly in front of her.

Martha slipped her identification badge out of her coat pocket, tilting it towards the light so that the woman could see the tiny, printed face staring grimly out at her. It was a fake, of course—she would never willingly present her genuine UNIT credentials to a member of the public. The name stamped across the card read "SAMANTHA JONES," with her birthdate and other miscellaneous identifiers printed below. To be sure the woman, aged as she was, could properly interpret the text, she stated the alias aloud... and heard sudden, scuffling movement behind her.

The receptionist didn't seem to notice the man in the velvet coat who was now sprawled out on the floor, looking vaguely dazed, and Martha herself was still staring straight ahead, with the rigour and discipline of a soldier. "Hm, yes, alright. I'll note you down in the guestbook," the little woman was mumbling, reaching for a pen with unsteady fingers and setting to work, "you can go upstairs now, but mind the elevator, it's quite broken."

Martha smiled her gratitude, dropping the ID badge back into one of her capacious pockets—she had learned to value that sort of extra carrying space a long while ago, back when she was... *travelling*—and moving towards the door to the stairwell. Behind her, she heard rapid footsteps and a man's voice, raised in apparent alarm: "Excuse me, ma'am, exactly *what* did that woman say her name was?" But Martha didn't hear the rest, she was already through the doorway and halfway up to the first floor.

The report she'd received hadn't been very specific, so all she knew was *what* she was dealing with (broadly speaking, anyway) and where it was geographically. They hadn't exactly accounted for the location being several storeys up, and frankly, she didn't have a clue on which floor the rift had even opened. Long-range scans hadn't seemed to work—the science officer she conferred with at base had theorised that the clutter of aged electronics all concentrated in one place was throwing off false signals that prevented the usual pin-point accuracy of their detectors. She had thought it rather pointless to have such high-end technology if it couldn't even function properly half the time, but she didn't say as much. She'd just nodded, grabbed what she needed, and went. So, as it was, she found herself weaving between office cubicles, clutching a short-range artron energy detector in her hands, brows furrowed in concentration. It wasn't a particularly exciting job, but someone had to do it. Every few steps, the gadget suspended in her fingers would give off a feeble *beep*, before lapsing once more into

silence—so that at least confirmed that the rift *was* here, somewhere, but it wasn't yet close by. Her footsteps were muffled by the thin carpet beneath her, and so were everyone else's, so at least she'd be able to tell herself later that she absolutely was not to be blamed for the ambush that she quite literally walked into.

"Oh—shit!" she yelped, bouncing the extremely delicate, extremely *expensive* scanner between her hands desperately until she got a solid grip on it again and her heart retreated, quite disappointed, from her mouth.

"Not quite the name they usually give me, but I'll take it," the solid mass in front of her announced cheerily, "though I don't suppose it's appropriate for a workplace setting..."

Martha glanced up, taken aback by the recognisable voice—it was the man from the foyer! He had both hands on her upper arms, holding her steady, and he stared down at her with a calm smile that existed in direct opposition to the wild, almost frightening, look in his eyes. "I'm sorry, sir. I apologise for the language, I just... wasn't expecting to bump into you," she said, grimacing, "quite literally."

"Oh, you can drop all the formalities, Ms. Jones, neither of us are here on business, I hope?"

Something about the man seemed to radiate authority, but it was packaged quite haphazardly in such an eccentric, dishevelled form. Still, he seemed harmless, and she felt herself relax, even dropping the clipped, professional tone from her voice as she straightened up to her proper height—still a few inches shorter than him—and regarded him calmly. "I am, actually. But I can't really say much."

"If you do, will you have to kill me?"

One side of her mouth tugged up in a smile, and she shrugged. "Something like that. What's your name, then? You don't look like the office-worker sort."

"I'm just passing through. You can call me... Smith. John Smith, to be exact. Generic, I know, but there really ought to be something about me that is, I've always thought." The man shot her a grin at that little inside joke, his hands falling from her arms as though he'd only just realised they were still lingering.

Martha, for her own part, hoped that she didn't look quite as alarmed as she felt. John Smith, she mused, was too common a name to think anything of, and yet... the man in front of her was *anything* but common. He held himself with a quiet sort of assurance, like he commanded the room purely by virtue of his existence. She'd only ever seen that sort of personality once before, and she never believed she'd see it again... yet here it was, stood in front of her—an enigma wrapped in a velveteen cloak—but she knew she ought not to get her hopes up, even if he was regarding her intently, as if he knew a lot more about her than he was letting on. She realised she'd been staring for a little bit too long, and managed to blurt out a shaky, "pleased to meet you."

John, to his credit, didn't seem at all fazed by the star-struck nature of his new acquaintance. Almost as if he was quite used to it. "May I accompany you on your travels, Samantha Jones?" He seemed to take a peculiar sort of glee at that statement, but it was a private thing, as if he was in on some great joke that she hadn't yet heard the punchline to.

She nodded weakly, waving the scanner—still clutched tightly in her hand—towards him. "This is... well, it's a machine that beeps," she stated, as if that in itself explained everything, "and I'm trying to get it to beep *more*. I'm looking for something, and this'll help me find it." It wouldn't do much harm to have him along,

and when she finally found the rift, she could hustle him off elsewhere while she got to work, and have everything tidy again once he returned. She almost laughed at the idea of having her very own companion, but stifled it before it ever reached her lips.

John, meanwhile, had gently taken the scanner from her hands and marched off forward, swinging it to and fro, an intense look of concentration on his face as if, suddenly, this insignificant task he had assigned himself, was suddenly the most important thing in the world. Every time the beeps increased even fractionally in frequency, he'd turn and march off in a specific direction, dodging cubicles and office furniture without glancing up even once from the tiny, monochrome view-screen that held him enraptured. She trailed, almost casually, after him, her boots scuffing the carpeted floor—there was little need for discretion now, with such an overly-excitable individual now declaring themselves her partner.

For the first hour, nothing happened.

Beep... beep... beepbeepbeep... beepbeepbeepbeep... beepbeepbeepbeepbeepbeep...

The scanner had picked up considerably once they'd ventured upwards to the third floor, its repetitive symphony almost grating in the otherwise quiet office block. Most of the workers had slipped off by now, intent on getting home and getting their feet up, but they occasionally stumbled across some particularly dedicated individual, pounding away at a keyboard and looking more stressed than Martha thought she'd ever been in her life. She and John hadn't talked at all, save a few murmured words of suggestion as they traipsed about the place, making an awful technological racket, but now the companionable silence weighed far too much with words unspoken, so she snapped it over her knee and piped up.

"Why did you follow me?"

John paused for what must've been the first time since he'd taken on this unconventional mission, his feet skidding to an abrupt halt, and his eyes turning from the tiny screen to meet her own. "You were interesting," he hummed, then scrunched up his nose and sighed, "besides, the woman at the front desk wouldn't let me in until I said I was accompanying you."

Martha raised an incredulous eyebrow. "And she believed you?"

John gave a quick, almost musical laugh, his eyes—which, as she stared into them now, she realised were impossibly, unbelievably ancient—glittering in the flickering fluorescent lighting. "Not at all. I knocked over her pencil holder and made a dash for it. The security guard looked far too bored to bother coming after me, or I hoped anyway." He cast a wary glance about. "Looks like I was right. Not the first time I have been, I admit."

"You seem to have a bit of a taste for trouble," Martha offered, reaching to pluck the scanner from between the man's hands and flicking a few switches on it idly, "I knew someone like that once. But that was a long time ago."

John gave a gentle, almost knowing smile, but his eyes were alight with some fierce curiosity, his unoccupied fingers twitching idly by his side, curling into loose fists. "What was his name?" he prompted, almost like he already knew the answer.

“Well, that’s the thing,” Martha said, setting off again on their shared journey round the dreary urban setting, “he didn’t really have one. A title, more like. He called himself... the Doctor, which—don’t tell him I said this—I always thought was a bit *poncy*.” His eyes widened at that statement, and he looked ready to blurt out an indignant protestation. That was when she knew for sure. “Hello, Doctor.”

The incredulous look on his face melted away almost instantaneously, replaced by a bright warmth, as though he were regarding her in a different light entirely. “I take it your own name isn’t quite Samantha then, is it?”

She shook her head at that, shrugging. “No, just a pseudonym I use, an old friend that the Doct—you used to tell me about.” She noted the widening of his eyes at that, then continued: “my real name’s Martha, but the ‘Jones’ bit is as authentic as they come—Dr. Martha Jones.”

The Doctor muttered something under his breath about “future,” then repeated her name to himself. He seemed impressed, almost, but Martha tried to prevent her ego from believing it. His head suddenly snapped up, eyes locking intently with hers, “and this... Samantha Jones, I told you about—what did I say about her?” There was a quiet sort of desperation about him, now, a nervous energy laced through each of his words, and Martha got the distinct feeling that this question meant far more to him than it might initially seem.

“Not much,” she started, cautious and hyper-aware of the drop of his shoulders at that statement, “but you were clearly very fond of her. It was mostly the whole,” she passed the scanner into one hand, then wiggled the fingers of the free one, “Smith and Jones shtick, y’know?” She smiled wistfully at the memory of that, of her own Doctor, who had been eccentric and lively but altogether more... modern, than this one in front of her seemed. She sorted absently through her memories, trying to recall all the photographs that UNIT had on file of his many faces—if she had to guess, she’d have pinned this as his... eighth regeneration. The tousle of shoulder-length hair and the antiquated dress was a give-away, and she wondered why she hadn’t really realised his identity until now. She remembered there not being much information on this version of him in the archive files.

“Yes, yes, I suppose it would be,” the Doctor murmured, falling more evenly into step with her, then reaching out a hand to gently readjust her course as the gadget in her hand—which she had managed to forget about—suddenly got excited. “Sam was... a companion of mine,” he stated, a detached and faraway look in his eyes even as he paced forward, “still is. Might be.”

Martha furrowed her brow in concern, fiddling with one of the loose buttons on the scanner. “What happened to her?”

The Doctor shook himself quite suddenly, as though pulling himself from some sort of trance. “We got separated on one of our adventures gone awry, and I’ve been looking for her ever since. I figured she couldn’t have gone far but,” he cast a glance at his surroundings, a pained grimace slipping across his youthful features, “it would seem as though I have.”

“Wrong time, wrong place?” Martha offered, with a sympathetic smile, and he nodded his confirmation. “You’ll find her, Doctor. I know you will. You’re good at that stuff.”

He blinked rapidly then, and there was a new bounce in his step, as if he had suddenly worked out the answer to a particularly troubling maths problem. “What am I like in days to come?” Before Martha could open her mouth to speak—to remind him of the potentially disastrous implications that imparting future knowledge could

have—he suddenly yelped, and clapped his hands tightly onto his head, covering his ears. “No, no, no, no! Don’t tell me! Nothing at all, Dr. Martha Jones! I simply cannot know my own future, no matter the temptations.”

She gave him a smile that was long-suffering, despite its placidity. *Time Lords*, she mused, *always so melodramatic*. With a gentle tap on the back of his hand, she drew his attention and motioned pulling her own hands from her head. He obliged, sheepishly. “I know, Doctor. I wasn’t going to tell you. I learned all this time stuff from you, after all, so I know the rules.”

The Doctor sighed and scrunched up his nose. “Probably how to break them, too. I was never much good at sticking to all those laws, and I don’t think my old age will manage to remedy that. I’m probably breaking at least three right now.”

Martha laughed heartily, but suddenly grew sombre as she remembered more about her travels with the Doctor’s older self. Older, of course, because he *was*—although, she couldn’t let this incarnation’s youthful face and childlike mannerisms fool her. He was still as ancient, and impossible, and as untouchable as ever; for all that this version was new to her, she felt that those traits were very much a constant throughout his life. “Yes, well, I don’t think you need to worry about getting in any trouble for that.” She froze then, her step faltering as she realised what she had said. She hoped he wouldn’t notice. Informing someone that their entire race was dead wasn’t exactly an easy task, and she knew in her heart it’d be a secret shared with far-reaching implications, ones which she had no authority to enforce upon the universe. She sealed her lips shut, and quickened her pace.

“Hm, no. I suppose not. They’re busy as it is back home, I doubt they’d have much time to check up on me,” he hummed, scratching at his chin, acting utterly innocuous despite knowing what he was saying was a blatant lie.

Martha felt an icy cold snake across her skin, realising he’d just confirmed exactly what she’d feared—this Doctor hadn’t been through the Time War yet, hadn’t pulled that metaphorical trigger and doomed everything he’d ever loved. She had to be careful with what she said from now on, she realised, and then felt her heart arrested by a sudden, aching pain. Nothing physical, just a spot of... *cosmic angst*, as the Doctor had liked to say. Her gaze lingered on his long, sharp features, the bright eyes and the unfiltered innocence that shone there, and felt all at once a great sadness for him. He had no idea what lay ahead, the sort of choices he’d have to make—his life now was one of adventure and mystery and companionship, and she felt sickened that the universe would ever dare twist that all into anger and hatred and fear. She shook her head softly, clearing her mind of such heavy thoughts; it wouldn’t do her any good to dwell on things she couldn’t change, so she focused hard on the scanner in her hands instead, and they lapsed into a comfortable silence.

The little contraption didn’t beep for the next twenty minutes or so, no matter the amount of pacing back and forth they did. Even retracing their steps back to spots where it had called out to them before netted them no substantial results. They were frustrated, to say the least. The Doctor had been first to break their quiet reverie about five minutes in, inquiring as to what, exactly, UNIT were doing in a mildew-ridden hellscape such as this. In kinder terms, of course.

“We received reports of a rift somewhere in the building,” she had stated, her voice claiming that clipped, almost militaristic scrupulosity, as though she were reading out the very document that had been logged in the

organisation's archives, "temporal in origin, maybe. I was sent to investigate and, if possible, seal it before any sort of damage could be done. I suppose they figured I'd be up to the task, with all my experience in that sort of stuff."

The Doctor hummed noncommittally, but said nothing and marched on, at least until the scanner suddenly screeched to life and started going haywire. He near enough jumped out of his skin with fright at the sudden, ear-piercing shriek of a beep, but so did she. Fumbling with the unwieldy piece of technology to turn the noise off as quickly as possible, she nodded towards a broom cupboard door. "Looks like it's in there, then. I've got a few... gadgets, I suppose, to give it a good seeing to. Should be able to close it right now if it's anything like the sort of thing we've seen before." She slipped the now-silent scanner back into her shoulder bag, then pulled out a few objects. One looked somewhat like a TV remote, but with too few buttons and an oddly-shaped attachment on the end; another was a black box peppered with lights, with three little legs on the bottom that folded out into some sort of tripod, and the last item initially looked like nothing more than a sleek silver pen, but on closer inspection, it was some sort of crude sonic screwdriver. The Doctor raised a curious eyebrow at that. "Nothing in leagues of your own, I promise you that."

"I admit I would've been rather surprised if it was," he smirked, then reached out to take some of the burden from her hands, starting off for the broom cupboard door, before coming to a sudden halt and staring quite dumbly. "Hm."

Martha pulled her bag strap higher up her shoulder, then brushed a loose strand of hair out of her face with the crude attempt at a sonic screwdriver—it was mostly useless, she just liked making an attempt with it in her work all the same. She narrowed her eyes at the Doctor, who was standing very still and bouncing the tech between his palms almost absentmindedly. "What's up?"

He glanced back over his shoulder, blinking at her. "Well, it's nothing..." he started, then stopped, pursing his lips and turning back to the doorway, "it's just, I don't think you'll have to worry about that rift very much at all." With that cryptic statement, he stalked off towards the door and stood by it, waiting for her, with fingers curled eagerly around the handle.

She followed after him, then nodded as she stood on the precipice of the unopened entryway, preparing herself for the worst. Anything could be beyond there—rifts were like doorways, of a sort, into the time vortex, but doors can be passed through both ways. She dreaded the thought that there might be a Weeping Angel waiting in there, readying itself to pounce. With a soft *click*, the Doctor pushed down on the handle, and the door swung open to reveal—oh.

"I hate it when you're right," she muttered, shoving her things back into her bag. They were useless now. All that temporal energy that scanners had been picking up all coalesced here, in this spot, at this moment, in this impossibly big, impossibly small, blue box.

He laughed, a twinkle in his eye as he stepped forward, pushing against the door of the TARDIS that was fit snug into the cupboard. "No, you really don't." With its characteristic squeak, the door swung open and Martha caught her first glimpse inside. There wasn't really much to see, she had to admit. The Doctor merely gave her a smirk, stepped forward once again, and pushed on the inner doors.

She had expected something quite like her own Doctor's TARDIS interior, with its grungy metal and arcing

coral-like structures; instead, what greeted her was a vast Gothic wonder, all stonework and hardwood flooring, candelabras and ancient tomes. At the gentle encouragement of the Doctor, she stepped inside, and was struck by the sheer *vastness* of it all. His future console rooms seemed suffocating in comparison with the open-plan grandeur that this one offered, with every creature comfort one could ever need within easy reach. She noticed that each side of the TARDIS was decorated differently—at one end there was a library, shelves teeming with books and scrolls and the occasional knick-knack; at the other, a small alcove thick with potted plant-life, hiding within it a number of bizarrely unrelated objects. As she wandered further in, she spotted—of all things!—a garishly purple Volkswagen Beetle tucked off in a corner, and she decided that for the sake of her sanity, she wasn't going to consider how he even got that in here. The Doctor shuffled up behind her, tapping her on the shoulder.

"I haven't even shown you the best part yet," he said with a wicked grin, bounding forward and flicking a switch on the console. For a long moment, nothing happened at all, and then the world above her burst with colour. An infinite, impossible starscape, hanging right above her head. She stared for a long, long moment, lost in the galaxies laid before her, and when she tipped her head forward again, she was faintly surprised to feel the tears in her eyes. The Doctor, never one to miss these sorts of things, suddenly gained a look of intense distress, and he bounded forward, a bright yellow handkerchief having seemingly manifested in his palm. He tilted her chin up with the crook of his finger, and dabbed at her face gently, though no tears had actually fallen. "What's wrong?"

She sniffed, then made a vain attempt at composing herself. "Nothing... it's just—it's been so long. I've missed all of," she waved her hands about idly, "this." Of course, she didn't mean *this* in specificity; for she'd never stepped foot within this impossibly ancient-looking console room before. It was all of it, in conjunction. She'd been working for UNIT long enough that alien beings didn't faze her, and concepts like space and time travel were so pedestrian that they'd lost their wonder—but then, she realised, they never really could. You just forgot about them gradually, until they lost that lustre, and your memories faded and became tinged with regret, and you started speaking about everything in such technical terms. No wonder she felt as though she could cry.

"I apologise, Martha. I never meant to cause you any sort of distress," the Doctor stated quite seriously, his hands now away from her face and kneading the crumpled handkerchief anxiously.

She couldn't help but smile at the sheer innocence of the man before her; he looked like a child who'd just witnessed their mother crying for the first time—lost, distressed, utterly heartbroken, and ultimately unsure of what to do. "It's alright. Thank you, Doctor."

"For what?" he asked softly, eyebrows knit together in simultaneous confusion and concern.

"Showing me again." She leaned forward then, and with only the slightest of hesitation, leaned up and kissed him gently on the cheek.

"I don't suppose I could convince you to stay?"

She shook her head lightly, tousling her dark hair. "When I left the TARDIS all those years ago," she frowned, unsure of whether she ought to phrase things in the future tense or not, but a small, almost imperceptible nod from the Doctor spurred her on, "I left it on my own terms. My reasons for leaving then are the same as those I

have for refusing now.” She reached out, gently squeezing his shoulder, an apologetic smile on her face that told him exactly what she knew he was thinking: she wasn’t going to tell him what those reasons were, not yet.

“I suppose I’ll understand when the time comes,” he murmured, eyes downcast. Then a bright smile etched itself onto his face, and she pretended not to see that hint of sadness in his eyes. *He must think he did something wrong*, she thought, then hastily corrected herself, *or will do. But I can’t interfere, as much as I’d like to*. He reached over to flick a switch on the TARDIS console, and the interior doors swung shut. “At least let me take you home?”

She nodded, he grinned, and with a pull of a lever, the TARDIS dematerialised and all the cleaning supplies in the broom cupboard came crashing down.

--- YEARS LATER ---

“I’ll see you again, mister.”

The TARDIS door clicked shut behind her, and the Doctor leaned back against the console, his hands in his pocket and a long, drawn-out sigh escaping his lips. It had taken a while, he had to admit. His memory wasn’t quite what it used to be—too preoccupied by the latest adventure, the latest tragedy, to spend time reminiscing on the distant past—but he was sure now.

He finally understood.

“I’m sorry, Martha Jones. I’m so, so sorry.”

The Thirteen Trips

by Gallifrey_Immigrant

On the sands of Jupiter, a lone temporal event ran. This temporal event hid in the form of a black-skinned man, and wore glasses. His body was slender, but not skinny, and from a distance, he seemed nice-looking. If you got closer, you might realize he was actually rather creepy-looking. Were you to ask him his name, he would say he was called "Gallifrey_Immigrant." In his hand is a notebook containing his fiction writing. In fact, it contains every fiction story ever made about Doctor Who. Were you to talk about it to him, he would immediately ask for a review. He, like all writers, loves reviews.

That doesn't matter, because in a few minutes, he is going to die.

A dark shadow crept slowly the land. It looked like an old lady, and smelled of rotting corpses. Were you to get close to it, your mind would begin to go insane. Its eyes glowed red, and bits and pieces of its skin flaked off as it moved, causing the very air to decay. Immigrant looked back at it, and ran faster. His footsteps left impressions of the sand, but the shadow left no evidence at all upon the dunes. Eventually, he turned a corner, and came across a large stone wall. This was the Jovian fortress of Arkemin. For years, this had been sanctuary for errant Time Lords. He knocked on the door. There was no answer.

"Please don't harm me. I only write fanfiction for that show! It's not a break in Gallifreyan security!" said Immigrant. As the creature ambled toward him, a light appeared from the top of the fortress wall. Someone appeared from the top of the tower, looking down at them.

"You...lie. Your arrogance has shown itself," said the creature. Five stretchy arms extended from its shoulders, and bony hands grabbed Immigrant's body. The creature's head slowly drew closer to Immigrant's, and a black, fleshy appendage reached to its face.

"Y-you're not from Gallifreyan government," said Immigrant. Desperate, he smacked the creature in the face with his book. The monster fell back, slightly stunned, and Immigrant stumbled backward. At that point, the fortress door opened slowly. Immigrant ran through the door, and didn't look back. The monster tried to follow, but was stopped by the rapidly shutting doors.

Immigrant sighed, cradling his book in hand. The old stone columns of the fortress couldn't hide the thunderstorm winds from buffeting his frankly uncombed hair, and his green-striped shirt fluttered in the breeze. Taking out his phone, he clicked around on his browser, and typed in his message.

"/who/, someone's after me. Guys...I need to tell you something. I'm a Time Lord. Time Lords are real. Doctor Who's like, an embellishment. But Time Lords are real. And I'm one of them. I'm on Jupiter right now. The fortress, year 2017. But something's following me. And if any Time Lords are on /who/...contact the CIA. This isn't right. I think it's one of the Degens."

He finished the captcha, and waited for a reply. Something made him look up.

The creature was right in front.

“Oh fiddlesticks,” said Immigrant, who didn't curse, no matter what.

The creature grabbed him, and brought him closer, till their faces were touching. Immigrant felt his sanity disappear, and then his life. His body burned with a bright red light, and then he was gone.

The creature picked up his phone. A horrific giggle left its throat, and it threw the phone to the ground, and disappeared.

Time passed. And somewhere in the cosmos, a pathway between two points in space appeared. One end laid on Earth, and the other in the Fortress on Jupiter. Another temporal event traveled between those points, taking only the time necessary to ascertain the atmosphere on Jupiter, before resting comfortably on the planet. This temporal event was wrapped in the form of a beautiful Caucasian woman. Her hair was brown, and shoulder-length, with a rather nice nose, neither quite sharp, nor a button. Her eyes were hazel green, with a faint star pattern within, the only clue to her lack of humanity. She wore a scarf and a simple red jacket, a blue shirt underneath. Had you asked her name, she wouldn't have given it, but let's call her Starfu. That's her name on the /who/ forum, anyway.

She opened the open door of the fortress. Her eyes tensed upon seeing the open door, and she paused, before slowly walking in. Her eyes followed the footsteps left by Immigrant, until she saw the phone. Picking it up, she scrolled through, seeing the replies to Immigrant's message.

“Fuck off, trip.”

“I'm part of Gallifrey, too.”

From Cloister: you okay, Immigrant?

And from Starfu herself: “Immigrant, stay where you are. I'll meet you there.”

Starfu looked away from the phone. No sign of where Immigrant was.

“Well, Immigrant. You've screwed up this time,” she said. (As a temporal event, she didn't have to speak. It was the personal choice of Time Lords, just like being a “she” was a personal decision.). She wrapped her hands around the temporal echo left behind by Immigrant. It was faint, with sharp edges where he had been shredded away. No regeneration traces were left. That was scary—he must have died before he could transform. Regeneration was instantaneous—so how fast was the person that killed him? If it was a person. The stink in the air didn't smell human.

Something floated down to the ground. It was a short man in a blue hood, with yellow antenna sticking from his head. Starfu recognized him as one of the Fortress Moderators. The man hobbled over to Starfu, glaring at her.

“Time Lords aren't allowed here,” hissed the Moderator.

“One of my kind died here recently. Any idea what happened?”

“He was being chased by something. Whatever it was, it got past the gates,” said the Guardian. His antenna vibrated, probably out of fear. “We don't want your species' business interfering with us.”

“A man just died.”

“Don't mock my intelligence. You're no more a human than I'm a plant. Get out. That's a courtesy warning.”

Starfu decided not to argue. She grabbed the temporal trace of Immigrant, closed her eyes, and focused her mind upon the location of the one person who could work with temporal traces. When she opened her eyes, she was in a bazaar in an underground subway. It was somewhere in America, early 21st century. She followed her temporal sense, letting the biodata lead her to the location of N8. Whether or not N8 was his real name, she didn't know. She suspected not.

She found him in the corner of a room, reading a novel, jars lined up on a table in front of him. His skull mask gleamed in the fluorescent lighting, and bright stark eyes ignored her completely. In those jars, she saw flashes of images, scenes from her past, and some she hadn't seen before.

“Memories. I sell them for a small fee. I need something to pay for my Faction Paradox novels,” said N8. He still hadn't looked up. Starfu rolled her eyes at the mention of Faction Paradox. All Gallifreyans who frequented Earth knew about Doctor Who. How a very real alien civilization ended up part of Terran media was unknown; but it was widely agreed that Faction Paradox was the dumbest thing ever created. An entertaining myth—except to N8, who was assured it was real. Any attempt to convince him contrary drove him further to waffle on about the show.

“I don't remember some of those scenes.”

“Not all memories are from the past.”

“Or maybe you falsify some scenes?” said Starfu. She raised her eyebrows at N8, who scoffed, but didn't say no. She plunked down Immigrant's temporal trace, which N8 examined. “It's from Immigrant. He died recently. I think he was murdered, and I want to know who did it.”

“Ah, Immigrant. Pretty nice trip, although he is a little naggy shit when it comes to the fanfic writing thing,” said N8. He hummed. “Well, he *was*. What will you give me for delving into his time line? This isn't a charity, you know.”

“Do you remember Granddaughter? In the early days, before she disappeared into the nether-sphere, she gave me access to Gallifrey's Black Library. You know Lawrence Miles?”

“Of course. He practically wrote the Faction Paradox novel line. I swear to you—he's one of us” said N8.

“Well,” said Starfu, lowering her tone, “Granddaughter may or may not have given me access to all of the Forgiven Library's collection of unmade Lawrence Miles stories, from the alternate universes where he was successful.”

“Say no more,” said N8, who focused his gaze upon Immigrant's temporal trace. His eyes glowed red, as he unraveled his timeline just a smidgen, interacting with the trace. His skull mask began to move, as reality shifted around him.

And then he dropped the trace.

“What's wrong?” asked Starfu.

N8 didn't speak for a moment. Then he said “We need to leave, now.”

He grabbed Starfu's hand, and rushed to the exit, his memory jars shattering. The contents billowed around them, as he ran out the door. A rotting stink filled the air suddenly. Starfu stopped him.

“Talk to me. What's--”

She was cut off by an old, decrepit woman who burst out of the exit. She was wrapped in rags, and her timeline was perverted and rotten, sucking reality into it.

“Your deeds have given you out,” said the monster. It rushed to N8, grabbing his head in its claws. Darkness billowed from its cape, and covered N8's skin, as he was slowly dragged backward.

Starfu focused her mind, and reached out her hand, moving the probabilities like water. Reality shifted, and N8 was teleported from the monster's grasp. A wave of tiredness hit Starfu—messing with reality drained her always. N8 drew something from his cloak, and threw it onto the monster. The creature froze in mid-movement.

“Temporal freezes. They come in handy. Starfu, we need to leave, now,” said N8.

The creature unfroze, launching itself at N8. Starfu was too tired to do anything, as N8 was devoured in front of her. His essence was sucked into the monster. In his last moments, he threw a device into Starfu's hand. The cylindrical device glowed blue, and Starfu found herself in another room.

A brunette woman was being spanked by a man with glasses. The woman was smiling, and Starfu blushed at what she heard. The man noticed her and waved.

“Hello. Are you Gina?” said the man. He held out a hand to shake.

“No. I just got here...do you know N8?” said Starfu. Her senses were tired, but something in the back of her mind was being tickled. The biodata around these people sparkled, and felt oddly similar. Like they were cousins.

“N8? He's a fellow trip. Did he send you?” asked the man. The woman placed some clothes on, clearly annoyed at Starfu's interruption. The man grinned at her, his eyes twinkling with a dark intelligence.

“Fellow trip? You're on /who/? Wait. Are you Cloister? And Belle?” asked Starfu.

“Wait. You're a trip? Stephanie Hyam is a trip?” asked Belle.

“I'm not Hyam. I just look like her,” said Starfu.

Cloister raised his eyebrows.

“I don't know why. This is my first body, so...” said Starfu, biting her lip nervously.

Belle wrapped an arm around Starfu, and said “I think you look cute.”

“Thanks. I'm Starfu,” she said.

A few minutes later, she had explained what happened to N8 and the Immigrant to Cloister.

“I think something is hunting down the Time Lords who post in /who/, “said Starfu.

Cloister drank a sip of water, and thought. “That's an odd obsession to have.”

“It's not a person. It appears to be a creature from the Dark Times. The very essence of this monster is a piece of corruption. Why would it hate trips?”

“No one likes trips,” pointed out Belle.

“Most people don't go around killing them, though,” said Cloister. He pulled out his phone, and connected to the Secret Trip server that connected to the Gallifreyan matrix. A green-skinned chitinous woman with mandibles answered.

“Chan-Hello, how are you, Cloister-tho?”

“Doing well. We need the Time Lords help. Something is chasing my friends, and may come for me next,” said Cloister.

“Chan the Time Lords know tho,” said Chantho.

“Wait, what?”

“Chan-the Time Lords are very much aware of the Mongo creature attacking you tho. Chan Unfortunately, the Time Lords have refused to allow me to assist you, as they say that posting on /who/ is, in their words, “ waste of your abilities to control time and space. The fact that you post on a site dedicated to that mockery known as Doctor Who is a disgrace to Gallifrey. Please let you die quickly” tho.”

“But you post on /who--”

“Please don't say too loud,” said Chantho. She looked around, and added “Tho.”

“Can you help us at all?” asked Starfu.

Chantho's mandibles quivered as she thought. “Chan-yes-tho. Chan-I've been able to track the Mongo infestation to one source-tho. Chan-It's a...Kanye West concert in 2013-tho.”

“Send in the space time coordinates, please?” said Cloister.

“Chan-Don't make me regret it, though.-tho,” said Chantho.

The connection suddenly cut off.

“Damn Pikeys,” said Cloister, and he checked the wires. A black shadow dropped from the ceiling, and landed on him, ripping him in half. Wires sprung from his body, which was artificial.

“It's Mongo!” said Starfu.

“You all taste like candy. Mongo loves candy,” said the creature. A smile leered from its rotted face, as it crawled over the floor. Starfu tried to warp reality, but was still too drained. Belle grabbed a whip from the floor, and lashed it at the monster. The creature skittered away, retreating into a shadow.

“Cloister--” started Starfu.

“Is fine. That's the robot body I use to go outside,” said Cloister, who appeared behind Starfu. “Useful for an agoraphobic Time Lord. Now let's go!”

The three of them focused their being to the coordinates Chantho had given them. They opened to a Kanye West concert. Fans were cheering loudly, as the famous black singer was rapping. He wasn't bad, for a human.

A hole in reality formed behind them, and Mongo's black hand reached out and grabbed Cloister, as he followed them. It sliced Cloister in the stomach, and he fell down.

“CLOISTER!” screamed Belle. Her whip slashed at the black hand, which fell off, and withered into a wisp. Starfu focused her mind, and forced the portal close.

“How many bodies has he had?” said Starfu.

“One,” said Belle. She cradled him in her arms. Starfu psychically analyzed at Cloister's biodata—there was no way he had only one body so far. Body decay and reformation left scars in a Time Lord's biodata; Cloister had too many scars to be only in his first body. Again, there was a sense of missing a simple clue.

“B-belle...owww,” said Cloister.

“Shhh,” said Belle. She kissed him.

When they released, he said “I'll never know why you stuck with me, but thank you for...that...”

And then he died.

And then, far away, the Life machines on Gallifrey connected to Cloister's life force. On planes beyond human perception, dark forces churned, and the biodata that had been encoded on the first day that Cloister's first body had been loomed, came apart, and began to reform. Phonic energy started to emerge from Cloister's body, and wind, created from heat coming from his body, blew Belle's hair back. Starfu gently drew Belle away, allowing the renewal process to complete.

Cloister's body convulsed, and his eyes rolled back in his head. His timeline began to rattle, and unfurl into a new configuration. All the /who/ Lords around him felt the cracks in his biodata start to form.

Reality was warping, destroying his cells, and eating his consciousness, vomiting out a new mind. A mind with a new ways of thinking, feeling, loving.

Cloister was regenerating.

When it was over, a new man was in Cloister's place. His face was no longer bearded, and his glasses no longer fit. He looked younger, with more stylized hair, though still black. He opened his eyes, and grinned.

"Cloister?" asked Belle. Her voice was unsteady, but hopeful.

The man frowned, and said "Who are you?"

"Your girlfriend. Belle," said Belle.

"Hmm. Well, that won't do," muttered the man.

"What? You said you loved me?" said Belle.

"I'm a new man, Belle. I have new needs. New desires. A neophyte. A Neo... You know, I think I might be into black women this time around..." he said. He walked a few steps, and promptly fainted.

Starfu sighed. Post-regenerative trauma wasn't as bad as in the show, but it could cause embarrassing incidents. She reached an arm out to Belle, and said "I'm sure he'll come around."

"Yeah. I just love him so much. You always fear when one of your loved ones change, that they might no longer care after they come back," said Belle. Her black hair fell over her face, framing her features. "We need to find out who did this to Cloister. Let's find Cats."

"Cats?"

"It's a Kanye West concert. Who else would be here?"

Belle and Starfu was soon in front of an old man with sunglasses. Now, this Time Lord had young biodata, the youngest Starfu had ever seen. Despite the old form the looms had given him, this was clearly the first body. He had been screaming "ktt smiley" in the crowd when they found him.

"You're Cats?" said Starfu.

"Oh crap. Are you the Time Lord police?" said Cats. "I know they discourage posting about Doctor Who, but man, I love meming on that board. /who/, it's on 4chan."

"We know. We're fellow trips. I'm Starfu, and this is Belle," she said.

"How's Cloister?"

"Someone killed him. It's hunting all the trips. For some reason, it's targeting the Time Lords. And whatever creates it happens here," said Belle.

“At a Kanye concert?” said Cats. “Well, I am doing a private project...but that shouldn't cause anyone to try to kill me, or kill any other trips.”

“What's the project?” asked Starfu. A sense of foreboding filled her stomach.

“Well, you see, I've seen every single hip-hop concert in existence. Every single one. But, I have a problem.”

“You have several.”

“No, Belle. I have one. I can't ever see those concerts for the first time again...because I've already seen them. I admit, I was quite upset. But then I spoke to a good friend of mine, John Wiles. He pointed out that if I could wipe my memory, I wouldn't have that problem. He's a sci fi guy. So I trusted him,” said Cats. His cane was striking to the ground to the beat of the music.

“You're wiping your own memory?” asked Belle.

Cats' cane began to glow. The heads of everyone in the crowd began to sparkle, and the glow grew brighter as they sang. Starfu could feel their temporal energy being harnessed for some sort of ritual.

“No. That'd be silly. I'm going to wipe the memories of my future selves. That way, I might have a chance to see Kanye concerts for an infinite amount of times,” said Cats. A large red machine floated down from above. It appeared like a large mass of tentacles, thrashing about. Tentacles drew in the glow from the crowds. Small bits of biodata, gathered from the people, collected into the machine. Only the Time Lords could see the device, as it was refracted across the reality

“Isn't that illegal? To mess with your future selves?” asked Starfu.

Creaking noises rebounded from the device. Cats smiled, and said “Yes, it's illegal. But who would know?”

Then he hit the ground with his cane. All the temporal energy channeled into the bio-mechanical monstrosity above.

And all hell broke loose.

Cats screeched, as his timeline was mutilated. The tentacles ripped into his back, cutting off his future history, and reversing his biodata. For every time he was fated to be reborn, a part of him was cut out. A part of his temporal state was chiseled away, until there were 13 (or so) holes in his memory. Each version of him would think he or she or xhe was the first. Each would walk around in life, unawares that he or she was one being. It was temporal modification on a basic level that should never be done even by a professional, and Cats had done it with no supervision whatsoever.

Starfu caught Cats, as he fell to the ground, unconscious. His face, craggy with wrinkles, looked even older now.

Then the ground began to shake. The concrete started to break apart, as a red light began to glow from underneath. Belle slowly approached the crack, and she wrinkled her nose.

“It smells rotten.”

Then Mongo grabbed her, and pulled her down into the depths. Starfu jumped after her, and was dragged with her. Down, down, down she fell. She landed in a dark cave, with Belle and Mongo in front of her. Belle's face was pressed into Mongo's, and her biodata flew into Mongo's lack of essence. Starfu could *feel* Belle become non-existent. Then, Mongo began to crawl toward Starfu.

“Hello, Cats. Using another of your bodies to hide from me?” said Mongo.

“I'm not Cats!” said Starfu, scrambling out of the darkness. She tried to warp away, but her abilities didn't seem to work here.

A bright light appeared from above. Then, a rope came down. Starfu began to climb it, when it evaporated. Mongo was behind her, grinning.

“You will soon see,” it said. And Mongo grew closer, and then she did see.

Gina sat at Cloister's home, rather annoyed. Cloister and Belle had invited her for a bit of “private fun”, and she had dressed up in some nice, sexy, clothes. She picked out a nice red corset to contrast a chocolate brown skin. But when she got home, they were nowhere to be found. She was about to leave, when someone rushed through the door. It was an old man with sunglasses.

“That didn't go as planned. Oh, hello,” he said to Gina, having just noted her. He looked at her red corset, and nodded approvingly.

Another man ran inside, and he looked upset. “Something's very wrong here. Why are you wearing a red corset?”

“Um, I think I need to go,” said Gina. She honestly hoped this wasn't part of a roleplay.

A black spark ran through the air, and a woman appeared. Her eyes were blue, and her face was cute. But a long scar laid on her left cheek. Behind her was a blue haired man with a trimmed beard, and a dashing black coat. He actually looked rather sexy, to be quite honest.

The brown-haired woman stared at the old man, enraged.

“Φ==11 ρ346 ηφ990 Mongo, Cats!” said the woman. “Φ=11 ρ567υ ιι Mongo ασο2γγ Βινερτυυ!”

“Ωηατ? And remember, Starfu, there's a human in the room. Let's not talk Gallifreyan here,” said Cats. “And stop blaming it on me.”

“Blame what? And who are you all, anyway?” said the man with black hair. He looked extremely confused.

“I'm sorry, Cloister. couldn't save Belle. She died, by Mongo's hand,” said Starfu.

“Who's Belle? And I'm Neo, by the way,” asked Neo.

“Do you guys like, know each other?” Gina asked.

“Yes. We're all temporal events who possess knowledge far greater than anything you can imagine,” said Starfu. “More importantly, we all post memes on the /who/ thread of the /TV board on 4chan.”

“Who? You mean, that show about that guy called Dr. Who? Man, that show's kinda--”

For a slight moment, all three of those Time Lords' faces slipped, and she saw three large, formless shapes of impossible Eldritch form. The angles of their bodies became beyond fourth-dimensional, and anger filled their countless writhing shadows. Her mind began to slowly draw into madness.

“He's called the Doctor. Never call him Dr. Who again,” said all three of those creatures. Then their human forms returned, and she forgot what she had seen of that portion of their true form, and her sanity returned. For the rest of her life, she would only remembered the warning.

“Anyway, why do you guys act like you know me? And who's Belle? Or Cloister. Wait, do you mean those trips I met on /who/?”

“Neo, how many bodies have you had so far?”

“Bit forward, huh?” asked Gina, trying to wrangle some humor out of this trainwreck.

“I'm on my first body. Rather nice one...you know, I think I'm into Asian women,” said Neo.

“Dammit. Cats, can't you see what you've done?” said Starfu. “None of the Time Lords who trip realize that they aren't the first o their regen cycle. They don't realize it, even though one glance of their biodata from a half-decent psychic can tell you that they aren't on their first body. Not even me. Do you know why that is?”

“...I don't like your tone,” said Cats.

“Because all of the trips are YOU. You refracted your time, ripped your own memory, but you did it crappily. None of us know who we are. And whatever you did caused Mongo to be born,” said Starfu. “Even now, it's hunting us. And it really hates you, for some reason.”

“Well...my bad. But in my defense--”

“Alright, so what can we do. How can we hide from Mongo?” said Neo.

“We can't. It can smell us anywhere,” said Starfu. “The only solution is for us to go talk to the Time Lord council. We have to take it to the Three Pillars of Time.”

“Three Pillars of Time?” said Gina.

“Yeah, that's the government of our planet. Well, actually they're the dying carcasses of the Time Lords of the last universe, who have died in linear time, but not in nonlinear time, so we can converse with them still,” said Cats.

“The answer to your question would be far too complicated,” said Neo suddenly.

“What's the difference between linear and non-linear time?” asked Gina.

“So, I'll be back soon. I suppose I should be the one to explain it, since I did it. I'll see you guys later,” said Cats. He snapped his fingers, and the old man disappeared, the sound of rap music faintly in the air as he disappeared.

The other Time Lords waited for Cats. Unfortunately, they decided to do it in her apartment. They promised to leave as soon as Cats returned...also, every time she kicked them out, they somehow teleported in. She was honestly just waiting for Cloister or Belle to show up, as the Time Lords had assured her that as soon as this was settled, Cloister and Belle would return to life. So she sat and watched them.

None of the Time Lords ate or drank regularly. At least, she never saw them eat or drink regularly. Cats told her that they had no need to eat or drink, but they did it to maintain their human form. They rarely blinked, and often acted like they were unused to having human bodies. Gina almost began to believe they were aliens.

From what Gina could gather, Cats had done something to piss off a murderous stalker called Mongo. Starfu had nearly been killed by Mongo, before Edge, who Neo notified on /who/, used his TARDIS to save Starfu. Starfu had managed to, in her words, “warp reality”, and trapped Mongo in his realm for a few days.

Also, they loved arguing about Who. She had heard the words “canon”, “looms”, and “fuckofferino” far too many times. She eventually banned all Who arguments, which made them all grumpy.

Eventually, she found herself sitting next to Edge. The man was drawing art. Art of...ponies?

“I'm not a furry, or anything. I get commissions from my art. It supplants the income I get from pirating other people's time-ships,” he said. His unblinking eyes focused on Gina like a laser, making her stomach butterflies flutter.

“You're a pirate?”

“Yes. I only take from the deserving. I mean, do you know how pompous my race can get?” said Edge. A grin covered his elfin features. At his feet was a black cat.

“Is that an alien cat?”

“No. Just a normal black tabby. We Time Lords are nothing like you humans, but who can't appreciate a kitty?” said Edge.

“What exactly is a Time Lord?”

“My true form doesn't just exist outside time. I am a living breathing sense of time. When I die in my final regeneration, and don't get reborn, a piece of history will be lost forever,” said Edge.

“That sounds...bad,” said Gina. “I'm not sure what it means, but it sounds bad.”

"If it makes you feel better, humans will never notice it was lost," said Edge. He suddenly grinned, and leaned in closer. "By the way," said Edge, making his voice husky, "I was Neil Gaiman's inspiration for the Corsair."

"Who is the Corsair? And what about a gay man?" asked Gina.

"...Never mind," said Edge. He suddenly looked around, and put down his art book. "Cats is back."

Cats appeared in the living room. Cats flopped onto Gina's couch, very annoyed.

"Do you know what I just went through? I just had to escape my own trial. The Time Lords arrested me for crimes against Gallifrey for illegally modifying my timeline. And Mongo was there, as the one holding a case against me. I barely escaped with my life!"

"Did you find any helpful information?" asked Starfu.

"No. Not really. Frankly, I'm annoyed. The Time Lords told me it was illegal to help in any way. Bunch of boggarts," said Cats. He pushed his sunglasses back onto his nose, and continued "And you guys never told me that you were at Gina's house. I had to trace your bio-signatures to find you."

Edge frowned, and said "Cats...you did remember to use a VPN to hide your tracks, right?"

"VPN?" asked Gina.

"Virtual Psionic Negation. It's how a Time Lord hides his identity when traveling through time," explained Starfu.

"Um...I'm sure I used a--"

A loud crash echoed from Gina's bathroom. The smell of rotting garbage filled her nose, and every Time Lord in the room got up immediately.

"Y'all need to use the spray once you're finished," said Gina angrily.

"We Time Lords don't defecate," said Neo off-handedly.

"I do," said Cats, his cane glowing brightly in his hand.

Then a person in black robes leaped from Gina's bathroom. Neo grabbed Gina out of the way, as the creature lunged past her and flew in the air toward Cats. The old man batted the creature away, as Starfu raised her hand, and the space around her hand began to warp before Gina's eyes.

The creature slashed at Cats, black liquid foaming from its mouth. "Cats..." the creature drawled, "thought you could hide using a VPN? Your stink carries through the air..."

"What is your problem, mate?" said Cats, slamming the creature into Gina's wall with a hard shove. As the creature was stunned, Starfu snapped her fingers, and the creature literally began to freeze. Edge pulled out a sword from a pocket that was certainly too small to fit it, and stabbed the frozen Mongo in

the heart. The creature melted, then reformed back into itself, as Edge struggled to pin it down.

“Any ideas on how to kill it?” Edge asked.

“You...cannot...kill me,” said the creature.

“Sheesh. This guy's a handful,” said Neo.

Mongo suddenly disappeared.

“Ah yeah! He gave up!” said Cats, grinning.

“Shut up,” hissed Starfu. She looked at Gina, and said “You need to leave.”

“That's alright with me,” said Gina. Then she smelled the corpse stink behind her. She turned around, to see Neo's body evaporating into thin air, and Mongo's horrific face looking straight at her. The monster's smile brought out an animal fright instinct in her, and her mind blanked out in fear.

She awoke five days later. And heard a knock at her door.

After Neo was taken by Mongo, the rest of them fell soon after. Gina began shrieking in fear upon seeing Mongo devour Neo's biodata, and Edge tried to save her. Unfortunately, that left him open to distraction, and so Mongo devoured him in turn. Starfu was too drained to do much else, and was devoured. Cats decided to run at that point, but no amount of VPNs could save him.

They all died. And then they woke up.

Starfu woke with a crick in her neck. She had been lying on some rocks, in the middle of what appeared like a wasteland. A woman who looked like Nyssa with a side ponytail hovered over Starfu, smiling. This woman wore a long purple dress with sleeves.

“So, you're awake. You took the longest,” said the woman. “I'm Amadiana. The one before you. It seems we wake up here in the order of our original regenerations. Jenhello!”

Starfu remembered hearing about Ama from years back. Ama had been in /who/ for a while, before drifting away. Starfu was beginning to wonder whether all Trips were Time Lord—or rather, a Time Lord. It was disturbing to realize they were all one person, returning to /who/ again and again. It felt existentially weird, in a way.

“Where are the other trips?”

“All devoured by Mongo. We're in his realm now,” said Ama. “I was on discord when Mongo attacked me. Was quite horrific tbh. Jennascared”

Starfu raised her eyebrows. “What happens now?”

“We meet our end,” said Amadiana. “Jennangry!”

Suddenly, Starfu was in a room with 12 other people. Edge, Neo, Belle, and Cloister were all there, as were other trips she recognized. Immigrant sat in the corner, still alive.

In the center of the room, facing the 13 Trips, was the form of Mongo.

“Cats,” it drawled, “you cannot hide from me. Your actions have given you out. Your reckoning is now.”

Then Mongo leaped at the crew.

Starfu prepared to warp. Cats drew out his cane. Belle drew out her whip, charged with energy. Neo began muttering spells. Immigrant wrote fic about the coming battle. Amadiana summoned gunpla to attack with, crying out a battle cry of “Amade-Amadan- AMADIANA” . Cloister looked confused. They prepared for a final glorious battle.

Then Cats said, “Wait, why are you hate us so much?”

Mongo paused, and said “If you want to know...”

Mongo transformed into the form of Missy. Speaking in her voice, it said “I don't hate you. I don't hate any of you. I'm providing a community service.”

“By killing us?” asked Edge.

“Just absorbing your essence. You see, I was created by the pieces of your timeline that you cut from yourself, Cats. I needed to become whole. Now, you're all digesting inside myself, slowly becoming part of me,” said Mongo.

“Sounds a bit vorey,” said Immigrant.

“Oh please, stuff your fetishes in your pantry, please. I targeted you first, immigrant, because I saw all those twisted fics you hide from /who/. Anyway, I am a balancing force. All of you trips carry around a name, only for vanity. You came from Gallifrey, and decided to destroy the perfect anonymity of the /who/ board. No one asked you. Half the time, your names serve no purpose. And yet, you keep it, lording it over the anons,” said Mongo.

“That's not true!” said Starfu. “Trips contri--”

“Typical condescending tripe. But I never used a trip in /who/. I have no name. I am anonymous, and yet I've destroyed you, on-line, and now off-line. And, I will now finish the job. Welcome to my hell,” said the creature, whose teeth became bloody and razor-sharp, and whose form began twice as high.

And then, a wheezing, groaning sound started.

“That sounds like the TARDIS from the show,” said Neo.

And a blue box appeared. A woman in a red dress, with a black sailor's cap, walked out. She surveyed the giant razor-toothed creature about to eat the trips, and sighed. “Well, you've managed to cock this up.”

“WHO ARE YOU?” asked Mongo.

“Oh, I'm the Doctor. Hello!” said the Doctor, smiling and waving.

“But...you're not real!” said Mongo.

“Well, no one's perfect,” said the Doctor petulantly. She looked around, and grinned at the trips.

“Haven't been around so many Time Lords in ages.”

“We're only one Time Lord,” said Cats.

“Oh,” said the Doctor, looking extremely disappointed. After a moment, she looked back up at Mongo.

“So, are you always so tall?”

“No. I'm going to devour the trips, and end them,” said Mongo.

“That sounds mean,” said the Doctor, wagging her finger. “Bad mongo. Nyah!”

“You cannot stop me!” said Mongo.

The Doctor shrugged, then she pulled out her sonic screwdriver, and pressed a button on its side. Mongo was suddenly frozen in mid-step. The Doctor gave a satisfied hum at her handiwork, and turned to the trips, grinning even wider.

“So, are you guys gonna close your mouths?” she asked.

“Jennashocked,” said Amadiana.

“Doctor...how can you exist? How can you be actually a real thing?” said Starfu. She scanned the Doctor's mind, and saw that, yep, this was an actual Time Lord.

“Well, where do you think they get the ideas from? I met Verity Lambert, by the way.”

“Doctor, I didn't mean to cause all this,” said Cats.

The Doctor walked over and hugged Cats. He seemed surprised to be hugged by someone who wasn't even thought to be real a few days ago. The Doctor tousled his hair, and said “Everyone makes mistakes. At least you're taking responsibility for yours.”

“Do I get a hug?” said Edge.

The Doctor glared at Edge, and grabbed him. Her formerly grinning face looked very angry. “Why didn't you call me?”

Edge scratched his blue hair, rather confused. “I've never met you before.”

“Obviously not. You meet me in your future. But I'm still angry at you. You just left me. And I gave so much of myself to you! I mean, I understood you had needs! The usual *physical* urges aren't exactly my top priority in life, but I like you, so it was okay. I even transformed into David Tennant's form for you,

when I regenerated! Because you kept on begging me too! And we had some good days...and not unpleasant nights.” said the Doctor, smiling.

“So why did you leave?” asked Cats.

“Because YOU left me after I died. It wasn't my fault I didn't come back as Tennant! As soon as I turned into a blonde woman with a bit of a nose, you coincidentally left. No call back. You used me! Am I just a slut to you? A Tennant-shaped piece of meat? Am I?”

“Um...no?”

“Good. So call me! In the future. After you leave, call me back....what are the rest of you looking at?”

The other /who/ Lords were quietly looking at this display. Neo was scratching his head, while Cats was desperately trying not to laugh. Edge's face was growing redder.

Mongo moaned in the background.

“Oh right. I have to save the day,” said the Doctor off-handedly, apparently having forgotten the world-ending danger behind her. She held out her left hand, a small strand of Cats's hair hanging off it. She pointed her screwdriver at Mongo, and pressed a button. Mongo began to move again. Before Mongo could attack the trips, the Doctor threw the hair into Mongo's face.

Mongo's body began to glow a bright red. It screeched, and Starfu could see the creature's antitimeline being healed by Cats' biodata.

“What did you do?” asked Neo.

The Doctor raised up a hand, to shush him. Mongo began to twist and turn, roaring as its form began to bubble outward.

“I've made the poor creature whole again. All it ever wanted,” said the Doctor wistfully.

The monster transformed into a bright shine of light, and then disappeared.

“Mongo thought it was bringing a vengeance upon your kind. But it never would have stopped at you. It needed biodata to make itself. I gave it the biodata of Cats, the freshest version of itself. That pure biodata negated Mongo's lack of biodata, and combined with a shock of energy, created enough heat to end its temporal signature. In short, Mongo has been wiped from history...for now. Mongo thought it was a saviour, but Mongo was only a pawn in the game of life. Like we all are,” said the Doctor.

The world began to glow. Even the sand underneath their feet warmed up.

“I think this place is destroying itself. I think we should go,” said the Doctor. “Into my TARDIS!”

So, five days later, Gina heard a knock on her door. And then 13 Time Lords came in. As well as that woman from Broadchurch (who Gina later learned was apparently the Doctor).

“So, we're all the same person?” said Cats.

“Yes,” said the Doctor.

“You know what's weird? I can remember now!” said Neo. “I mean, I can remember being Cloister. And being Cats. And all the others before me. The details are a blur, but I generally remember it.”

“That makes sense. Your timelines are healing. You'll never remember everything, but some of your past regenerations' lives will return to your mind,” said the Doctor. She was playing with Edge's pussy, who was chasing a ball of yarn the Doctor was twirling around.

“Jennahappy! So, what happens next?” said Amadiana.

“Your choice. I have to go to Rome to pick up a friend of mine. I only stopped over because the Jovian Guardians tipped me off to Immigrant's attack from Mongo,” said the Doctor. She bit her nails, thinking. “I probably should get going.”

“Wait! You're the real Doctor?” said Cloister, who was sitting away from Belle. Neither had talked to each other since realizing who they was.

“The original, you might say.”

“Well then, answer some questions first!” said Starfu.

The Doctor rubbed the tabby, and then looked up with wide eyes. Her face stretched into an impossible grin, and she shrugged.

“Okay. Ask away. Keep it short. But no Dalek questions. I don't like thinking about them,” said the Doctor.

“Classic or Nu Who?” asked Edge.

“Wilderness era.”

“Is Susan real?”

“Yes.”

“Did you give Verity the idea for the show?”

“Sort of. She had a similar idea already, and I just nudged her a bit. Wonderful woman,” said the Doctor.

“Have you seen the show, actually?”

“Dear, I've played in the show three separate times. And I will never tell you who.”

“Is Clara real?”

The Doctor grinned, and snapped her fingers, turning into Jenna Coleman's form. She pointed at her

face, winked, and transformed back.

“Is Sarah Jane real?”

“No. But Elisabeth Sladen traveled in my TARDIS for several years. I miss her greatly.”

“Is Tom Baker a Time Lord?”

“I’ve never met him, but I suspect he’s just the most alien human in existence,” said the Doctor.

“Daleks--”

“I told you not to ask me about that,” asked the Doctor, her human form slipping for a moment, and a mass of angry biodata writhing underneath, exposed for a moment. Then it passed, and she was back to a human form.

“Okay. Um, is Faction Paradox real?” asked N8.

“I could answer you, but that would defy the point, no?”

“River Song doesn't exist, right?”

“Not only does she exist, she helped make Series 6. Not sure how, or why,” said the Doctor.

“Amy Pond?”

“A real woman, who apparently is in my future.”

“Ian and Barbara?”

“They existed, except it was in the 70s. And Barbara was black.”

“That sounds like you're trolling.”

“I'm always trolling.”

“How many times have you lied so far?”

“20.”

“You haven't given twenty answers yet.”

“Next question?”

“Second favorite episode of Who?”

“Can't tell you. It hasn't been made yet. You're gonna love it.”

“Third favorite?”

“Kill the Moon. Daft science, but it got what I want for humanity better than any other episode I've seen,” said the Doctor. She giggled, and blushed a bit.

“Brigadier Stewart?”

“He's a composite of several people.”

“The Morbius Doctors?”

“Oh please, don't remind me!” said the Doctor.

“Second favorite episode?”

“Fear Her,” said the Doctor.

“Fear...Her?” said Neo slowly.

“The fucking scribbles episode?” said Cloister, laughing.

The Doctor raised her eyebrows. Her face was completely serious. And then her face turned into the biggest grin possible.

“Good-bye, losers,” she said. She winked at Edge, and disappeared into her TARDIS.

Alone, they all looked at each other. Each one was one individual, yet one part of the whole.

“You know, /who/ would never believe us,” said Cloister.

“Still a good story, though,” said Belle. She sat closer to Cloister. “Do you still love me? Despite us being the same person?”

Cloister blinked, and said “I've always supported self-love.”

They kissed each other deeply.

Neo balked. “You do know I can remember everything you two are doing, right?”

“We should write a fanfic about this,” said Immigrant.

“Faction Paradox is definitely real now,” said N8.

Edge sidled up to Gina, and whispered in her ear. The dark-skinned woman blushed, but then whispered something back. Edge grinned in turn, and they walked to a bedroom.

Starfu shook her head. These people might be one Time Lord, but together, they were just separate posters on 4chan's /who/ thread, enriching it. No matter what they discovered, that would never change.

EPILOGUE:

A man in stereotypically creepy robes opens a stereotypically creepy door. He is in the halls of that Last Great Trip War. Coffins, engraved with names such as “Prog” line the walls. He smiles creepily, as he retrieves a sword from this forbidden place.

“Mongo may have died. But there are other ways to destroy /who/, said the man.

INTRODUCING

John Hurt

as

The Member of the Order of Orford.

SOLITUDE

By SCP Anon

A report featuring the 13th Temporal Anomaly known as the Doctor

MANUSCRIPT FROM RECORDING 003-A (FIRST REPORT) REGARDING SUBJECT D-W63 (CLASS GAMMA).

INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY AGENT NEWMAN AND CO.

N: It's about a quarter past 3 in the afternoon. Subject D-W63 has been contained in vault [REDACTED]. This is agent **Newman**, accompanied by Agents **Lambert** and **Hussein**.

N: The subject is a blue box, apparently resembling a late 1950's british "police box", in accordance to **H's** intel. It's about 9 feet tall, 3 feet wide and deep, and it appears to be made of wood.

N: It holds two doors and a "pull to enter" sign. Attempts at pulling the doors have failed, only by pushing them have we succeeded in opening it.

N: The interior of the box is what gave this its Gamma class. The booth holds a separate pocket dimension, of unique appearance and great length. A team is inside as we speak, cataloguing and mapping the interior.

H: Sir?

N: Yes?

[INAUDIBLE]

N: Ah, yes, excuse me.

N: H has just informed me that we've lost communication with our research party. **H** and I will investigate. **L** will finish the report.

L: This is **L** speaking.

L: Subject D-W63 was found in close proximity to [REDACTED], Captain [REDACTED] was the first to encounter the object on [REDACTED]. See: Recording 001 for the Captain's first sighting on the object.

L: The original capture party took 7 days, 20 hours and 55 minutes to retrieve D-W63, thanks to not only the harsh conditions of the surface but the many radiation storms happening that week. See: Recording 002 for the capture party's report.

L: Our initial inspections point that the object is of alien origin, it is unknown if it crashed as it entered our orbit, or if a more sophisticated method of teleportation was used. It left a scorch mark on the white sand around it, and the exterior damage shows it's been left there for centuries. **H** hypothesizes that it has stood there since before the war, which would indicate almost impossible resistance, considering the sheer destruction that area has faced.

L: As pointed by **N**, the booth seems to be made out of wood, but it's clearly from a stronger material. Research has tried all tools in our disposal; we still haven't managed to cut, drill, burn, saw, hammer or pierce the object.

L: In another note, the box produces a light humming noise, as well as heat and a small vibration. Agent **N** has said, I assume jokingly, that the machine was alive, laughing at our faces. But I can't quite put my finger on it, the humming sounds like something else to me, it sounds li-

[UNINTELLIGIBLE SCREAMING]

L: Oh my lord.

- RECORDING ENDS -

MANUSCRIPT FROM RECORDING 003-B (FIRST REPORT) REGARDING SUBJECT D-W63 (CLASS GAMMA).

INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY AGENT NEWMAN AND CO.

N: T-this is Newman. 30 days ago, Agent **H** and I entered subject D-W63 to procure the lost search party after losing communications.

N: **H** decided to separate, turning into the left hall after the main entrance room. I proceeded to the right. What I found was the biggest selection of mazes and confusing rooms I've ever seen in my life.

N: I've seen libraries the size of cities, olympic pools and many different bedrooms, and that's only the rooms I understood.

N: As the days went by I was afraid I was losing my mind. I saw critters and shadow creatures stalking me around those steel corridors and then – (he breathes) – then the lights went out. Complete darkness through those endless tunnels.

N: I lost track of time, I lost track of everything. That's when I finally went around and found **H**. He... He was dead.

N: Much older than me, it'd seemed he was there for decades. In my terror I began to understand how this hellish machine operates, I saw an opportunity and ran for the exit.

N: But it just couldn't let me go. It had to give me a final memory, a final reason to never return.

N: The research party, all dead. Decaying bodies, blood splattered on the walls, signs of intense struggle, cannibalism and much more terrifying horrors we haven't seen since the war.

N: I've left the box, only to be informed I was there for less than 10 minutes...

N: This is a request for the machine to be shut-off in this god-forsaken vault. To be left alone and forgotten, just how it wants to be. Agent **L** has left to call command, I'm finishing this recording. Newman out.

- RECORDING ENDS -

***MANUSCRIPT OF RECORDING 004 (FINAL REPORT) REGARDING SUBJECT D-W63
(CLASS GAMMA).***

BY ORDERS OF BRIGADIER L.S

L.S: This is Brigadier **L.S**, after a formal request by Agent **Newman** and evaluations from high command, it's been decided that Subject D-W63, Class Gamma, should undergo *opertus*, and be completely enclosed in vault [REDACTED].

L.S: Agent **L**, the only living member of the original D-W63 research team, accompanies me for a final inspection and report.

L.S: We're entering the machine for a last look inside. By **N's** original report, if we stay away from the hallways, we won't be in trouble.

[**L.S** and **L** enter D-W63]

L.S: As per the capture party's report: A strange octagonal room, with what seems to be a 6-sided control panel in its center. A glowing tube in its middle, it reaches the ceiling.

L.S: Agent **L** is approaching the screen located in the right-side of the room.

L.S: Oh, it has just turned on.

L.S: We're seeing what appears to be the front of D-W63, in the exact location it was found, before it became the dying desert it is today.

L.S: A [Unidentified] blonde woman is looking at the box, she seems nervous.

[**U**]: Calm down now, you know how it is. I can't go around flying you right in the eye of the storm.

[**U**]: (laugh) I know, I've done that before, and I almost lost you! Now. What would I be without you?

Would I just stay here? Alone? Forever? I'd go mad!

[U]: I know how you feel, but this is important. You know how they are and what stupid things they do when I'm not around. Well, they're about to do something really stupid this time, and I have to stop them.

[U]: (laugh) 2000 or so years and nothing changes, eh old girl?

[U]: D-don't leave me, all right? I'll come back. I always do, don't I? (laugh)

L.S: The woman has just left the box, she's running in the complete opposite direction.

L.S: She stopped. She's returning. She's placed her hand on the box.

[U]: Thank you. For everything. For stealing me, for showing me the universe, and for always being there. Every step was ours. Nothing that I did I did alone.

L.S: She's just embraced the box. She's crying.

[U]: Don't leave me. Please. I'll come back. Promise.

[U]: Wait for me.

L.S: She kissed the box. She's back to running.

L.S: The recording ends... It just restarted.

L: Has it been playing this on repeat? For all those years? To itself?

L.S: It would seem so.

[LOUD UNINTELLIGIBLE NOISES]

L.S: I-I think this is our leave. L?

L: Y-yes, sir.

[L.S and L leave the vault].

L.S: Men, you can start closing it down.

L.S: This has been the final report on subject D-W63, Class Gamma. To be closed off in vault [REDACTED], [REDACTED] Facility. 'Tis a shame we'll never comprehend it entirely, but maybe that's for the better.

L.S: L might think otherwise, but I agree with N's assessment. The box is alive, somehow.

L: Sir, if I may?

L.S: Yes, my dear?

L: I think I finally understand it.

L.S: What?

L: That humming sound.

L.S: What about it?

L: N used to say that it was the machine laughing, but it's not that.

L.S: Really? What do you think it is?

L: I think it's crying, sir. The box is crying.

- RECORDING ENDS -

Mercy

By: catharticspurious

The Time Lords don't interrupt him when he's picking the Collapse Seeds.

The name is willfully misleading. For a short while, or perhaps it was a very long while, it was thought that they were simply an odd sort of waste product from the Collapses themselves. It's an easy mistake to make - they only appear in close proximity, floating down onto nearby moons such as the one the Doctor now walks on. Their shape suggests a seed; no larger than a football, quite round, a tightly wrapped tangle of organic material with a hardened, browned outer layer. So the name just stuck.

It'll be easy to spot one among all this grass. Mostly untouched by sentient hand, Carthenor is one of the miscellaneous War Moons, caught in the gravity well generated by the Collapse Triangle. He gazes up at the Triangle now, keeping an eye out for any more Seeds. A few hundreds of thousands of miles above the Doctor's head, out there in the abyss, three artificial suns blaze in a perfectly equidistant formation. They're not really suns, but they do the job, a fortunate thing since anything around here resembling a natural sun has been long obliterated. And with no light, it would be impossible to lay eyes on a sight as pristine, as out of place as Carthenor. A quiet, green spot of calm, floating in hell.

It'll stay that way. No matter how urgently the Time Lords might want to seize him, he knows they will not interrupt his business here. He will keep walking in full view of his people, as the only person on Carthenor, and it will remain otherwise undisturbed - even as the trinity of Total Event Collapses burn with time-ending flames, and infinite firefights rage in their vicinity, right at the temporal centre of the war to end all wars.

Until he is done, there will be stillness. That is the unspoken rule.

~

Plinross the Younger, second incarnation, was flying at top speed. Daleks evaporated into nothingness, left and right, up and down, behind and ahead, at the touch of the light from his de-mat gun.

The Eternal Skirmish of the Third Collapse raged, as it had done for endless cycles, around the outer orbit of the lowermost Collapse Sun.

The Collapse Triangle represented the nexus of the entire War, located as it was in the abyss directly between Gallifrey and Skaro. The two planets would naturally be lightyears apart, but the Daleks' move of transporting their entire planet for a direct takeover resulted in the Battle of the Crucible that formed the War's epicenter. Three synchronised TARDIS detonations created three time energy suns, a triangular blockade disrupting the Daleks' efforts, and around each one a constant battle was waged.

The First Collapse, the closest to Gallifrey, was under the Time Lords' control. The Second Collapse, closer to Skaro, was currently under Dalek control. Which meant that the outcome of the battle, and by extension the entire War, potentially hinged on which side could gain control of the Third Collapse.

It was known to all throughout the War that the Battle of the Crucible would be concluded in a few centuries' time, and the temporary collision of Gallifrey and Skaro would be reverted. But the question of which planet was left standing at the end was very much up for debate - two completely different timelines spun out of the fire, each struggling to assert itself as the truth.

So Plinross the Younger fought, and fought with desperation, as did all of his brothers in arms. With gravity limiters in their combat suits enabling flight, they dove out into space like acrobats.

The environment of a Collapse Sun (being, as it was, an atrocity against linear time which under normal circumstances would obliterate all existence) proved challenging to shoot Daleks in. Time itself was frayed. Maintaining a stable grip on reality meant not only fending off the hordes of Daleks, but the flashing, ghostly, fleeting images of past, present and future on all sides.

Plinross, swooping out of a Dalek squadron's fire-line, perilously close to the surface of the Collapse, suddenly saw himself catching a stray burst from a Special Weapons Dalek and exploding into a hundred burning fragments.

The vision appeared to be only seconds ahead of the present, and any Time Lord could tell you that attempts to avoid a predestined event were often futile.

He was still only a relatively recent, newer addition to the force. Impulsive. Less experienced.

He could think of only one way to avert this grim fate. In the raging heat of the moment, doing what he knew he should not, he fired up his Vortex Manipulation Gauntlet.

~

One's arrived. The Doctor just faintly catches it against the dark of space, then drifting past the light of the Third Collapse, gently rotating on its axis as it sinks towards Carthenor. He waits until the Seed has come to rest in the long grass before setting off towards it.

It's the third one today.

The Seeds are light to carry in this moon's gravity, though the Doctor imagines that in full-planet gravity they'd be significantly heftier. He lifts this one up, drawing its blackened surface close to his face for inspection, scanning its every warped inch with his tired eyes.

Turning the Seed over in his hands fails to reveal any useful details, but that's fairly normal.

The Doctor can still do what he needs to do.

~

Using the Vortex Manipulator Gauntlet was a mistake. Plinross now understood why it was strongly cautioned against in this context.

The moment he used it, it created a burst of energy around him, pulling him into the vortex.

He'd intended to go a good several minutes backwards, at least.

But he should have been smarter. He should have considered that he was only a short distance from the edge of the Collapse Sun.

Total Event Collapses, holes in the vortex by their very nature, shrunk time. And while each of those in the Collapse Triangle was being offset by its counterparts and an astronomical number of Gallifreyan safeguards, their ultimate effect was never negotiable, especially at close range. Traversal through the vortex at this distance simply wasn't realistic.

He went back. But he didn't go back far enough.

He went back only as far as the exact moment and instant he used the Gauntlet.

There, while materialising in the same space as his pre-existent self, he was simultaneously sucked into the same burst of energy that took him backwards in the first place.

And now he was being pulled back to the same moment, over and over and over, endlessly.

Almost immediately he lost all the feeling in his body. His vision was a non-stop series of flashes, interspersed with the same captured moment of time replaying again and again.

He felt like he was in freefall.

In the gaps between the flashes, he noticed the ghostly images of his future vanishing, sucked into the Collapse Sun as another aborted possibility.

Perhaps...if only...he could reach, with whatever connection he still had to his arms and legs, out to the side—and slowly pull himself out of this eternal loop—

~

The Seed is a few feet away from the Doctor on the grass, where he sits cross-legged.

It was he, of course, who originally worked out how the Seeds were created. It was the Doctor, cursed to always revert to his old curious ways, who first pulled one open with his bare hands and looked inside. From that point, figuring it out was simple.

It was linked to the phenomenon of Vortex Manipulator use in the immediate vicinity of a Collapse Sun.

In one of his rare confrontations with the High Council, the Doctor told them everything, insistent that they share the knowledge with the entirety of the Gallifreyan fighting force. But naturally, no such honesty has since been forthcoming. Every day they continue to delay it, fearful of the impact on morale, more Seeds will be generated. The High Council will watch it happen, but will not under any circumstances interrupt the Doctor when he collects them.

He's said a few words, so it's time for the final part of the process. The Doctor reaches out with his mind, and locates within the Seed the still-extant consciousness of the former Time Lord. Presumably this Time Lord's

body was caught in an infinite loop of teleporting into itself, and suffering a fraction more erosion from the Collapse Sun's time energy on every single loop, until all that remained - was ever there to begin with - was a temporally dislocated, physically mangled, charred, rounded husk, somehow still containing a conscious mind rendered incapable of anything but internal screaming, forever. Once the Vortex Manipulator had been destroyed by the effects, the loop ceased and the end product simply fell away. Down here.

Whatever your name may have been, thinks the Doctor, suffer no more.

The Seed stops screaming for just a moment.

The Doctor takes this opportunity to aim his screwdriver and incinerate it on the spot.

A wisp of smoke spreads and fades.

Sometimes, the most he can ever do is bring pain to an end.

A Farewell To Friends

By Nacho

An adventure with Eighth Doctor (well, sort of), and Destrii.

The Eighth Doctor suddenly found himself sipping a strawberry milkshake in the middle of a war that he held no place being in. The Cyber War had raged across the cosmos, somewhat under the noses of the Time Lords or the Daleks' machinations as both empires expanded and grew against one another. It had nearly engulfed the entire galaxy, planets being destroyed and rammed into each other in hideous fashion to destroy one another to ensure survival for one side vs the other, like a game of galactic pinball that no one truly had control over the bumpers of.

Nevertheless, here he was on Earth during the bloodiest and last battle of this war. "You will be conv..." the Cyberleader began, only to be interrupted by the Doctor holding up a finger and taking a deep, long sip. Savoring the flavor, he smiled and gave the signal to start again. "YOU WILL BE..." started the Cyberleader again with frustration, only to be cut off by the Doctor who finished with "ConnnnnvERRRRRRRRted!" in an over-the-top Cyberman accent mocking his first encounter with them. Instantly they drew back, realizing who they had in their midst.

"IT IS THE DO-" they began before The Doctor put up a finger again and took a long sip of his milkshake. "Are ya done yet?" asked Destrii impatiently. Destrii was the kind of girl who liked to get to the action first, like on TV. Everything was quick, BANG, POW with her. Er... as much of a her as any shape shifting alien could identify as at least. One of these days The Doctor would have to either teach her to relax or start feeding her bananas to slow her down.

The Doctor rolled his eyes and tossed the milkshake behind him, ready for the confrontation finally. "It wasn't that good of a milkshake anyways. Go on now, ultimate peril; destruction and deletion for the good of the cyber race; you know the whole spiel. How it's time to convince me humans are evil for letting each other die of treatable diseases through mind control but how it's silly to like the Mona Lisa..." the Doctor said with an air of boyish indifference without any real malice or contempt. Then the expression on his face changed.

"You know why I love humans? The randomness of it all that they cannot even begin to appreciate. Looking endlessly for meaning, structure and rules but at the end of the day? Their beauty is the chaos they breathe. From a sloppy alcoholic came the most beautiful violins known to man. From a

germophobe in the world's most insanitary period came the electricity that runs you. From the wanton minds of an Every Flavour Jelly Bean shop came a milkshake that brought down a Cyberman blimp into a volcano..."

He smiled and looked at Destrii; who was dumbstruck, looking at the milkshake behind the doctor that had landed on the control panel, causing the blimp to dovetail towards the ground. Alerts rang out as the Doctor grabbed her hand and ran towards the Tardis in the back of the blimp, the Cybermen now running around to brace for impact. There would have been quite a big impact if the Blimp wasn't falling towards an active volcano.

He smiled. Parking the Tardis at the back of the ship was a fantastic way to ensure himself the time to escape. For once he had made it through a situation and every possibility had just fallen into place without some master plan. "Ha! He wouldn't have been able to pull this one off!" he said aloud gloating against one of his past selves.

Running through the Tardis doors, The Doctor and Destrii set the coordinates to get out of the area as quickly as possible, but the Tardis didn't move. The Doctor began to panic and slapped the console before the realization hit him. "DESTRII, THE DOOR!" he yelled running back across the room to shut them so they could take off.

But it was too late. The explosions started and as tight as the Doctor had the door closed, an inferno shot through right into the front of his body. He just barely managed to close the doors before the explosion could shoot through the entire control room. He fell backwards, the front of his body charred.

"Next time I try this one, I do it to the robots instead. No large scale explosions, just a quick and proper malfunction." he thought to himself, gasping and charred.

Destrii ran to him, in tears. The Doctor smiled, knowing what was coming. All was right with the universe in his time now. The Next Doctor would have a practically clean slate. "Destrii, slow down..." he began as he swallowed some saliva. "The universe is beautiful in it's possibility. Life and love and chaos... none of these are terrible things to hold dear. Please hold them dear, Destrii. Please." he said with his last breath before the change began.

Inside his head, he was saying goodbye. He was gathered in the company of friends. First things first was Izzy, unable to contain herself. She smiled through the tears in her eyes as she touched his face. For a second she looked like she was on the verge of finding something to say, but on cue Fitz pushed her out of the way and gave him a hug of his own. Anji joined in. And Sam. And everyone at once,

eventually.

Soon however, they filed off one by one, beckoning him towards the distance. He turned to face them but stopped dead in his tracks as someone grabbed his hand. Quietly, he began to hear Madam Butterfly in his ears. He opened his mouth to speak, he turned his head to look, but in the moment he saw Grace again he ceased. He nodded his head and took her hand more tightly. He was glad someone would be there to walk with him on the way out.

Inside the Tardis, a storm of electricity blasted around Destrii and The Doctor. Life, energy, time and space jumped around them in a frenzy around the room. The Tardis ceiling became a great planetarium again. Blue light from the stars and pure energy from the lightning were the only lights on them now. All at once, they struck the Doctor and behind her, Destrii heard the rise and fall of the central Tardis console column. She turned to look as it came to life only for a second; but as she looked back a completely different figure was in The Doctor's place. In his clothes. Holding his screwdriver. A new Doctor. She brushed his hair to the side to get a look at his face. Black hair, a touch of grey; and what a scowl he had...

The Doctor turned on his side, coughing post-regeneration. "Ugh..." he groaned in a stupor as everything came into focus and an intense heat shot out of his mouth, almost as if he was breathing out the heat of the fire in a blue smoke. As he came to his wits he sat up and brushed Destrii away with a sense of revulsion at the physical comfort she had given him. Rolling into a position on his knees before standing up as quickly as he could manage and portray some sort of sense of dignity, he quickly grabbed his head and felt his feverish heat slowly subside to some relief.

Still with a sour expression across his face, The Doctor finally caught his breath and said "Disgusting. His saliva is still in my stomach" with a sort of composed, stuffy nature to his voice. Immediately and with purpose he walked towards the wardrobe. His strut never had such authority before.

Catchphrase Crisis

By Punny Anon

The Tenth Doctor squirmed in agony under the beam of green light that emanated from the Comediac Leeching weapon.

"You fool, Doctor! There's enough cheap comedic energy in your cells to power our civilisation for a hundred millennia!"

"You won't get away with this!" the Doctor strained.

"That wasn't a quip," said the Comediac High Centurion, "try harder, Doctor! Feel the comedy flowing through you."

"Allons-y," he murmured, making the Leech beam pulsate with the perfect timing.

"Good, good," the Comediac purred.

"Molto bene, oh yes!"

The Comediac High Centurion laughed maniacally. "This is golden! I love it!"

"I don't want to go!" the Doctor said, clenching his fists.

"I remember that one! You said that twice!" He wiped a tear from his eye, saying softly, "always cracks me up."

"What?" the Doctor muttered, growing in volume with each repetition. "What? What!?"

The Leech beam was several times larger now, and was surging erratically, fizzling and popping. "Alright, I think you can stop now," said the Comediac High Centurion, "there's clearly a humour surplus developing."

"WELL..." he cried obnoxiously, as though he was about to contradict himself in a very well-written way. At that, the Leech beam began to further destabilize. It arced about, shaking the chamber to its core.

"Stop, Doctor!" pleaded the Comediac High Centurion, "the Leeching weapon cannot withstand this much quirky comedy!"

"Don't you think she looks tired!?" he bellowed in response, as the ceiling started to cave in.

"What have you done?"

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

And with that, the Leeching weapon exploded under the pressure of the side-splitting comedy, turning the High Centurion into mulch.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL "A STITCH IN TIME" GUEST STARRING JAMIE OLIVER

The Terror Of the Dead

By Greentext Anon

A short adventure with Tenth Doctor and Donna

- >be 10th doctor
- >Traveling around with this Donna chick
- >Bitch be sassy
- >TARDIS brings us to some distant planet Earth colony in 35th century
- >Literally Puritans settling America IN SPACE
- >going so far in time history repeats itself
- >Try to figure out what going wrong here
- >Donna ran off to flirt with some locals
- >Apparently people have been getting attacked recently
- >Only when night hits
- >3spooky5me for Donna
- >My genius already guessing what's happening
- >Try telling Donna not to get too close t the locals
- >She doesn't listen
- >Nightfall and shit gets real
- >It's mud monsters
- >Sonic screwdriver says the mud itself isn't sentient
- >Donna's pet local gets taken, we have to go find them
- >Turns out the planet used to hold it's own native sentient beings
- >Got killed by solar blast
- >Their dead make up the entire topsoil the settlers plant in
- >The mud monsters are werewolf style transformations from eating the cultivated food
- >The locals don't even know
- >Try to figure out how to help them best
- >Donna just out and tells the entire colony while 'm scanning the mud again
- >The colonists panic and start turning for good
- >Have to hightail Donna out of there
- >Don't notice that we tracked some dirt into the TARDIS until I'm the 11th

A Dastardly Plot

by Bunk Bed Ben

An adventure with the Fourth Doctor and Sarah Jane

1

On a dark and dreary night in the cold month of September, a man came home from a day he'd always remember. As he walked up the three flights of stairs to his small, dingy flat, he thought of his girlfriend Cacie, and suddenly thought that... No, surely not. It's just another intrusive thought. He opened his front door and threw his briefcase off to the side. He breathed a sigh of relief as he saw Cacie, arms open wide. He'd been waiting for this moment all day - he had so much to say. He took his key back out of the other side of the door, and gouged out Cacie's eyes and threw her to the floor. He stomped upon her head to make sure she was utterly dead. He didn't know why he was doing it, but he knew that it felt right. He made sure to tidy up, else the cleaner'd get a nasty fright.

2

Back in the TARDIS, Sarah Jane Smith was feeling inquisitive. "If you regenerate to sort of fix everything that's wrong with you, repair all the damage... then why do you still have a belly button?"

"Well," the Doctor croaked and took a slight pause, momentarily looking deep in thought before smiling and continuing; "I just rather like them, is all. Have you ever seen a stomach without a belly button? It just looks wrong, like a face with no nose or a building without any windows."

"Did you have one when you were born?" His companion hesitated. "You were... born, right? You weren't... woven or anything? Wouldn't surprise me, knowing you." she laughed. There was a slightly-too-long-pause... "Were you?"

The 750 year-old Time Lord suddenly seemed full of energy. "Woven?! Woven? Of course I wasn't woven! How would you weave a human being?" He gave a wide eyed, zany smile. "You're asking too many questions, which obviously means you're bored. So where would you like to go?"

"Ooh, can we go to New York?"

"New York?!" the alien spewed incredulously. "Haven't you any imagination, hmm? This thing can go anywhere! Anywhen!"

"Well alright then, why don't you pick, eh?"

"Good choice."

The Doctor threw a lever, pushed some buttons and twisted some knobs, seemingly at random, as if he neither knew nor cared what he was doing. A wheezing, groaning sound emanated from the central column which slide

up and down like a pendulum ride at a funfair. The column slowed, the noise faded away, the Doctor pulled a lever and the door opened.

"New York." the Doctor said with a grin and a raised eyebrow.

3

The old traveller and his old friend stepped out of the TARDIS into a dark and dreary night in the cold month of September. The Doctor shut the doors behind himself and put the key into his breast pocket. "This isn't New York!" Sarah giggled.

"How would you know? We only just got here, there are no signs. This is definitely New York. Just look at this architecture! And that sky! And that smell! Bona fide-y New York, if you ask me."

"Well, if this is New York, where's all the skyscrapers? Where's the Empire State Building?"

"Well, er, maybe they only come out at night. Listen, I've been flying that TARDIS for over four hundred years and we know each other very well, and she nev-"

His sentence was cut off by a sickening scream cutting through the fog that could curdle the blood of a Drashig at seven hundred knots.

"Come along, Sarah." The Doctor grabbed his assistant's arm and ran towards the source of the curdling, kicking the water out of puddles as they went. She got the brunt of the result of this, but figured there were more important things to do than chastise the man at this particular moment in time. She'll save it all up for later, and really have a go at him.

The Doctor urgently knocked on the door of the first flat he came to, having established that this manky stone structure must be the building where the event took place. Sarah peered up the stairs to check if anyone was out and about, just as the door creaked open, and a foul stench permeated the landing, like a pile of dirty clothes three weeks old that a squadron of skunks used as a fighting ground.

"Awright?" asked a man with short dirty blonde hair, a look like he had just gotten out of bed and no sense of style or personal hygiene.

"Hello, I'm The Doctor and this is Sarah. We heard a scream. Do you know what happened?"

The man blinked extremely slowly, the hamsters in his head got to work and he responded: "Fokin'... I wis jus' mindin' ma own business, right? An' this pure mad scream jus' like... screamed doon the stair, an a wis like... 'fuck's 'at, man? 'At disnae sound good."

"Yes, yes, but where did it come from?" The Doctor looked annoyed.

"Fokin'..." there was a long pause, as the clearly inebriated man stared into the distance and swung his jaw from side to side. He seemed to lapse in and out of consciousness before making eye contact with his visitors, looking startled, and asking, "awright?"

"The scream! Where did the scream come from?" Sarah tried to encourage an answer out of the man.

"Aw, the scream, aye... it came fae upstairs, no?"

"Thanks for your help." the clearly miffed man mumbled in monotone. Before he could say 'come along Sarah', a

tall blonde man with a suit and tie and blood all over came careering down the stairs.

"Wait!" yelled the pair of inquisitors into each other and out of this way. "Come along, Sarah!" He grabbed her arm again and off they went.

"Dee Dee..." the man in the flat said to himself. "See, 'is'z why a' keep tae masel. Too much drama."

4

The Doctor and Ms. Smith sprinted after the man, coming down to a shack by a warehouse by the lakeside. He was nowhere to be seen in this serene scene where he should have been. The moonlight glistened on the water in a way that would be absolutely breathtaking, had the three solid minutes of running they had just done not taken all of their breath away first. Just as they could begin to appreciate the beauty of the night, a man yelled with all his might. "Get away from me!" The doors to the shack crashed open and the tall blonde man with a suit and tie and blood all over came careering down the embankment.

"There!" The Doctor ran over to the man, skidding down the dirt like a skater down a rail. "What on Mondas are you doing?"

The man jumped up after his great fall, barely fazed by it at all, and ran directly towards the water. "Stop!" shouted the Doctor, running after him.

The man jumped right into the water and didn't get up. By the time the Doctor was able to pick him up, he was severely out of breath and choking. "For heaven's sake man, what's going on?" he barked at the man. The man sneezed on him, and his head rolled back, his eyes shut, and all life left his body, as if all of his life force had been contained within that one final sneeze. Clearly dead, The Doctor placed him gently at the side of the lake and tried to make sense of what had just happened.

Sarah approached him slowly and nervously, horrified at what she had just seen. A clearly insane man trying to drown himself after attacking at least two innocent people. She had seen some horrors in her travels with the Doctor, but she never got used to it. 'At least it can't get any worse than this', she thought to herself, placing her hand on the Doctor's shoulder.

The Doctor sprung to life, jumped up, turned around, and tried to strangle her.

Continued in SHIT TRIPS 3...MAYBE

The Tenth Hour

By Neo

An adventure with the Tenth Doctor. [Author Note: this takes place during my other shit trip “The War of the Doctor”, but should read fine standalone]

“I don’t want to go,” cried the Doctor, about to regenerate. He braced himself for the golden light to beam out of him.

But it never did. The regeneration never came.

“What? What? What?”

The TARDIS crash landed outside a house in Leadworth, 1996. Inside, a young Scottish girl (in an English village) prayed to Santa. She rushed downstairs when she saw the confusing sight of the crashed TARDIS. The Tenth Doctor clambered out of the TARDIS.

“Hello!” he called out the young girl standing in front of the TARDIS. “I’m the Doctor.”

“Are you okay?” asked Amelia Pond.

“Well,” drawled the Doctor, “more or less.”

“You broke my shed.”

“I know, and I’m so...so sorry,” replied the Doctor

“You’re funny.”

“Oh yes!”

“Who are you?”

“I’m the Doctor! And you’re Amelia Pond.”

“How do you know that?”

“Oh, wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey reasons. Say, do you have any chips? Rose loved chips.”

“Sure...”

“Then allons-y, to the kitchen! Come along Pond. Actually...no. No, don’t do that Doctor.”

Inside, in the kitchen, Amelia and the Doctor chatted away happily over chips. Whenever Amelia wasn’t looking at him, the Doctor’s face would fall in pain and he’d clutch his side, but he kept a brave and cheerful conversation going all the while. He talked of grand adventures, travelling in the TARDIS, all sorts of mysteries and mayhem. Amelia was utterly captivated.

Amelia had no grand mysteries for the Doctor to look into, but she was enthralled by the strange, raggedy figure. He inquired about seeing her room, and so she showed it to him. He fiddled with the crack in the wall for quite a

while, but the crack had never bothered her. There'd never been anything strange about it.

Eventually, after the two of them spoke at length about what sort of adventures they could have together, the cloister bell began sounding loudly. The Doctor ran outside to the TARDIS, Amelia in tow.

"Well, Amelia Pond, I don't want to go, but the engines are phasing, and the TARDIS is going to burn unless I get back in there and sort it out."

"But it's just a box," said Amelia. "How can a box have engines?"

"It's not just a box," said the Doctor. "It's the TARDIS. It's a type 40 TT capsule time machine. It's from the planet Gallifrey in the constellation of Kasterborous. It's 903 years old, and it's the box that's going to save your lives and all the billion billion people in the galaxy above. You got a problem with that?"

"A time machine? You've got a real time machine?"

"Well, not for much longer if I can't get her stabilised. A little hop into the past should do it. Well, I say little."

"Can I come?"

"Not safe, I'm afraid. But I'll be back. I promise you, Amelia Pond, I will be back. Trust me - I'm the Doctor." He jumped down into the TARDIS.

"Allons-y!"

The TARDIS dematerialised, Amelia ran to her room, then ran back outside with a suitcase. She sat on it and waited for a long while.

Twelve years later, the TARDIS materialised in the same backyard. The Tenth Doctor sauntered outside, waving a strange device around that kept insistently dinging.

"Oh yes," he said merrily, "new days! It's that feeling you get, right at the back of your head, that impulse, that strangle little impulse. That mad little voice saying go on, go on! On I go!"

Inside, a very grown up Amy Pond - in a very grown-up policewoman outfit - knocked the Doctor on the head with a cricket bat, rendering him unconscious. His dinging device clattered to the ground.

When he came to, he was very disoriented, but recognised the ding-ding-dinging of his dinging device.

"White male, early forties, breaking and entering. Send me some back-up. I've got him restrained. Oi! You, sit still!"

"Cricket bat? Love the cricket bat!"

"You were breaking and entering."

"Well, I was following this," he said, looking pointedly at his dinging device beside him. "It's a machine that goes...ding! It lights up in the presence of shapeshifter DNA. Adapted it from some old Time Lord technology to detect holes in Dalek defences, I thought I could put that to much better use, so I made it able to microwave frozen dinners from up to twenty feet, and download comics from the future. I never know when to stop!"

Amy gawped at the Doctor, as he babbled on.

"I thought," he continued, "said my goodbyes, didn't need to, clean break, why not go sort out some Zygon problems, and look what I find, the perfect toy for it! Love the Zygons!"

“Do you want to shut up now? I’ve got back up on the way.”

“Well, you are a policewoman.”

“And you’re breaking and entering. You see how this works?”

“But why’d it lead me here? You’re not a Zygon, are you? No, it would be dingling faster if you were. But there must be one in here. What’s your name, by the way? I’m the Doctor.”

Amy squinted at him suspiciously.

“You’re the Doctor? And you don’t know who I am?”

“Yes, and no! Should I? Have I met you and forgotten you? That’s rather rude of me. If so, I’m sorry, I’m so...so sorry. Ooh, or have I just met you out of order? Did that with a lovely girl by the name of Sally Sparrow once, you see, I was-”

“Out of order...? Wait, why am I listening to this - enough out of you!”

“Yes, yes, quite right, sidetracked, but seriously, Zygons. Big red rubbery things, covered in suckers. Have you seen any? Who else lives here?”

“Aunt Sharon. Da-erm, Augustus Pond, that is. And Tabetha Pond.”

“Your aunt and parents then?”

“I didn’t say that!”

“You said aunt. Look, I’m just trying to help! I’m the Doctor. What’s your name?”

“...Amy. Amy Pond. You really can’t remember?”

The Doctor looked at her seriously.

“I’ve properly hurt you haven’t I? You really do know me?”

“Yes!” Amy let it all out. “You said I’d see you again! I waited all night! I waited twelve years.”

The Doctor mulled that over.

“I’ve had some pretty, well, dramatic events in my life lately,” he said. “Got into a lot of trouble. Got a bit...cooked. Thought I was done for. I wasn’t. But maybe, maybe my mind did get a bit cooked after all. Maybe there’s some things I can’t remember anymore. Amy Pond, I think you’re one of those things. I’m sorry, I’m so...so sorry. But I can’t remember meeting you before now.”

Amy pondered that.

“I suppose you did come back. Eventually.”

“Oh yes!”

“Are you from another planet?”

“Oh yes!”

“Okay.”

“So, what do you think?”

“Of what?”

“Of the Zygon! Shall we go on an adventure, Amy Pond?”

Amy said nothing at first, but then undid his restraints.

In their first adventure together, the Tenth Doctor and Amy Pond dealt with a Zygon posing as Amy's aunt Sharon, and rescued the real Aunt Sharon. When they returned to the Pond house in Leadworth, the Doctor seemed very interested in the crack in her wall. He fiddled with it for quite some time. The crack had never bothered Amy, there'd never been anything strange about it. He asked if he could leave his dinging device by the wall, babbling on about.

"It's like the opposite of a time rift," he said, "it soaks up time. You'd never notice it, but if there was ever an explosion in the vortex around here, well, the whole thing might invert, and then you'd have a problem on your hands. A crack sucking things in. But for now, it just collects time, like a chronon loop! Lovely! Love the chronon loop. If I leave my dinging device here, well, not only would it run its calculations quicker - quicker calculations, so grown up - but beam the sonic resonancies of its data back in time. Like an overflowing cup, the overflowing time would leak over and backwards. Just a thought!"

Amy let the Doctor leave the dinging device there, for as long as he wanted, in exchange for trips in the TARDIS. And so the adventures went on.

Space whales in the future, Daleks in the past. Weeping Angels, weeping fiances. The fiance, Rory, ended up joining them on adventures too. Silurians, Van Gogh. The Doctor was more mature in matters of love than he used to be, and gently helped set Amy and Rory on their way as best he could. They ended up getting married, the Doctor happily in attendance. The Doctor began to see them less and less as he went on missions alone to fight the Daleks, while Amy and Rory began to prefer more and more the adventures of married life, than of Daleks in the sky.

The Doctor began to fight more and more recklessly against the Daleks as their new empire grew and grew. The victory of the Daleks showed the Doctor how little over the Time War he was, and he began to fight more and more outrageously. The Daleks eventually forming a new Skaro sent him into an apoplectic fit. He was the last of the Time Lords, but as long as one Time Lord lived, the Time War would rage on.

The Tenth Doctor sailed the TARDIS into Skaro. To fight.

The TARDIS crash landed outside a house in Leadworth, 1996. Inside, a young Scottish girl (in an English village) prayed to Santa. She rushed downstairs when she saw the confusing sight of the crashed TARDIS. The Tenth Doctor clambered out of the TARDIS.

"Hello!" he called out the young girl standing in front of the TARDIS. "I'm the Doctor."

Amy Williams would eventually realise what exactly had happened that night, but Amelia Pond had no idea. The Doctor enjoyed a much more lowkey style victory lap of companions - just the one companion, really - before regeneration.

After some conversation over chips, the Doctor asked to see inside her room, where he fiddled with the crack in the wall for a while, waving his silly sonic screwdriver around it, and muttering about calculations and dinging

noises. Eventually he exclaimed cheerfully, but was cut short by the insistent sounding of the cloister bell. Again (before), the two of them were outside.

“A time machine? You’ve got a real time machine?”

“Well, not for much longer if I can’t get her stabilised. A little hop into the past should do it. Well, I say little.”

“Can I come?”

“Not safe, I’m afraid. But I’ll be back. I promise you, Amelia Pond, I will be back. Trust me - I’m the Doctor.” He jumped down into the TARDIS.

“Allons-y!”

Again, the Tenth Doctor sailed the TARDIS into Skaro. To fight.

The Dalek fleet surrounding Skaro had shot down the Doctor as he tried to enter Skaro. Skaro’s defences were so great that to calculate a way through them would take hundreds of years. The Daleks were confident they’d caused sufficient damage to trigger a regeneration in the Doctor.

So the Daleks inside Skaro were very shocked when the Doctor, somehow bypassing all their defences, materialised in the middle of the war room with Davros and the Supreme Dalek.

“Well, you’re probably wondering how I got past your shields, aren’t you Daleks? It’d take years and years to calculate the exact harmonic resonancies to bypass this level of Dalek shielding. Luckily,” he babbled, waving his sonic screwdriver, “I had plenty of time!”

His grin turned to a grimace as his regeneration overtook him. He deployed his regeneration in a way that would have made Rassilon proud - as a weapon. Many Daleks fell to his explosion of a torrent of golden energy, from a regeneration stalled too long. The legions of Daleks in the room crowded around both the Supreme Dalek and Davros, to shield them. Many fell to the Time Lord explosion, but the Supreme Dalek and Davros remained safe. Eventually the golden light dissipated, and the Tenth Doctor became the Eleventh.

“It matters not how you breached our defences,” the Supreme Dalek boomed. “You are in greatest concentration of Daleks in the universe. You are not an invader, you are but a madman in a box, in a Dalek trap!”

“Supreme Dalek,” the Eleventh Doctor replied, “there’s something you better understand about me, ‘cause it’s important. And one day your life may depend on it. I am definitely a mad man with a box.”

“Terminate your prattle!” roared the Supreme Dalek.

“Wibbly wobbly-”

“Desist!”

“Timey-wimey-”

“Cease the mockery!”

“Humany-wumany-”

“Exterminate!”

The Doctor staggered back as he began to leak golden light again.

“You think you can stop me now, Daleks? If you want my life, come and get it!” the Eleventh Doctor roared. Again, he exploded in an outpouring of golden energy, but it only managed to hit the Supreme Dalek, not Davros. The stream of golden energy came to an end, and the Eleventh Doctor became the Twelfth. This Twelfth Doctor was a ginger-haired, middle-aged man. He swaggered over to the TARDIS and gave the doors an affectionate knock.

“These polices boxes, they’re ever so good aren’t they?” he said cheerfully.

“You have destroyed only a small fraction of my Daleks, Doctor,” drawled Davros, “you are still surrounded by my new Dalek empire. It is fitting that you should once again bear witness to the resurrection and triumph of Davros, lord and creator of the Dalek race.”

“Quel dommage, Davros!” exclaimed the Doctor.

Waving his sonic screwdriver around, the Doctor triggered some sort of meltdown in the computer systems in the room. He ran back to his TARDIS and warped it to a safe distance in outer space outside of Skaro, but still with the planet in view.

The Doctor watched the planet explode by his hand, for the second time.

“Finally,” said the Doctor, “the Daleks are gone forever!”

And they were.

Until the next time.

The Wrong TARDIS

By Clom the Clombassador

An adventure with the Seventh Doctor

“This isn’t right,” the Doctor said, stroking his chin. He had quite idly sauntered into a Type 40 TARDIS, of that much he was certain, but something was distinctly wrong about the console room he now found himself in. Tensing his fingers around the handle of his umbrella, he took a few more steps into the dark, toward the unfamiliar central column. It was not the sterile, grey arrangement he had grown accustomed to over the last four hundred-ish years. Gone was the stout console with its many panels and little viewing screens, as were the roundels that patterned both the walls and, over time, his two hearts.

Walking briskly, the Doctor felt himself sliding on the floor. “Is that wood-effect Lino? Whatever happened to authentic wooden panelling, eh?” he said to no-one in particular. The console was perched on a slightly raised platform. Carefully, the Doctor stepped up, squinting in the white light of the column. He tipped the rim of his hat over his eyes. “Must be a new bulb,” he muttered, turning his attention to the mysterious console set-up. The column stretched upwards, elongated, into a steel cradle that arced back down to the floor as six support beams. “A bit self-indulgent,” said the Doctor. “This is definitely not my TARDIS.”

Nonetheless, the Doctor threw off his hat and scarf onto a small table that nestled against one of the beams, as if he owned the place. He began talking to himself as he skirted around the console, pushing an array of buttons and switches. “Not even I am so clumsy as to just waltz into someone else’s TARDIS,” he said, adjusting the screen that hung above him from the column.

“I know how to prove definitively that this is not my TARDIS,” the Doctor said with a flourish, pulling a lever. Upon the screen, there was a flash of activity, before the image rearranged itself into a Gallifreyan script. It was flowing, circular, and elaborate. The Doctor looked up in amazement. “My name. My real name. Inside this TARDIS’ memory banks,” he murmured, gazing around the console room, “then this isn’t the wrong TARDIS after all.” The room was otherwise bare, echoing with his voice.

“I can scarcely remember the last time it changed. Took me by surprise,” he rested a hand on the central column. The room was dark, quiet. Disconcerting.

The Doctor was gripped by inspiration. “A bookshelf or three, a nice armchair,” he pictured it, “maybe even dig out that old record player John Lennon lent to me. Make a house a home.” He smiled. This was not the wrong TARDIS. Far from it; in seven hundred years’ travel with the Doctor, it had never been more right.

The MultiDimensional Diner

By Gallifrey_Immigrant

An adventure with Bill Potts

“Don't look to your right,” said the Doctor. He was eating some Ramen noodles that he had apparently bought special order from this restaurant. He had decided today, upon Bill asking about a cool place to eat, to take Bill to a random coffee shop in the middle of nowhere. Apparently it had the best selection of food in the galaxy. The diner didn't look like much to Bill, but the Doctor rolled his eyes at that.

“It's not about the décor. Why are you humans so superficial? No wonder I could pretend to be human around your kind for so long,” said the Doctor, waving a chopstick in Bill's face. She raised her eyebrows, unimpressed.

“To be fair, we wipedv the memory of anyone who found out that we didn't approve of. And took a fee out of their wallet,” said Nardole. Bill's eyes widened, and Nardole grinned, adding “It was a small fee, of only a few pounds.”

“That's basically mugging, you know,” said Bill. In between bites of a cheeseburger, Nardole stuck out his tongue.

“Don't look to your right,” repeated the Doctor.

“Why?” said Bill, peeking out the side of her eyes to her right. She was surprised to see the Doctor, in what looked like a navy blue coat with a white collarred shirt. He was talking to a cute looking brunette.

“There are a lot of versions of the Doctor and all his/her different companions. Because of that, each one tries to reserve one or two seats. This place is actually, um, what's the term?”

“Spatially transcendent.”

“Right, that. So, it's a very large establishment, filled with Doctors and companions and all those sorts of people. I've had some interesting conversations with a nice fellow called Turlough, and a wonderful Cibbie called Kroton,” said Nardole.

“Yes, you can go and talk to them. If you delete yourself accidentally out of history by chatting about your future, that'll be too bad,” said the Doctor. He paused, and said “Oh, and one more thing. Don't ask me about my history before leaving Gallifrey. Just muddles me up.”

“Uh, thanks!” said Bill. Then she dashed off to go see the Doctor and the cute brunette.

The Doctor at the other table eyed her with trepidation. Bill recognized the brunette, now that she had gotten closer, as Clara Oswald. That was a previous companion of the Doctor's, or at least that's what Bill had assumed.

“Hello. I'm Clara,” said the girl. She was dressed in a red skirt.

“Hello, I'm Bill. I'm a future companion,” said Bill.

“Wonderful. Do you want a cookie, or something?” said the Doctor. His mood was much ruder than Bill was used to.

“No. I just wanted to talk,” said Bill.

“Well. We talked. Goodbye,” said the Doctor.

“What the Doctor means is, let's talk. But not for too long,” said Clara, laughing.

Bill walked back to her Doctor and Nardole's table. “Okay guys. I just talked to like, 4 different versions of you, including a version of you that's a cute blonde hottie, and also an old pirate version of you that said he was called the Other? Dunno. He was weird. Anyway, what's up?”

The Doctor looked very confused, and stared at Nardole for help. Nardole rolled his eyes, and pulled out a Men in Black-looking device.

Nardole frowned at her. “Don't know who you are. But you've wasted my time, so that'll be 5 dollars, please.”

--STOP--

By Cool Anon

An adventure with the Twelfth Doctor and Bill Potts

The Tardis came to a sudden halt.

The familiar whirring that it usually makes when it moves was nowhere to be heard. It was eerily silent. The Doctor studied the monitor with furred brows at the console.

"Uhhh Doctor? I thought you said you were taking me home?" Bill said while peeping her head out of the door of the Tardis.

"I was..but something happened" the Doctor replied, while continued to study the monitor.

"Yeah... Because we're in space. And there are lots of weird ring things around that star."

"Ring things!?"

Surprised he finally un-glues himself from the monitor and looks in Bill's direction with furrowed brow. "Get back in, it might not be safe."

Bill moves aside and Doctor takes a quick look out then comes back in. "Ah now I see. They're not just weird ring things. They're planets"

"Um, last time i checked, and I did, planets were round. We haven't crossed into some other universe where planets are discs on elephants on giant turtles, right?"

"No, but wouldn't that be great!"

"I guess, if you like giant turtles"

"I do."

"So what's going on?"

"Ah well you see, we're outside time, and that's all of time."

"Which part of that sentence was supposed to make sense?"

"You see we left the timestream of the universe and are now able to see every single moment all at once It's like if all the frames from a film, instead of moving each really fast to make it look like it's moving, were all layered on top of each other rendering them motionless"

"But wouldn't that make it hard to see all of them?"

"Well yes, but space is really really really big, and we are really really really small. plus we're not outside of space, just out of time. "

"I...think I get it.."

"And that's why the TARDIS stopped working; time is what makes it work."

"So what do we do?"

"We investigate." The Doctor peeks outside again as the tardis silently floats through space.

"Hey, we're getting closer to that big grey snake thing."

"Snake!? I told you it was a spaceship."

"Still looks like a snake to me."

"And those smaller white wiggly snakes?"

"Those it seems, are the maintenance crew."

"Weird..."

The Tardis slowly floats closer and closer towards the "snake" until...

"Okay let's go investigate, Doctor.

"

The two exit the Tardis door in their spacesuits, and move towards the "snake" ship.

"I'm going for a closer look"

"Okay be careful now Bill"

Bill moves towards the ships and readies to stop herself before she hits the walls but instead, to her surprise, floats right through the ship to the other side.

"Ugh.... what happened?.."

The Doctor pops through the same wall Bill exited. "I said be careful!" he scolds a still disoriented Bill.

"I just wanted to see if there was a way inside but didn't expect that"

"It's all walls i'm afraid, front and back. All those instances of the ship all on top of one another."

"Well that's surprisingly boring.

"Maybe up close, but from a distance it's rings around rings, dancing galaxy lines through deep space. Imagine what it all must look like from at a far away perspective; it must be beautiful!"

"Yeah.....but why did we float through?"

"Ah you see, all matter is mostly empty space anyway and matter needs time, even the the most miniscule amount to transmit that interaction information."

"So we go through things?"

"Yes, this is a state of a universe in which we can never interact. Only observe."

"Wait,Then how come we could feel the Tardis our suits and clothes?"

"Residual time energy, just not enough to power the Tardis"

"Okay, so how do we get out of this?"

"IN. We get back IN time.

And i'm not quite sure"

The tardis appears floats through the ship as they did

Look here comes the tardis let's get back and figure something out.

As it approaches them they are caught by it in the doorway.

"I don't want to be stuck here forever Doctor"

"You already are Bill. This is forever. A single eternal moment"

"You're scaring me Doctor."

"Sorry, we'll get back in time don't worry"

"We better" An annoyed and frightened Bill swings her left arm and suddenly all of space zooms across their eyes.

"Woah, did i just throw the tardis across space?"

"No Bill"

"Aw, that would of been cool, coincidence huh?"

"No, what you did is move space across the Tardis"

"Now that is cool!!" a little smug with herself

"Let me try" The Doctor swings and star-rings and planet-rings once again zooms across their eyes.

So we can't interact with matter but we can move ourselves through space or more correctly move space through us.

"How is that even possible?"

"For once i really don't know, but it gives me an idea.

If we can find the point where we left the time stream we might be able to re enter it there. Bill you keep moving space. I'll look for any temporal anomalies on the monitor."

An hour later (or at least at what Bill assumed was an hour later, though really it was no time at all, because there was none). Bill was sitting at the open Tardis door, mumbling, "nope, nope"

while nonchalantly moving all of space through them with a flick of the wrist "You know, even most amazing things can become dull given an eternity to do them. It's just, swipe left, nope, swipe left, nope."

"Hang on Bill, the reading is getting stronger keep swiping left, " the Doctor encourages her while monitoring the temporal energy levels on the monitor.

Bill gives a big swipe left and lets space whizz by for about a minute,

When suddenly the Doctor lets out a loud" "SWIPE RIGHT!!"

"SWIPE RIGHT!!" Bill repeats in excitement

"Gently does it, we don't want to lose it like last time."

"Yeah, sorry about that " she embarrassedly apologizes.

"Okay now, a little closer now, and... STOP!"

"The Tardis syncs with the in-time still Tardis"

The earlier in time Bill and Doctor stood motionless at the console

"This is weird, never really get to see yourself from an outside perspective." Bill says looking at her other self.

"You know, I usually have a policy on meddling in my own timestream, but i guess this doesn't actually count", the Doctor muses. "Did I always have those wrinkles on my forehead" noticing his furrowed brow.

"I think it makes you look distinguished."

"Anyway now I can use the time energy from one tardis to power the other, just have to amplify it."

The Doctor grabs a large winding cog on the side of the console, and begins winding.

Soon the cylinder in the central column begins moving up and down, and the tardis whirring begins to whirr once again as it began to dematerialise. The Doctor takes Bill to the door.

"I just couldn't resist looking."

"At what?"

"Everything."

The Doctor and Bill looked out awe at what can only be described as an ocean of flowing light and flowers. The eternal moment ended briefly, as the Tardis fully dematerialised.

Bill and the Doctor exited the Tardis, in the Doctor's office at the University.

"See, told you i'd have you back in time for tea." the Doctor jokes.

"Yes, but it's 1 A.M.," said Bill. "Well it's been fun, I better be heading back home."

She walks through the doorway, looks back at the Doctor.

"See ya," she said, swiping left to close the door.

Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now

by Rob McCoy

TARDIS materialised on the busy, cobbled streets of Stretford, Manchester. The right door swung open and the Doctor slowly made his way out, turned and whispered softly to the old blue box. "One last trip then." He made his way glumly down the overpopulated streets before he slipped through the side streets before he smelt the last ten seconds of life. Eventually he stopped and found himself outside the Salford Lads' Club. He breathed a deep, heavy sigh, ruffled his hair and made his way inside.

The Doctor hung up his long brown coat and proceeded to the bar. It was full of polo-shirt wearing skinheads, talking loudly, barmaids attempting to calm them, there was only one exception in here and that was whom here was here to see. He avoided them and made his way to the bar, purchased a Banana daiquiri. He seemed to enjoy the chaos, it was the nineteen-eighties after all. He then sifted his way back through the crowd to the figure reading a newspaper in the back corner and drinking his tea. He never changes.

The Doctor sat down in front of him, he didn't even flinch he knew exactly who was there. The Doctor looked around in an attempt to make conversation and noticed the peeling deep green wallpaper that encased the room. "Same old wallpaper then. Nothing changes." the Doctor spoke with a smile. "Nothing ever changes here." A voice responded from behind the newspaper. Morrissey then lowered the newspaper to come eye to eye with the Doctor.

He was wearing a T-shirt of himself, only someone as narcissistic as him could pull it off the Doctor thought.

"Hello you." the Doctor said putting his feet up on the table and taking a gulp from his drink.

"Hi." Morrissey responded bluntly, going back to his newspaper and carefully taking a sip from his tea.

"What's wrong with you then misery-guts?" the Doctor said, attempting to lighten the mood.

"What isn't?" spoke Morrissey through hollow eyes.

"Ah" The Doctor said cautiously, noticing New Order's 'True Faith' playing in the background.

“1987”.

“Yeah, 1987”. Morrissey’s sulking soon grew into anger, now locking eyes with the Doctor.

“Why didn’t you warn me?” Morrissey was furious. “Why didn’t you warn me my life as I’ve known it would be torn into pieces?”

The Doctor was indifferent to the scolding, but took his feet off the table and attempted to cheer him up. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.”

“Bet you are. You know-” Morrissey said pointing a finger at the Doctor. “You are no better than those troglodytes working in the slaughterhouse. Watching me get cut up before you.”

“Fixed point in time I’m afraid, nothing I could do.” The Doctor said. “I am sorry”.

Morrissey was unimpressed. He held his head in his hands. “Now that I’ve said I’m going solo and now that that’s out there, I’m going to be judged for moving on so quickly. But the truth is I haven’t. I’m still there, in my bedroom, writing songs with him.”

The Doctor saddened. “Look, some people just leave and that’s okay. It’s all okay.”

Morrissey looked up, not entirely complacent. “But I’ve never written songs with anyone but him.”

The Doctor’s lips once again curled into a grin. “Oh don’t worry about that, your solo stuff is some of your best work.”

“Yeah, but it won’t be the same.”

“Weeeeeeeell” said the Doctor “Nothing ever is.”

After a while Morrissey asked “Why are you here?”

The Doctor crooked his neck. “Weeeeeeeell, I’m dying and I’m on a sort of, farewell tour.”

“Farewell tour? That’s a good metaphor for life.” Morrissey inquired. “And we’re all dying”.

“Yes but now I’m visiting all my old friends, I’ve gone from London, to the Amazon to a distant bar out in space.”

“Nice for you.” Morrissey spoke, returning to his newspaper.

“It hasn’t exactly been fun.” The Doctor scorned. “I’ve committed to visiting everyone. From waiting for a dead body to float through space, to wading through the wreckage of a spaceship to find the corpse of a schoolboy, to a pile of ash on Kembel, to Ace where, I kid you not, I had to sift through alternate realities as the writers left no canon version of her exit.”

“Wow, interesting” Morrissey wasn’t paying any attention.

“And I came to you last.” the Doctor added. Morrissey perked up and smiled, finally.

“And what does that say about you?” Morrissey rhetorically asked with a smile.

No response.

“Anyway how is Oscar?” asked Morrissey.

“Still painting.” replied the Doctor, “How’s Johnny?”

“I thought we weren’t gonna talk about him.” retorted a glum Morrissey.

“How’s James Dean?”

“He still-” the Doctor began coughing and then spluttering and then some regeneration energy escaped his throat.

“What the-”

“I’m sorry. I’m going to have to leave.” the Doctor interrupted. “Nice seeing you.” the Doctor said as he darted

out leaving Morrissey sat alone.

Now at the door, the Doctor searched for his long, brown coat but couldn't find it anywhere.

Then Morrissey appeared behind him with it. "You know, you say sorry so much it's almost in song" Morrissey said charmingly.

"And may those songs never end." the Doctor returned taking his coat and putting it on. "What are you gonna do next?" Morrissey asked.

"Oh probably just stalk someone for a bit before they know me and then cry and blow up my TARDIS because it isn't like I've done this nine (but actually eleven) times before."

"Okay Doctor, until the next time." Morrissey said with a smile.

And with that, the Doctor left the Salford Lads' Club and Morrissey returned to his tea.

The Soul Bug Part I: EMERGENCE

By: catharticspurious @ The Outsideists

I. Blue Box Malfunction (1)

The image doesn't quite make sense. None of them can process it. It's all perfectly visible - sunlight is streaming in through the room-size window, along with the view from above the eerily delicate cloud layer, so every single corner of the lounge is illuminated.

The minimal yet elegant furniture. The decorative vegetation. The softly pulsing wall screens, glowing red, in lockdown. The two figures at the centre of the room.

Two soon becomes half a dozen, as panicking care staff in pale uniforms surge through to address the situation. They jostle past the three scientists, who stare, lost, at the scene that has splayed out obscenely before them. Not one understands how this could have happened; with test subjects vetted this painstakingly, with an environment so controlled, with technology oh, so harmless. In some way beyond what any of the three could have imagined, the calm, pristine, even *chic* testers' lounge has been defiled by an act of violence.

As two staffers haul Nord Ganschlebe up, his frame wracked with paroxysms of adrenaline, he wrenches his blood-flecked face towards the scientists. His eyes are headlight-wide, skittering as they search the people in white coats for any recognition, any sign that they inhabit the same reality. The three of them, and the inspector who turned up about an hour ago, can only stare back, uncomprehending.

"Look at it!" he screams, even as he's dragged along the navy-blue carpeting, heaving an arm out of the staffer's grip to point back at his victim laid on the floor. "It was coming for me. Look at its *head*. Oh god - look - at - its - head!!!"

Face soaked in tears and clear snot, he devolves into spluttering, sobbing hysteria as he's borne backwards out of the room. Two more care staffers rush to the aid of Zarren Mole, who appears to be *just about* alive - chest softly heaving, a narrow stream of air escaping through swollen lips - urgently sailing him up and onto a stretcher. With their broken, dripping charge in hand, they glide past the group of four and out, as the emergency medical bay doors slide open somewhere else on the ship.

The air in the room feels solid. No-one breathes a word.

Until one of them, the inspector, the strange, grey-haired Scottish interloper, takes it upon himself to remark, "I take it that's not meant to happen."

The other three all wince on the inside, with no idea how to take it. Serene, being the lead on the project, feels compelled to speak first. "It wasn't in our predictions," she forces herself to admit. "We have taken the utmost care—"

"Really not bothered. It looked to me," the inspector says with more than a faint note of curiosity, "like something was altering his perception."

Serene swallows and keeps her composure. “Well, the most likely outcome is that somehow, his Blue Box malfunctioned.”

The inspector misses a beat. Stopping short, he suddenly spins round to face the scientists, a craggy eyebrow arching with a broad curve of suspicion. All three of them feel suddenly very exposed.

“I beg your pardon - did you just say *blue box*?”

II. Bugs (1)

It’s far from the first time he’s become a hobo, even within his Eleventh self. The overly-long brown hair and dry, scraggly beard are traditional fixtures at this point, whether it was sitting pretty in Area 51 or chained up by Churchill in the Tower of London (at least, that’s how he thinks he remembers that part). But this time, from his throne among the black plastic bags of a festering dumpster, the Doctor feels he’s maybe reached a new nadir.

Such are the ways of the wibbly and the wobbly. Fate has landed him here, with his TARDIS seemingly complicit in doing so. And they must surely have had good reasons. So the only question that really remains is, precisely when did *he* lose his mind?

Was it the moment he stepped out of the police box onto a sunny street in Maryland? Was it a few moments earlier, as he was worriedly checking the scanner to find out why they’d stopped here? Or was it a few moments later, at the exact instant he saw the nearest human walking down the street, and realised with gaping dread what he was seeing above them?

One way or the other, it happened. He’s lost his marbles, and this time they aren’t just scattered under the console. So he’s decided to pursue the full experience of going mad, by indulging in some of the freedoms of expression it allows. Adjusting his reclining position in the dumpster as the sun rises on yet another warm morning, and wiping some of the muck from his bow tie, he bellows at the top of his voice, “*You don’t fool me!*

“*I know this is some kind of alien illusion—*” He budes up a bit to stop a pointy bit of garbage pressing into his back. “*—but you won’t pull the wool over my eyes! Whoever you are, whatever you are, I will find you, and when I do, I will get to - ow - I will get to the bottom of this!*”

Satisfied with having yelled at absolutely nothing, he decides now is a good time to lie here and fall asleep for the rest of the day (or at least an unconscious activity that resembles human sleeping). It’s easier than having to go out and face the humans, they and their little *problem* that only he seems to be aware of.

Not ten minutes after he finally gets comfortable in the dumpster, an example of precisely what he wants to avoid suddenly emerges. There’s a brief, timid rapping on the metal wall of the trash container. With a groan, the Doctor heaves himself up and hangs his upper body over the rim, expecting to have to tell another human to whizz off and bother him again at a more convenient time.

But it’s not quite what he expects. Firstly, the young man who’s turned up doesn’t look angry. And secondly, his Bug is by some margin the biggest the Doctor has seen since he landed here.

“You alright in there, dude?” the pale youth asks in twangy American tones, but the Doctor can’t quite stop staring.

“Y - Yes. Just peachy.”

“”Kinda weird place to live.”

“That’s rich from a species that lives in a clearance zone. Hang on, no, shut up, sorry, is there some reason you found me here?”

The stranger shrugs, faintly sheepish. “Just thought I heard someone talking about aliens.”

“Aliens, yes...” The Doctor, distracted, is starting to reach out one hand. “Indeed...I do sometimes talk about those...my God, that’s a whopper.”

“What is?”

His outstretched palm isn’t far from the space above the young man’s head. He takes in every detail. “I have a question for *you*, sonny-Jim. What if I told you, right here and right now, that there’s an invisible parasite attached to your head, burrowing into your brain? A slimy, beige-looking, bulging monstrosity that looks halfway between a giant bean and a bag sewn from human skin? What if I told you that one of these creatures, these Bugs, is inhaling the thoughts and memories of every single person in this town, if not this state, if not this country, if not the entire world by now? What would you say if I told you those things?”

A silence, as the youth considers.

“I’d say...it sounds like some kinda metaphor.”

The Doctor retracts his arm. “Great. That’s a great answer. I’m the Doctor.”

“Hello then, ‘Doctor’ ...I’m Cole. Cole Sanderton.”

“Hello, ‘Cole’, if that is in fact your real name. You have a *thing* on your head, and it’s about two feet in diameter. Yours is bigger than usual. I have to figure out why, but I’m going to do something else first.”

Cole’s forehead creases, trying to follow the homeless man’s train of thought. “And what’s that?”

“This.” The Doctor drops like a stone, his body falling completely limp and unconscious back into the dumpster, and immediately begins to snore like a combine harvester.

Bemused, Cole heads back to his house with a chuckle. And a swallow.

Yours is bigger than usual.

He’s not sure what that could have meant.

III. The Day of the Umbrella Men (1)

They came to everyone, but no two people had the same experience.

Bill Pletchley and his wife Marsha were relaxing by the swimming pool, waiting for dinner to be brought to them.

When the butler arrived, there were two additional figures.

One was a tall man, wearing a suit, but seemed to have some kind of large, metal implant intersecting with and

covering the top, front and sides of his head.

The other was short, stumpy, in an off-white jacket and white hat, carrying a folded umbrella.

Neither of the wealthy couple called for security. For some reason, they felt they couldn't.

Their interaction was brief, and they had trouble remembering all the details afterwards.

The butler seemed to have already met the guests.

The umbrella man was calm. The metal man appeared troubled. The more he looked at Bill, and Marsha, and their lavish abode, the more troubled he appeared.

There was a moment of friendly, polite conversation.

The Petchleys, to the best of their ability, could only remember two things that were spoken.

The metal man said something that included the word, "shielded?"

The umbrella man said something that included the word, "material."

The two guests bade a polite goodbye. When they were gone, the butler was still there.

IV. Blue Box Malfunction (2)

Restrained to a bed in a white room on the Nerverlight Skybunker, less hospitable than it appears, Nord Ganschlebe rues his misfortune.

Not long has passed before a stranger slips into the room - the same unknown old man who'd been watching so gravely as Nord knelt over the monster. The man sneaks a glance back over his shoulder, as if checking to ensure he isn't being followed, then removes a small leather case with a white card inside.

"Good afternoon, whoever you are," he says, brusquely holding up the card. Nord thinks it reads, INTERNEURAL SAFETY INSPECTOR, NEO-SCOTLAND YARD or something similar. "I'm here to talk to you about the thing that attacked in you in the lounge."

Startled, immediately Nord tries to sit up but comes up short against the restraints. "You saw it?!"

“No,” the man begins, “but you did, and that’s a start, isn’t it? Tell me exactly what happened, and we’ll go from there. Think of me as your therapist, except without the therapy. Just call me Doctor.”

Nord sniffles a bit. “I’m so glad someone believes me.”

“Less of the tearfulness, please, I have a schedule.”

“I...I don’t know what it was that happened exactly.” He makes a great effort to compose himself.

“They’re saying it was Zarren...but it wasn’t. It just doesn’t make sense. It can’t have been.”

“Focus. When was the exact moment you saw it?”

“I’d just been going to get a coffee. We’d just had a group neural tuning session...I was going to go swap files with Danis. Nothing unusual. It just - I just - I walked into the lounge and it was *there*.”

“What is *it* exactly? I promise you, nothing you say can surprise me.”

At this point Nord has to pace himself, to summon the image of the *thing* as fully in his mind as possible.

“Okay. It...it stood upright, like a person. But - but instead of the head...there was this...eruption. This horrible *mass*, shiny, it was black like tar - and covered in *mouths*. There were just all these mouths, opening, and closing, with teeth, and it had this set of little wriggling *arms* bursting out from all angles—” He suppresses a shudder. “I know it sounds like a dream, but I swear to god, I swear it felt so crisp and real. It was huge.”

The Doctor seems a lot more intrigued now. His eyes have taken on an inquisitive spark. “And when you saw this, were you sure it was a threat? You never know with these things. Some aliens are harmless.”

Nord isn’t sure how to take that, but he answers regardless. “I didn’t do anything at first. But looking at it - even just from looking - I felt this *aura*, like this overwhelming *evil*, coming straight from it. My whole body just went stiff. I couldn’t move. It was like a, a, a fight-or-flight thing.”

“But you said it was coming for you.”

“It was! It did! Right after I came into the room - it turned around, and it looked at me. And I thought I heard Zarren’s voice, but it was like it was through a filter...it wasn’t him. It just wasn’t. And then it came at me. Real fast. I saw the arms reaching for me. The mouths opening up. It was going to kill me, Doctor. It needed to kill me. Or something even worse. I just don’t know.”

Now the Doctor looks absorbed in thought, a hand on his chin. There’s a pause, and Nord doesn’t know what else to say. He can only wait for this harsh-looking man to offer up judgment.

Eventually, the Doctor speaks. “I’d like you to understand that I have something of a *history* with things like this. Extraterrestrial beings flying down, possessing human bodies, attacking people, and generally causing mischief. This is the sort of case I take, if you follow me. And I’m inclined to take yours. I just have one issue.”

“Is that what you do as a safety inspector...?”

The Doctor ignores the question. “The team of scientists running this project - they’re saying, out there, that your Blue Box malfunctioned.”

Nord grips the bedsheets. Ice runs up his spine. “What?”

“They don’t know how, but they think that the device you have implanted in your brain for this test, your *upgrade*, has interfered with your perception. Because as far as any of us can see, you’ve just smashed an innocent man’s head open.”

Without thinking, Nord tries to reach for the small blue cube affixed just above and behind his right ear,

but is stopped by his restraints again. “But that can’t be right.”

“Can’t it?”

“We’ve been using these for weeks - *months*. They don’t make things like this happen. They just—” He forces himself to breathe normally, as huge and strange ideas start to form in his head. “The Blue Box...it *corrects* for human error. It’s a computer. You can talk to any of us, talk to Rand, talk to Danis - they’ll all tell you - it lets us see better. Think better.”

The Doctor doesn’t seem to be listening that closely. “Cute name, isn’t it?”

“Doctor. If my Blue Box had anything to do with this, then - then - maybe it’s—”

“Yes? Go on.”

“What I saw was *real*.” He can’t seem to make the Doctor see. He’s just getting this raised-eyebrow look. “Maybe the Box *allowed* me to see it.”

“...Right.” The Doctor shuffles to his feet, looking as though he’s ready to leave.

“It was like some...embodiment, of everything dark. Everything wrong. It was like it was revealed to me. Like I had a second sight...”

“An embodiment?” This seems to stop the old man in his tracks. “Would you say, almost like...a symbol?”

“Maybe.”

The Doctor sucks in and releases a heavy sigh. “I’ll tell you the truth. I hadn’t meant to stop here long. I was interested in this technology. The idea of brain-to-brain communication. I have a friend who...” He trails off. “Never mind. The point is, there’s a problem here that goes a lot deeper than I thought, and I think I’d better find out what’s really going on. Expect me back soon.” With that, he makes a move for the exit.

Suddenly nervous about being abandoned, Nord calls after him, “Is it still on board? Is it still alive?”

“You mean the blob formerly known as your friend Zarren? He’s in a bay at the other end of the ship.”

“Then it’s not safe. None of us are safe. They all need to see it - they all need to see it soon. It’s coming.”

“I think that can wait.” As the Doctor slips back out of the room, Nord has a last glimpse of his face, and thinks he detects a faint hint of derision there.

V. Bugs (2)

“And you thought that was bad? Wait until you hear about the Silents. I mean, the Silence. I mean - same thing, you know? What a pretentious naming scheme, good *God*.

“Anyway, those guys - *those guys*. What can I tell you? Literal men in black; some kind of serious problem ironing their suits, not that I even know why they’d wear suits - wonder what they look like naked? - with these big bulbous craniums, and these weird triangle faces that look a bit like someone repurposed the faceplate of a Cybus Cyberman and splashed it with yogurt - except their mouths are these little puckered up bungholes, they’ve got this perpetual look like they’re sucking on a lemon. But I’m off track again, sorry.

“These guys’ big trick is they’d wipe your memory the moment you stopped looking at ‘em. So you

could walk down the street, and by the time you'd reached the other end, you'd probably have tripped over about 60 without even realising. Absolute pain in the rear. But it just goes to show, doesn't it? Memories, truth, they're all a bit malleable-walleable, assuming you've got access to hyper-advanced psychic technology...yeah...

"But for all that supposed cleverness, their plan was a hell of a clusterfumble. I struggle to even remember it in the right order, to be honest. It's funny, though. Lemme see...they planted themselves on Earth however many decades ago; they had a load of little time ships plonked everywhere, some underground, some probably in plain sight, maybe there's one on your house.

"And they didn't make their own merch, mind you, they just sort of hypnotised other people into doing it for them - that's the bit I forgot, the hypnosis! Yeah, after you forget them you still sort of have whatever they say to you floating round your mind like a suggestion. So they probably got other species to build them time ships and whatnot, and then they all flew over here, and they started fiddling about with the American space program. So that whole thing's basically an alien hoax, I hope you're paying attention.

"But why did they care about going to space? Answer: they didn't! No, they didn't even want the rocket! All they wanted was a spacesuit. One spacesuit. Which they kitted out into this kind of...android-y...cybersuit...thing...and they used it to imprison this kidnapped little girl.

"Now, the little girl, she was special, since she potentially represented the next step in human evolution, but in retrospect maybe it's a good thing that never got off the ground...this is where it gets a bit complicated, but she was basically spirited away to get brainwashed with the idea that she should kill me specifically. Which sort of worked. In fact she did nearly kill me, except she didn't.

"So then what happened, after it became clear that she wasn't *gonna* kill me, is they kidnapped her again - stay with me on this - and they put her back *in* that spacesuit, right? Wait for it. And then. They had the spacesuit walk up to me, with her inside it. And the *spacesuit* killed me instead! She couldn't even stop it! She didn't even *need* to be in there! So why did they even - I just - *what*?

"There was also this whole bit with a subatomic pocket reality but it didn't really happen so I won't go into it. And the whole thing just struck me as so phenomenally pointless. A gigantic runaround, uprooting countless lives and families, causing no end of grief, and for what? To achieve something they could have done with, I dunno, thirty seconds and a ray gun?

"If you're wondering how I can still be alive and saying this to you, well, don't worry, because I was actually in a me-shaped robot at the time. And the moral of this story, really, is that you can't just assume that someone is really themselves. You've got your Slitheen, you've got your Zygons (oh boy, you're gonna have a *lot* of them shortly). And most of all, of course, you've got me. And I could be bloody anyone.

"That's all for today, folks. Tune in next week for the next truth broadcast from the Doc—um, the, *Truth*tor. I'll be telling you all about how I rigged the moon landing. And wait til you hear about the Land of Fiction! Stay awakened!"

There's a knock on the dumpster. "Doctor?"

The Doctor dangles himself over the rim again, this time with his camera in hand. "What is it? I'm YouTubing. It's like yelling at nothing, except you get to save a copy."

Cole looks confused. "You're shooting videos...from the dumpster?"

"Yeah. Look, I've got a Tube and everything—" The bearded hobo briefly holds up a cardboard toilet

roll, long stripped of any paper. “And *here’s* my camera, complete with selfie rod.”

“That looks like a milk carton with a stick through it.”

“And with imagination, it becomes a camera. Who are you to judge me, anyway? What do you even do with your life, Cole?”

“Actually,” Cole replies, puffing up with pride a little, “I do a spot of YouTubing myself. I have over 5K subscribers. I just overheard you again—”

“Yes, yes, I was going on about the aliens like this morning. You mustn’t take anything that comes out of my mouth seriously, fella. It’s all just stories and piffle.” The Doctor starts to slide back into the trash.

“Sometimes a story is code for the truth.”

That catches the Doctor’s attention. “You’re certainly not wrong there.” Though he still can’t stop staring at the thick, pulsating, creature attached to Cole’s head. “Do you have an interest in aliens? The supernatural?”

The young man avoids his gaze slightly, and the Doctor takes the opportunity to notice some other details about him - the black T-shirt with some edgy-looking logo on it, the dark green cargo trousers. “You could say that...Anything to do with hidden secrets. Lies. Hoaxes. Things being manipulated.”

“Haha, like the Silence! Oh boy, I could tell you some hilarious tales...”

“Well, hey,” Cole suddenly blurts, sounding a bit less confident than he wants. “You don’t have to do your thing in the dumpster...you could come visit. We could chat. I’ve got my own little kind of studio in my room. I’m sure Mom won’t mind.”

The Doctor’s mouth purses. He considers the offer.

Finally, he swings a leg over the rim of the rubbish receptacle. “I warn you now, if you listen to me, you might find yourself plunged into a world where everything you think is real is a lie. Where evils beyond human comprehension lurk around every corner. Where the fragile thread of human existence is under attack from every direction, at the hands of things bred in the darkest corners of the universe. I’ve been around this little planet, and I know truths that’d make your hair stand on end.” With that, he stumbles, then plummets straight out of the dumpster and directly onto his face with a great clatter of falling garbage.

But in the brief fraction of a second as he soars towards the pavement, he thinks - though it might just be imagination - that he sees the creature on Cole’s head moving.

VI. Blue Box Malfunction (3)

The Skybunker continues its pleasant glide above the clouds as if nothing has happened.

The Doctor, meanwhile, is doing his best to gather the facts about the situation from the three neuroscientists supervising the project, the top minds of Nerverlight Laboratories. They sit around a small, circular table; an ideal vantage point for him to scrutinise them all equally, while they each regard him with vague discomfort.

“We’ve been letting the five test subjects coexist casually in the bunker, going about daily routines, so we can gather data about how Blue Box integration will affect people’s everyday lives,” says Serene Charles, the

leader and the only one of the three who seems like she still has her head screwed on. “This is a completely unprecedented field. Not only are we following volumes’ worth of safety procedures, we’ve had to invent several volumes’ worth of *new ones*. They’ve got Internet access, obviously, but everything is passing through a hundred layers of scanning and encryption. There isn’t an outlet for hostile outside interference. And there wasn’t fundamentally any reason for us to be able to predict this, Mr. Smith.”

“Call me Doctor.”

“...Dr. Smith. We’re forced to concede that the problem might have originated within the device somehow, but it’s extremely difficult for us to understand how or where.”

“I’ll level with you, Serene,” the Doctor begins, resting his elbows on the table. “I’m sure you followed all the safety guidelines. To be totally honest, I don’t really give a toss about any of that. I’m more interested in solving the problem so it doesn’t happen again.”

This prompts the fidgety one, a tangle-haired paranoiac by the name of Locke Vernon, to pipe up. “I thought your card said you were an inter-neural safety inspector?”

“I’m inspecting your safety and that of the entire human race. Now shut up.”

“Who even *are* you?” His eyes start to widen from behind his thick-rimmed glasses. “Serene, what if this guy’s a spy? What if he’s from Twitter?”

Serene is about to intervene when the Doctor cuts over her quite abruptly. “If you ever accuse me of being *from Twitter* again, I will make it a personal ambition to erase you from every historical account of whatever is about to take place. Repeating my request that you shut up.”

She makes an effort to regain control. “With all due respect, Doctor - however much that may or may not be - you aren’t in charge here.”

“Not yet. Now you - you over there with the beard - who are you again?” The Doctor points at the one person who hasn’t spoken up yet, the man with the thick tufts of ginger facial hair, who suddenly looks up as if broken out of a trance.

“Uh, I’m Gunther. Gunther Kadysyak.”

“You look intelligent, probably. Do you have even the faintest bit of idle speculation as to what happened here?”

Gunther subverts the Doctor’s expectations by being fairly animated, as opposed to his prior withdrawn state. “I was actually just thinking it over. One way or another, the Blue Box has gone directly to overriding his visual cortex, which means bypassing a hell of a lot of safeguards. Best case scenario is there’s a bug in the code somewhere, but...”

“It’d have to be a hell of a big bug,” the Doctor follows up, “to allow the programming to turn against itself.”

“There’s one and only one way I can picture it happening - and that’s somehow *spoofing* secondary-layer authority.”

Serene has to interject at this point. “Not possible.”

“Apologies if I’m dragging the conversation back a bit,” says the Doctor, “but as the guest here, I’d appreciate a definition of this ‘secondary-layer authority’. Though chances are I’ve already worked it out.”

Keeping a lid on her irritation, Serene obliges him. “The primary layer is the animal brain. The

secondary layer is the thinking brain, the cortex. The tertiary layer, which up until now has been tools like phones and computers, is in this case the Blue Box. Secondary-layer authority means that we have control over the Blue Box, and not the other way around. Directives from the brain itself have command-line-level authority over the Box's operation."

"Oooh. Trusting the fleshy bit. That's never a good idea."

"I think you misunderstand, Dr. Smith. A lay user like these test subjects can't just reprogram the Box to reprogram *them*. All they can meaningfully do is use its normal functionality, so brain-to-brain and machine-to-brain communication."

The Doctor reclines in his seat. "Even so, you gave it a way in."

Locke, who's been shifting anxiously back and forth like he needs to urinate, can restrain himself no longer. "Which is more likely? A...*bug* spoofed SLA, or our hundreds and hundreds of oh-so-great safety barriers aren't as bulletproof as we thought, and somewhere, somehow, some sabotaging pieces of—some sweatshop workers, probably, on order from Russia or who-knows-where, *inserted* some foreign malware—"

"Locke, calm down."

"No, Serene, *no*. We're sitting on the next step in human evolution, of course, *of course* someone out there wants to ruin it!"

"We'll run scans of everything, including Nord's Blue Box, and we'll isolate the processes that went wrong. If there's been a breach, we'll find it, but we haven't had anything register—"

"Scan his brain as well," the Doctor suggests. "I had a chat with him earlier...Just scan his brain. All I'm saying. You can do that, can't you?"

"The Blue Box will have a record of any secondary-layer activity, so yes, Dr. Smith, we'll scan that as well. Are you satisfied? Can we all take some deep breaths and dial down the toxicity in this room?"

"Hold on, Doctor," Gunther suddenly chips in. "You said you talked to Nord?"

"Yes. I assume by now you've all heard his account of the tentacle-beast-thing?"

"I keep insisting it must mean something, but no-one listens to me. Did it not strike you as a bit *specific*, what he saw?"

"Honestly? No. The exact opposite." Actually interested now he has the opportunity to explain something, the Doctor leans forward on the table. "Lots of mouths, lots of tentacles, an overpowering aura of dread - those are things humans dream up to fill in a vacuum, if anything. Things that naturally freak you out. It's a generic, surreal, sleep-paralysis creation. (The monsters you lot generate without even trying, it honestly impresses me sometimes.) I'm of the opinion that whatever went wrong with this chap's Blue Box, it didn't insert a creepy-crawly so much as spur his mind to conjure one for himself. It's more like a sym—"

The monologue is interrupted by the sudden wail of sirens, and the wall-screens flashing crimson. It's another alarm, exactly like the one that followed Nord's attack on Zarren. "Oh god," Serene breathes. "It's happening again." They leave the room, running.

VII. The Day of the Umbrella Men (2)

It was the same day.

The boat rocked and dipped on the untameable sea. The people on it, packed like sardines, took solace in the memory of comfort.

Some of them felt life was cheap. Some of them felt that they were good people, on the inside. Some of them felt that a great judge would balance the scales. Some of them feared things, people that were unfamiliar.

All of them were going to a new place.

This account is in the category of instances that include the blue phone booth. At some point it appeared on board.

The umbrella man brought the metal man down, below decks, to see them all.

The umbrella man was very, very insistent that the metal man talk to every single person on board.

Conversations occurred which, if these people lived, they would certainly be unable to retain the details of.

The metal man appeared to be in a state of great discomfort and agitation upon his initial appearance, although once some hours had passed, he became more neutral.

The umbrella man supervised some of the conversations.

Occasionally, something would be said which offended the metal man, and the umbrella man would intervene, but no specific details could be recalled.

Separate tellings, from multiple people who were on the trip, enabled the reconstruction of some things the two men said to each other shortly before disappearing.

“This hasn’t convinced me of anything.”

“I’m not interested in convincing you of anything. What’s important is the data.”

“It doesn’t change the fact there’ll be consequences.”

“Perhaps it might allow you to reframe them.”

Further than that, nothing else is known. The vessel reached its destination.

VIII. Bugs (3)

They’ve ascended into a small but cosy abode within deepest suburbia, and it’s as Cole said - at one end of his room is a surprisingly expensive-looking camera, opposite an office chair framed by some bits of geeky-looking memorabilia and books on shelves. “The centre of operations,” observes the Doctor.

“You could call it that, I guess,” mumbles Cole, sliding out another chair from beneath a desk at the side, though the Doctor seems to have already made himself comfortable perched on an errant bean bag.

He rocks gently from side to side. “Your mum seems like quite a nice lady, Cole.”

“She’s OK. She’s kind of a boring person though.” They’d briefly passed her on the way in as she was doing lunch. Her and the Doctor had regarded each other with a roughly equivalent level of bemusement.

Relieved that the fragrance eliminator installed in his coat pocket seems to be counteracting the garbage reek, the Time Lord gazes at his surroundings. “She’s got one too, of course.”

“One what?”

“You know, one of the head parasites. Do try and keep up. Mind you, it’s nowhere near as big as yours. No offense.”

“None taken.” Cole seats himself in the main chair. “You’re English, right?”

“Not really. There’s a sort of parallel evolution going on, yes, but I’m from quite a different sphere. Excuse the accent, it’s an old habit.”

“How did you wind up here? In a dumpster?”

The Doctor bites his lip in thought. “Have you ever locked yourself out of your house?”

“Not personally.”

“Well, imagine that, except the house did the locking.”

“...Don’t you have a key?”

“Oh, yes! Of course I’ve got a key, I’ve got several. But when she doesn’t wanna open, she’s not gonna open.” His old eyes are still creeping over the contents of Cole’s bedroom, mainly looking for patterns - and trying (for once) not to fixate awkwardly on the boy’s Bug, sitting unnoticed in all its disgusting glory directly atop his head. The Doctor sees plenty of books that seem educational - some to do with evolutionary biology, some looking like they revolve around economics, some concerning comedy and others on American history; many that he feels like he skimmed once but can’t really recall -

“So, Doctor, are you kind of in line with any big conspiracy theories?”

“Who, me? I tend to be more in line with the conspiracies themselves than the theories. Did I mention I

rigged the moon landing? Oh, don't worry, it was definitely *real*, I just used their transmitter to beam out a hypnotic signal."

There's a layer of irony in Cole's gaze. "You don't look that old."

"Why, thank you, Cole, I'm flattered. I was worried this beard would age me horribly. But without divulging too much, let's just say I've gone through a series of explosive and traumatic cosmetic surgeries."

"...Like witness protection?"

"A bit like that, yeah! Except without the protection. You're a clever one, aren't you?"

"People do say that about me."

"Now, Cole, forgive the prying, but..." The Doctor shifts hesitantly on the bean bag. "Do you ever feel...*different*...from people around you?"

At that, something lights up behind Cole's eyes, and the Doctor begins to spot tiny physical changes indicating an small increase of pulse. "I don't know about different, but—"

"Oh, go on, I'm not the judgy kind. I'm well weird, me."

The young man's Adam's apple bobs, and it seems like he's about to say something, then stops and chooses something easier. "I'm pretty into nerd culture. I don't know if you noticed." He noncommittally gestures to some of the bric-a-brac and posters around the room; old *Star Wars* and *Professor X* DVDs, little toy figurines of weird-looking creatures, stacks of video games dating back to the late 90s.

"All *that* stuff?" The Time Lord shrugs. "I didn't really register it. But there's nothing to be ashamed of in geekiness, at least as long as it's not lulling you into some kind of dead-eyed consumerist trance, of course."

"I agree. Absolutely." A little relieved, Cole presses further. "That's not exactly all, though."

"No?"

"I guess, uh...I'm not the most sociable person..."

"I spent a century sulking on a cloud once. Never underestimate the value of one's own internal voices as company."

"I know, right? I mean. Talking to friends is good and everything—"

"Well, obviously."

"It's just—" Cole stops, and takes a deep breath, trying to articulate what it is he has to say. "Doctor, what about you? Do you ever feel like...you're the smartest person in the room?"

"Ahahahahaha!" The Doctor's sudden peals of laughter catch Cole off guard. "Sorry. Very sorry. It's just funny hearing someone actually ask me that. Do I *feel like* it? Buddy, I know it for a *fact*. My life is a constant grapple to translate the vast complexity of life for less advanced intellects. No offense, again, by the way. Is that how *you* feel?"

"I've just got a very logical brain, I think. Ever since I was a kid." Despite the Doctor's habit of interrupting, he feels like someone who's easy to talk to. This fact, the Doctor often notes, has been of great assistance in discovering megalomaniacs' grand plans. "Like, I fell out of religion when I was 12."

"Was it from a height?"

"I suppose."

“I fall out of religions almost as quickly as I fall over them.”

Cole barely even stops to try and parse that homeless word salad. “And I have a real problem with the way people...reject facts. You know?”

“I’m not so sure about *that*. If humans didn’t reject a few facts now and then, I’d be in a lot of trouble. But I more or less get you.”

“Let me get to the point. My YouTube channel, it’s...skepticism-themed.”

“Yes, and?” The Doctor peers at Cole ever so slightly worriedly, and not just because of the Bug. “Why are you saying that like it’s a dirty word?”

“Exactly. Exactly! You understand, right? It’s just such a huge habit people have, to tell themselves lies, and ignore things that are right in front of them, just to protect their own feelings. That’s why I do what I do, and there’s an audience for that, there’s a whole community. But it seems to...separate you from...a lot of people.”

“Cole, just curious, is there something you’re not telling me?”

Cole blinks.

The Doctor’s giving him a look, one that seems to contain a far increased depth and clarity compared to his prior absentness. It’s all in the eyes, or perhaps the eyebrows. Despite this, Cole remembers that this man is very clearly insane on some level. So perhaps it doesn’t matter what they say to each other.

“I have a real, and genuine, concern about what’ll happen to us if we allow emotion to supercede reality.”

He’s expecting the Doctor to cut in again, but this time the strange man just sits patiently and waits for Cole to continue.

“I feel there’s a—” He’s getting to the part that’s hardest to admit IRL (*in real life*, as opposed to in a video or online). “A dangerous movement. In the West. To replace objectivity, with irrationality.”

Still no response, but the Doctor doesn’t seem wary or dismayed so far. Just interested.

“And that manifests - in forcing people to play along, with things that don’t make any sense...things that aren’t fair. Things that are hurtful. In the name of doing good. Sorry, am I boring you?”

“No, no, not at all! Please, go on,” replies the Doctor with a pleasant smile. And Cole thinks, maybe this will actually go well.

“There’s the first level, which is just everyday things. Like media. And, being a nerd, I have to face the brunt of this - like, what they’ve done to *Professor X* lately—”

“I’m not really familiar with that.”

“Well, trust me, be glad you aren’t. But then there’s the cultural level. This is where it just gets unbearable. I, uh—” Cole clears his throat. “Hmm. Doctor?”

“Yes?”

“Have you heard of the, uh, so-called red pill?”

The Doctor mulls it over for a second. “What’s that? Is it closer to a red Wine Gum or ADHD medication?”

“Neither, it’s just a metaphor.”

“Ohhh. I’m good with metaphors. Carry on.”

Cole rallies himself. “It just means an awakening. Becoming aware of a hidden truth, one that encompasses your whole reality.”

“I suppose I’ve taken my share of those ‘pills’. Blimey, this is interesting!”

“It’s happening to more and more people. It’s like a revelation. It goes against mainstream dogma, the lie that everyone else has been taught from birth to believe in. And it’s...a sad kind of...fate...”

“Because it means being excluded? Alone?” The Doctor’s seeming genuinely sympathetic.

“Yeah. With what feels like the whole machinery of the state against you.”

“Must be rough. So, if you don’t mind, Cole, tell me - what sort of...‘revelations’ are you privy to?”

Cole avoids his eyeline.

“Well, there’s the big one...”

He also notices it’s uncomfortably warm in here today. “People are trying to replace the white race.”

The Doctor blinks. “Okay.”

Cole’s fingers are trembling a bit from nerves. “Th- this is usually the bit where I start spilling the spaghetti everywhere...”

“Sorry?”

“I mean I - I start quoting refugee crime statistics and—” He takes a deep, calming in-breath. “It gets weird. But you seem like you can listen without automatically freaking out...”

“I’ve been called a great listener, usually by myself.”

“Sure. Whatever. It’s just, there’s *so much* evidence. And all you have to do is look. Look at the difference in cultures. But there’s this obsession - in the media - with looking the other way - and I can’t help but think, maybe they *want* this, the suffering, the death - or they only care about signalling virtue - it’s like mass insanity...”

Meanwhile, the Doctor has been internally screaming for roughly the past twenty seconds. *Oh, by the rotting corpse of Rassilon, what fresh hell have I gotten myself into? Keep smiling and nodding, Doctor, just smile and nod*, he thinks. He’s not sure if the Bug on Cole’s head is the thing most making him viscerally uncomfortable any more - but maybe what he’s hearing right now is the key to all of this.

“...down to skull shape! And you must have felt this yourself, Doctor, in some way.”

He mustn’t let his mind wander. “I, eh, what specifically?”

“The sense of persecution. Just for being who you are.”

“...” There are a lot of ways the Doctor could answer that. “What do you mean in *this* context?”

Cole exhales through his nose. “You don’t have to be polite about it, man. You can see it, I can see it. We’re both the *dreaded* white males.”

The Doctor sucks in his bottom lip. *Oh. Hmm. Right.* “That does seem to be the case. I, er, I can’t say I’ve thought about it that way very often.”

“Well, you won’t be able to avoid it much longer. It’s getting worse and worse. We’re the only group it’s still acceptable to make fun of, and you have to start thinking, what is that going to *do* to us? To little boys...I

guess it's kind of irrelevant compared to the genocide thing. But they're all just different prongs of the same attack."

The mind of the Time Lord is whirring furiously. What could be happening here? *Okay*, he thinks. *Theory - the Bug feeds on...THOSE kinds of thoughts? No, that can't be it, because all the humans seem to have one. But there has to be a connection, or why else is Cole's so huge?*

"Doctor?"

"Oh, God, yes, terrible. Just terrible."

"Right? And I think, when people stop, and watch videos like mine, maybe they can get a sense that we're *not* inhuman. We're not *nasty*. It's, it's just, it's just self-preservation - we can't *lose ourselves* to meaningless guilt and delusions and niceness and—"

"And empathy?"

"Yeah! We need to save, protect, *some* idea of normal...we're all just sinking into this depraved hellscape, it's even turning to *violence*..." Cole seems to be getting genuinely emotional, like this confession is a real catharsis of unexpurgated resentments. "Ugh. Look at me. I don't know why I'm getting like this."

There's got to be something else, thinks the Doctor. *What kind of creature, what kind of predator, can feed on any brain but feeds MORE on this one? And that still doesn't answer the question of why only I can see it - has the TARDIS done something to me?* "Maybe we should change the subject for a bit," he timidly offers.

"Actually," Cole begins, and he suddenly starts to clam up again, "I kind of want to ask you something else related to that..."

The Doctor's facial expression doesn't change. "Yes...?"

"I, um. You can see. I'm not super confident in a - uh - face to face kind of situation."

"A lot of people get socially anxious, Cole, there's nothing to be ashamed of in that."

"There's a bit of a...get-together happening soon. For people like m—like us. We're trying to show, like, solidarity, fight back, because if we don't, it'll be *illegal* just to *speak the truth*. You know? And I thought, since you seem...willing to listen..."

Suddenly, the Doctor has an idea, and it wills him to choke down his bile. "You want me to go with you? Yes. I'll do it. Absolutely. No problem." *If I can observe a whole group of them*, he thinks, *I'll really be able to work out what's going on here*.

"You don't have to feel pressured, or anything!" Cole splutters. "It might be kind of weird. There's always these, counter-demonstrators, and even though this is only a small one and next month's is way bigger, I know from the videos it gets pretty heated—"

"Even better." *Oops*. The Doctor didn't mean to let that slip out loud. "As in, all the more reason I should accompany you. You'll need an adult there - I mean a mature - Just someone to watch over you." *And it seems I'll fit in easily enough...*

"Well, there'll be cops too."

"What, trying to arrest us?"

Cole allows himself a smirk. "No. Trying to arrest *them*, with any luck."

"Brilliant." The content of the bedroom seems to be caving in on the Doctor. The bookshelves, full of

isolated, limited nuggets of knowledge stripped from their universal context, loom in like odious schoolteachers. The quaint bits and bobs of nerdy memorabilia, idols reproduced from narratives with cobbled half-histories and philosophically disembodied values of good and evil in eternal toy-soldier combat, leer at the Doctor like smug gargoyles.

Just then, the door opens, and Cole's mother enters with her normal-sized Bug.

"Cole, I thought I asked you to do your laundry today."

"Alright, Mom, I was just entertaining a guest." His voice has immediately taken on a more sullen tone. The Doctor briefly catches Cole's mum's eye, and gives his most winning grin (though he fears it's not entirely showing through the scraggly beard).

She, a portly lady in a spotted apron, responds to this odd hobo in her house with a wobbly, vaguely uncomfortable half-smile. Then she refocuses on her son. "That's all well and good, Cole, but I always ask you to do things and you just don't bother."

"It's not a big deal."

"Aren't you going to your party on Thursday? What are you going to do without clothes?"

"I have clothes."

She sighs. "I'll do it."

"Mom, no."

"No, Cole, if you're gonna be like this—"

"It's easy, I'll do it myself."

"You won't, will you? You'll just put it off again!"

"Fine. Fine, do it. Sorry."

Huffing slightly, she barges past the Doctor and scoops up a bag full of discarded garments. "Sorry about this, Mr...."

"Smith," the Doctor offers. As she hustles out the door, he watches her Bug intently. Just as the door closes, he thinks he sees it—

"Sorry about her, Doctor," says Cole, overriding the Doctor's train of thought. "Like I said. She fixates on these meaningless things. She's not got much going on. I could have done that chore whenever, but she just finds a way to make it about her."

The Doctor isn't entirely convinced, but he isn't going to do anything apart from judge silently and ideally excuse himself - until he looks at Cole.

The Bug on his head is growing.

It's throbbing, stretching, the mottled skin bulging - and it's increasing in volume, right at this very second.

“Doctor?” Cole is struck by the way the Doctor is suddenly staring, in awe and fear. “You alright?”

“I’m absolutely fine, Cole.”

Looks like I need to update my theory again, the Doctor muses. *I don’t know where this is leading me - but it might be deeper inside the human psyche than is especially comfortable.*

“So when exactly is this gathering?”

IX. Blue Box Malfunction (4)

With the alarm sirens still wailing, the group bursts into the dining room - a wide space with a large round table off to the side - and the Doctor is greeted immediately by screams.

A triad of hysterics are positioned roughly ten feet away from each other in each direction, backing up against the curved walls and furniture - these are the remaining three test subjects, each of whom is brandishing something at the others and shouting garbled nonsense; a kind of surreal Mexican standoff.

They react to the entry of the Doctor, Serene, Locke and Gunther with simultaneous pleas for assistance.

“Oh god—”

“Please, someone, *help*—”

“Make ‘em stop—”

“Get me *away* from them—”

“*Do something*—”

“*Shut your traps,*” bellows the Doctor, and a wave of anxiety hushes the trembling humans. Behind him, the scientists are nonplussed. A moment passes of solely the alarm blaring. When he’s sure their attention is on him, the Time Lord continues, “I would like each of you to tell me your name. *Not all at once.*”

The short, soft-looking lad cowering behind the chair in his arms pipes up first. “R- Rand Steppenfield.”

“Alexandria Miyo,” cuts in the woman with the huge kitchen knife and the hair bun.

The last to speak is the tall, supermodel-like girl clutching a bundle of pointy-looking kitchen implements as if they’re her last possession on Earth. “Danis. Danis Tailor.”

The Doctor slowly begins to approach them. “Thank you. Now would someone like to tell us what the hell is happening here?”

They all burst into noise again.

“Look at them—”

“They’re gonna—”

“I was just—”

“Those *things*—”

“*No. Not like that. Shut up.* You first,” barks the Doctor, pointing at Rand. “I like you, you look the least lethal.”

The poor boy looks as though he's going to have some kind of bowel accident. He barely controls his shaking enough to whimper, "They just appeared. I was just talking to Danis. We were just thought chatting, about Zarren, and - it just appeared - and then they were everywhere - and now they're here—" He hooovers in a shuddering gasp of air. "They're trying to kill me!"

"It's lying, mister. It's lying," hisses Alexandria through her teeth, gripping the knife even harder. "I don't know who you are, but these creatures are *doing* something to us, they did something to Nord and Zarren, and please for the *love of God* get me out of here! Put - put them in quarantine or something! I'm defending myself. I'm *defending myself*—"

"Serene," comes the quiet plea of Danis. "What's happening?"

The project lead steps forward. "We don't know, Danis, but you need to put those down."

"Is this because of the Blue Box? Is that why they've come for me?"

"Nothing's *come* for anyone—"

"Why can't you *see it?*!" Danis shrieks. "They attacked me in the kitchen - they've got - so many mouths...!"

"Where are the care staff?" Alexandria is nearly hyperventilating. "We have to kill them! We have to kill them before they kill us!"

On cue, the rushing footsteps of the staffers can be heard from the corridor beyond.

Rand bleats. "Why have they got weapons?"

"They're *using* our *voices*," breathes Danis. "Why do they sound like Rand and Alex? They've *done something* to them!"

The knife in Alexandria's hand is shaking at top speed. "Give my friends back." Spittle flies from her lips. "Give my friends back, you - *YOU*—"

The Doctor's eyebrow twitches.

Alexandria screams.

Danis screams—

Alexandria darts forward with the knife—

Danis thrusts the sharp-edged tools forwards—

Rand screams and raises the chair—

Serene hears "*NO!*" leave her mouth—

The Doctor has moved—

The staff crash through the door—

A blur of bodies—

It's over before it's begun.

Everything is still.

Everything is silent.

The staff stop short at the edges of the room. They look. The scientists look. None of them can react.

The Doctor is in the centre.

Rand has stopped.

Danis has stopped.

Alexandria, knife held out ahead of her, arms rigid, has been stopped by force.

The knife's momentum has ceased completely.

The Doctor has seized it by the blade with his bare hands. Blood begins to leak down its steel surface.

She stares at him, her eyes huge.

The alarm finally cuts out.

The Doctor's breathing is patient. He doesn't show any sign of acknowledging any sensation. Slowly, his gaze travels off of Alexandria, to the side...passing by Rand, hugging the chair...all the way to Danis, agape.

He speaks. "Look at me."

Their fear is still palpable.

"Focus solely on me. Focus on the sound of my voice. There is nothing in this room except you and me."

Alexandria can't even let go of the knife. Her muscles have locked around it involuntarily. She starts to quiver.

"The fear you are feeling is an automatic reaction. But you're reacting to something that's not there. Your minds are being deceived."

"Th-they're so horrible," moans Rand.

"Don't look at them. There's nothing to look at. Look at me. Close out all else. Your visual cortex is being tricked. Your senses are being overridden. The things you think you're seeing are lies. You are stronger than this."

Danis' handful of tools clatters in her grip. "But it's so—"

"No. It's not 'so real'. Nothing is 'so real' that your brain can't be stupid enough to have imagined it. The only way to evolve beyond being a big, screaming baby, is self-awareness. There is some kind of malignant code infecting your Blue Boxes, and I'm gonna need all three of you to wake up and accept this is an illusion."

Nobody moves.

"Drop your weapons, if they can even be called that."

Alexandria's heart is thudding in her chest. "I can't. I physically can't. I'm too scared."

"Then close your eyes."

"What?"

"The image is perfectly attuned to your primal, animal fears. So shut off the image. Close your eyes. All of you, now."

Rand's eyes dart from the Doctor, to the monsters he's seeing in place of Alexandria and Danis, and back again. "If I shut my eyes, they'll get me."

The Doctor's voice doesn't rise in the slightest. He is utterly patient. "I promise you. Have faith in me.

I'm realer than these creatures you think you can see, and I promise you, you will come to no harm. Close your eyes."

It takes another second, but in one flinch, Rand throws down his chair and shuts his eyes tightly, cowering away against the wall.

"Thank you." The Doctor's breathing is inaudible. "You two next."

Alexandria starts forcing herself to take deep breaths. "It's not real," she mutters to herself. "It's not real, it's not real, it doesn't exist, it doesn't exist, *it doesn't exist*—"

Her fingers loosen without her even willing them to. The Doctor's do the same. The knife tumbles to the floor.

"Thank you, Alexandria."

Alexandria barrels backwards, into the arms of waiting care staff. They look at the Doctor, agonised, as if they can't decide whether or not to intervene. He silently shakes his head. One left.

He turns, slowly, to the glamorous Danis. Her weapons are now pointed straight at him.

Her face is a rictus of fear. "What if you're on their side?"

"Excuse me?" One long eyebrow shoots up.

"If this is happening to me, how do I know what's real and what isn't—"

"Don't start writing conspiracy theories, Danis," says the Doctor, almost a purr. "Everyone else on this ship is here to help you, and fix whatever has happened here. You are safe. The only danger on board with us right now is you, with that potato peeler. Your brain has activated its superpowers. You need to turn them off."

Her glare starts to turn to anger, perhaps at herself, at the Doctor, her whole situation.

"You promise?"

"You can hold me to it."

Her internal struggle reaching its peak, with all eyes in the room fixed on her, a vein bulging on her forehead, her lungs inflate—

She gently closes her eyes and drops everything.

The carers swarm in, tending to the still panicking test subjects in urgency and bafflement. Tension billows out of the room and away, in huge, airy waves. The Doctor doesn't move from his spot, but relaxes, arms and bloodied hands falling to his sides.

Serene can't find words. Locke looks frantically from side to side, as if trying to spot the wires. Gunther gazes at the Doctor in almost religious fascination.

The Doctor himself turns his head to Serene, and gives her a look that contains no trace of smugness, nor superiority, nor arrogance, nor patronisation. What he's saying isn't an insult to anyone, or a seizing of dominance. It's just a simple fact.

"Now I'm in charge."

X. Bugs (4)

The Doctor waits for midnight's clouds to pass on and let through the moonlight. He sits, cross-legged, atop a roof - he doesn't know whose house this is, and figures it's probably better that way - attempting the difficult task of meditation. For him, at least in this incarnation, meditation isn't so much a route to mental peace as an excuse to redirect bodily energy into even more intense mental exercise.

He glares intently into the night sky. The oppressive obscurity of the current mystery bears down on him, as does the grimness of his situation. The only thing providing any light is his half-conviction that whatever's happening, it was meant to happen - the TARDIS locked him out for a reason, the TARDIS forced him to land here for a reason. But in the absence of any further help from the old girl, he has to solve this one himself.

Still, though. What a sordid state of affairs.

He's done his best to avoid...this sort of group, truth be told. Perhaps that's a shirking of responsibility on his end, but so what? He travels on his own terms. The official story is that he's just out to have fun. He doesn't *have* to go and seek out experiences that he knows will be miserable. He can avoid them if he *wants*.

But they always do this. No matter where they are on the planet, they develop their own version of *this*. It's the part of humans that makes him feel dirty for loving them like he does - he consoles himself by noting that it's not unique to humans anyway. No, the problem isn't being a wriggling ape. It's something to do with consciousness. It's something to do with time. It's something to do with separation - something to do with linearity...

He shakes his head to clear out the philosophy.

What's irritating is that part of him feels like he should *do* something. Make some sort of grand, self-righteous, principled stand, like the ones the Master always hated him for so much but always felt so empowering - at least *say* something. Claim dominance, feel good about yourself, and upset the baddies. But what is that even meant to achieve? Whose mind will that even change? History roars on like a monster, an all-devouring tidal wave that never breaks. And besides, he has a far bigger problem right at this minute.

What does it mean?

Why did the Bug grow when Cole spoke about his mother?

Could the white nationalism be a total dead end? A red herring? Is the Doctor going to stumble into a street-fight on Thursday only to find nothing of use?

What is the *exact* - *specific* - impulse for these creatures to feed and expand?

The clouds are finally starting to thin over the moon. It's a relief; the darkness has been suffocating.

Even if the Doctor somehow answers the question of what the Bugs are, he might still be left with the most troubling question of all. Why can only *he* see them?

There are many special things about him, he knows that as well as anyone. He's attuned to certain frequencies, even more so than your average Time Lord. He knows more languages, is educated in more arts, has tasted more forbidden fruits, and possesses more unspeakable secrets. Trying to isolate which specific one relates to the Bugs is impossible.

And worse - he might really just be mad.

It doesn't help when he looks up at the moon and sees something inside it.

It's beautiful tonight, glowing white gold.

He blinks, hoping the vision will vanish. It doesn't.

The moon, in his sight, has become partially translucent. It's difficult for the Doctor to make out what precisely he's seeing, but he can tell unambiguously that it's located within the orb of Luna herself. It's not some random spaceship parked on the surface. This goes deep.

The being itself is black - a kind of dark mass, and the Doctor realises that it's so hard to see because it's somehow formless, and shifting. At a glance, it could almost be mistaken for an artifact in a video, or a harmless floater on the wet surface of an eyeball, or a tiny smudge on a canvas.

But the more he looks, the more he focuses...the clearer it seems to become.

Solid lines begin to form. He sees things sliding, slipping; the entity takes on some kind of shape, and it's one that's visibly in motion.

"Now what in the universe could *you* be?" he wonders aloud.

The image sharpens further, and he makes out black tentacles, worm-like, sliding over each other, as if the being were a mass of leeches - a more apt analogy than he initially realised, because now something else is becoming visible on the creature, a set of *mouths* - sucker-like mouths complete with *teeth*, endless rows of teeth - his eyes are fixed on this moon-being, growing more and more hideously beautiful and real the longer he allows himself to focus on it—

As if suddenly aware of him, it screams.

The sound travels straight to his ears.

It's an explosion of noise that sounds like the gates to Hell have been flung asunder; a cacophonous soup of the tortured, terrified howls of a billion damned souls, poured into a single instant, an earthquake of sound that upends the world itself and conjures its own three-dimensional Boschian deathscape for hundreds of miles in every direction—

The Doctor barely hears himself screaming, barely feels himself slipping and tumbling off of the roof, bouncing on crunching tiles—

Every atom of his body is seized with terror—

He fantasises those dark tendrils reaching for him, stretching all the way to Earth, and pulling him into those shredder mouths as they so desperately yearn to do—

He's vaguely aware of the ground rising up to meet him, and tries to brace for impact.

The scream is still echoing in his head. It blots out all else; its own reverberation, its own afterimage, its own shadow, haunting the Doctor's entire perception.

There's a thump. The world rolls, end over end, sky over ground over sky. His body goes numb. Somehow, he's still moving. He's up, and he's running. He doesn't know where. But it's away from the direction of the moon. It's away from the light.

His legs guide him back to his dumpster. He vaults inside, and digs himself in among the black, stinking

trash bags, letting them cover him totally, obscure his vision and submerge him in their protective embrace. He doesn't even feel his hearts rampaging in his chest until he has lain still, sweating, bruised and breathless, for thirty seconds.

This has possibly become more complicated than he expected.

Thursday, he thinks, is going to be very interesting.

NEXT TIME: THE GROWTH

Piss Heather

By Simon Cyberman

An adventure with Heather.

I hate being alone. It's Friday night, everyone is out having a blast and getting drunk, but here I am sitting at my snack wrapper covered desk arguing with some asshole on /who/ about his constant THICC-posting. God, I hate when this tripfag gets on. All he ever does is post constant shit about how THICC Colin Baker is. I had to tell him to kill himself. Just when I was about to solve the CAPTCHA by clicking on the cat furniture, I heard a dripping sounds behind me and a pungent smell sting my nostrils. I whirled around in my office chair to find Heather standing and dripping her wet essence on my floor.

"Hey", she said in a soft sultry voice, "You ever stick your dick in a puddle?"

I stammered. She was so beautiful. Her golden hair flowed like water, her curves were like waves, and her stunning eyes burned with passion like the star in her eye would go supernova. It was then that I noticed the water dipping off her was an amber hue. She was made of piss.

"H-How did you get in here?", I asked.

"Up through the toilet, it was quite the squeeze with hips like mine."

"Y-you smell like piss", I said chuckling sheepishly. I had always had a piss fetish after getting my head dunked in toilets by bullies at school.

"You like it? I often take up some of the liquid I come in contact with, part of being a liquid pilot I guess."

"Oh, I like it"

"Would you like for me to show you what I can do?"

"I thought you were a lesbian?"

“You could say I am a bit “fluid” in my sexuality”

She then launched herself at me with a jet of piss coming out of her feet and knocked me out of my chair. I fell hard on the floor, but thankfully a bed of Cheeto crumbs broke my fall. She was on top of me. She was surprisingly strong for a puddle of piss. Her wet hair dripped piss on my face. Drip drip, drop drop. She licked my face leaving a trail of piss from my chin to my forehead. She giggled and began to take off her clothes which seemed to liquify back into her body as soon as they came off. Her breasts were magnificent. Truly these were no pancake tits like Clara. She removed my clothes and began riding my dick. She was surprisingly warm on the inside. I grabbed her puddle ass and squeezed. It was like warm Jell-O in my hands. I was becoming rock hard. My erection could break the wall from Heaven Sent in just one punch. I nearly came early but she used her puddle powers to keep the cum inside me, furthering my organism. She grabbed my Tom Baker scarf my aunt had knitted me and started choking me with all twelve feet of it.

She leaned in close to my face. I could really smell the piss now. She opened her mouth and unleashed a torrent of piss straight onto my face. I opened my mouth so I could taste the salty flavor of her gift. I felt a warm feeling on my groin, she was also peeing while she fucked me. Just when I was about to pass out from the piss soaked scarf squeezing my neck, she released my orgasm. The largest load I had ever shot rhythmically spiriting from my cock. She began to soak in my cum. After I had finished and she had soaked in all my cum, she released the scarf from my throat. I lay there gasping for air in a fit of ecstasy. She got up and leaned over to me and whispered in my ear.

“You will now be a part of me forever, never forget that”

She then walked out of my room, into the bathroom, and then flushed herself back down the toilet. I continued to lay there for a while longer with only one thought in my head. This would be one hell of a cleanup.

Framing Story Part II: The Shields Are Failing

Beryl's cheeks were blushing red. It hadn't occurred to Rast that perhaps telling a piss fetish story to a woman born in Victorian times might be a very bad move. Or, considering the baby's wide grin at Beryl's distress, perhaps she had understood that, and just wanted to troll everyone. Ace was hiding her face in her paws, and Ellie's face carried a strong expression of utter disgust. Sam was giggling, and Susie was glaring. Clive, as always, was on his computer.

Rast rolled his eyes. "That's not even my worst story. There's one I heard about the Doctor and a pie--"

"I think we should all take a break," said Ellie quickly. I smiled at her segue, and nodded.

"Bathroom break. Then we come back and tell more stories," I said.

Everyone walked away from the common room. Desmond, who had been quietly listening to the stories offered, tapped me on the shoulder.

"I need to speak to you in private. Meet me in the shielding room," said Desmond. His expression was grave. I watched his coat flap away as he disappeared, and wondered what could shake him so.

I saw Beryl chatting to Susie. She looked a little calmer. I would hope so; she was liable to be here for a very long time. Rarely did anyone get taken from this little oasis in the war. The last person to leave was an Donna Summers, who had met the Doctor in his tenth body. That Tenth Doctor had decided to sacrifice himself so that Donna could live, and Donna had always had trouble with that. Her brain, being both Time Lord and human, had never quite worked right, and I often saw her in pain from the migraines. Everyone supported her the best we could, and she seemed to appreciate the companionship. However, one day the Time Lords picked her up. Apparently, they had found a place to put her. We never saw her again.

That was three years ago. Donna had been there for seven years. Rarely was she mentioned. Honestly, there weren't as many here as in the beginning. Maybe the Time Lords had found another place to keep them. However, my cynical side worried something else was happening.

I strolled to the shielding room. Pictures of people here, both past and current, lined the walls. With each picture, I remembered good and bad times. Desmond had told me that, with these pictures, none of these guests would ever be forgotten. With luck, they'd still be here after the War.

After the War. As if.

The equipment that maintained the shields looked like a bunch of glowing lyres. Each string maintained a certain energy frequency, and the combination of energies maintained the shields. If a string stopped glowing, or was broken, it weakened the shield. If the shield went,

so would our protection. Desmond maintained the shields, having learned the art of maintaining them in his mysterious past.

The man was staring out of the windows. The light from the silver shield-generators cast a low ethereal pattern on his red jacket. His face seemed like a mask, in the darkened room, for the glow was the only light in here. I could barely see his eyes, as he turned to me.

“Beryl is acclimating nicely,” he said.

“Yeah. What did you bring me here for?” I asked.

His eyes looked out at the window. Fields of green grass, and a rainy sky, was outside. I had no idea whether that was a real image or generated. The scenery outside often changed subtly, though it always rained. “Look at the shield-generators. What do you see?”

I looked at the lyre-like machine. The strings glowed red, blue, orange, orange, purple. Low humming sounds emitted from device, making my body vibrate in tune. Something felt off about what I was seeing, felt off about the vibration I was feeling...

“Hang on. Those colors are supposed to all be different.”

“Indeed,” said Desmond. “Each color represents a vibration of temporal waves. Each wave combines, to create the temporal echo that keeps us safe. And one of those waves has been disrupted, to be replaced by another wave.”

“So, a technical fault? That's not new.”

“No. But the source of it is. After reviewing the machinery, I've determined someone had to actually tamper with the shielding, in order to cause that fault.”

“What are you saying?”

“I'm saying, someone is trying to deactivate the shields,” said Desmond. He stepped closer into the light, and I saw he was serious. His eyes looked tired.

“Why would someone do that?”

“Perhaps they dislike the food here,” he said. After a short pause, he continued “They might be tired of being trapped. Perhaps they are a Time Lord enemy. Maybe even a Dalek spy. But know this—it could be anyone. Keep this to ourselves, for now. I need to look further into this, before deciding the course of action.”

As we returned to the room, I saw the crowd all around me. None of them seemed capable of violent action against us. But Desmond had told me that one of them had done it. I approached April, and she looked in my direction with her blood-red eyes.

“Hello, Karla. How are you today? You look sad,” she said.

“I'm fine. Did you notice anything odd today?” I asked her.

Her nose swiveled a bit, as she thought. "Well, we've got a new visitor, so everyone's all excited. A whole lot of walking about. Why? Desmond seemed worried; has something gone wrong with the shields?"

April, as always, were more perceptive than she let on. I couldn't be too forthcoming, but reasoned that she probably wasn't the saboteur. "Not necessarily. Desmond thinks some settings might have been changed by accident. It'll pass, but I need you to keep an eye out for any weird behaviour."

April nodded. "Will do. I feel like a spy," she giggled.

Beryl was staring at the food machine with a quizzical expression. I approached her, and pushed a button on the machine. "Are you doing okay?" I asked, while eating a doughboy.

"Yes. The Doctor showed me futuristic worlds before. It still marvels, though. I grew up in a town before that net-thingy, and we enjoyed all the electric lights and stuff. The world was moving so fast when I was around. But the 1800s seems rather quaint to most of the others," said Beryl. Her eyes looked sad, like she was imagining those times.

"Do you miss it?"

"All the time," said Beryl. "I miss my young charges. I miss fussing after them, and tucking them in. They were brats sometimes, but I miss them all the same."

For a moment, I just watched her wistful expression. Then she focused on me, and asked "What about you?"

"I used to work with a cult of time traveling criminals," I said.

"Sounds dangerous," said Beryl, in a tone awfully close to flirty.

"It was. But it was fun. Until...I lost the ability to defend myself," I said. Seeing her confusion, I added "Some weapons take your flesh, or your sanity. But at the level my group was playing at, the weapons take away deeper things. And I lost the ability to attack. I can't throw a punch, or use a knife against an enemy. Makes me useless to a cult of criminals, and useless to a society in war. So I'm here."

"Wow," is all she said.

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, let's go back into the main room. Storytime!" I said.

As Beryl walked away, I wondered whether she was the one who hijacked the shield. She was a new arrival, and seemed wistful for home. A Victorian barmaid seemed an unlikely person to mess with advanced technology, but she did use to travel with the Doctor...

I walked into the common room. Everyone was looking at me expectedly, waiting for my reply.

"Who wants to start now?"

It was Ellie who raised her hand. “I have a nice, family-friendly story to tell.”

“How boring,” said Sam Jones, and Susie English rolled her eyes.

“I have a story about the Doctor and a pie if you want,” said Rast.

“A story about eating pie?” said April.

“He doesn't *eat* the pie,” said Rast creepily.

“Let's go with Ellie's tale,” I said.

As she began her tale, I wondered: which one of these people were willing to bring the War to our doors? Didn't they know the violence they were risking to us all?

Or worse, did they know, and want it to happen?

Holiday

By McGanon

Early mornings on the TARDIS were quiet times. Except, they weren't really early... and they weren't really mornings, either. It would probably be more accurate to say: Sam Jones' wake-up times were quiet times. Except, wrong again. It was, in fact, on this unfortunate morning (relatively speaking) that she was rather rudely awoken, to no small amount of yelling, banging, and brief bouts of boisterous song. In her experience, this often meant one of three things:

1. the TARDIS had been invaded (unlikely)
2. the Doctor was being tortured mercilessly in an attempt to extract his multitude of secrets against his will (likely, but it hadn't happened in a while)
3. the Doctor was performing maintenance (simultaneously the most likely and most horrifying of all possible explanations)

Of course, no matter the source of the disturbance, it wasn't exactly a pleasant wake-up call. This was further compounded by the fact that the marching band of one outside her bedroom door did not seem to relinquish his duties for the next ten minutes. It was after such a point that Sam decided she'd had enough, grabbed whatever lay closest, swung her legs off the bed, and stormed out into the hallway, thunder in her eyes.

"Ah! Sam, there you are!" was about as much as the Doctor managed before he received a faceful of pillow, which was fairly remarkable considering the speed at which the projectile had been launched. It flopped to the floor afterwards, and probably would've felt satisfied at the bewildered expression on its target's face, were pillows of the tendency to feel things at all. "I... didn't wake you, did I?"

"No, Doctor, definitely not. I'm fresh as a daisy."

Sam's deadpan sarcasm seemed to bounce off of the Doctor in much the same way the pillow had, and he beamed at her, before clapping his hands excitedly. "Well, come on then—I've got something to show you!" He turned on his heel and started off down the hallway, before halting suddenly like he'd forgotten something, and glancing over his shoulder. "Have you really been in your pyjamas all day?"

Oh, she could kick him.

He bounded into the console room with all his usual enthusiasm, with Sam trailing along behind him somewhat dejectedly. To her eyes, nothing in the vast Gothic-inspired space seemed out of place—save a new pile of books growing quite unsteadily at the base of the centre dais—and she said as much to the Doctor, who shot her a sly smirk in response. He was over by the console, flicking switches with practiced ease, occasionally glancing at the low-hanging monitor to keep track of... whatever the hell he was doing.

"I never said what I wanted to show you was in *here*, but—" he paused, pressing a number of buttons in quick

succession as the TARDIS warbled feverishly in response, “—I *have* been meaning to ask you: have you noticed the stars lately?”

Sam gave him a puzzled look, then swiped huffily at her eye to rub the sleep out of it, tipping her head back and turning her gaze upwards, into the dark reaches of the ceiling that seemingly stretched into infinity. As she squinted at the void expectantly, it began to shimmer; a whole galaxy flickering into existence and spreading out before her, unravelling vast solar systems and interlocking asteroid belts, sprinkling the spaces between with bursts of stardust and chemicals. An impossibly vibrant painting of life itself—pinpricks of light set into the darkness, splashes of colour that she didn’t even have a name for and that she was fairly sure puzzled the Doctor too. Sometimes, when he was off elsewhere, tinkering in the laboratory or scraping together a late-night meal, she’d let herself collapse on the hardwood flooring of the console room, lie back, and just watch the universe go by. Rarely, when the TARDIS picked out its rest stops in a Federation sector, she thought she could see starships scooting on by, ducking and weaving through the debris that littered even the outer reaches of occupied space. She spent a lot of time thinking about the existence of each little life-sign on board, pottering about their daily business or rushing off to sort a fuel leak. She wondered if they lay back and watched the stars sometimes too. Just like she watched them now (though, this time, notably upright), searching hopelessly for whatever was amiss amongst the otherwise typical hologram.

“I don’t see anything,” she finally conceded, letting her head fall forward and her gaze find the Doctor’s once more, “it’s just... stars.”

There was a certain twinkle in the Doctor’s eyes, almost as if he knew exactly what she had been thinking about. It wouldn’t surprise her; he’d caught her spread-eagled once or twice, lost in the infinity above them. “Exactly!”

The confusion that was undoubtedly apparent on her features returned full force, and she shuffled up to the TARDIS console—careful not to trip up on the dais—to have a look at the monitor that the Doctor kept glancing at. In hindsight, she probably ought to have realised it wouldn’t have been any help. By the time she had gotten close enough to see, she could only catch a glimpse of some sort of tacky-looking romance holovid before the Doctor’s hand shot up and the soft *click* of the monitor’s dial accompanied the departure of its visuals. She ran a hand through her hair (still blonde, still cropped relatively short, although it had been growing noticeably in length these past few weeks) and huffed out a sigh that was only slightly exasperated.

“Doctor, I’ve just woken up, it’s...” she raised her wrist to eye-level and stared pointedly at a watch that didn’t exist, “*stupid* o’clock, and I haven’t actually had breakfast yet. You’re going to have to help me out with this one.”

He turned suddenly, coat-tails whirling, and grasped for her hands, holding them tightly. “Sam... Sam, Sam, Sam, Sam, Sam! Don’t you see?” His eyes shone with excitement—up this close, they were almost hypnotising in their intensity—and a smile broke out, unbidden, across his lips. “They’re just stars! That’s all! No great travesties, no civilians in peril, no wars to avert or bombs to defuse, just... *stars*. Is that not wonderful?”

Despite having no idea what was going on, Sam felt a smile ease her features and a sort of quiet adoration bubbled up in her chest. He could be utterly frustrating at times, but she had to admit that when he got excited like this, it was endearing in its unashamedly childlike way. “It is, Doctor, but... that still doesn’t explain why you woke me up.” She squeezed his hands gently, then pulled her own away, sticking them awkwardly in her

pyjama bottom pockets. He really was quite full-on at times, and she was fairly sure he never realised.

The Doctor clapped his now-free hands together, then began to shrug off his velvet coat, throwing it aside as soon as he plausibly could—Sam winced a little at the sound of a precariously-balanced book pile giving up the good fight and finally toppling over—and tugging at his cravat excitedly. It took an uncomfortably long moment for Sam to realise that he wasn't stopping there. When the long strip of silk had been suitably disposed of, draped over a lever on the console, his long fingers began working at his waistcoat buttons with a fluid grace, and Sam felt a blush creep up her cheeks. It was only around the point he was standing in no more than a shirt and trousers (the shoes, she only just noticed, were already off—and had perhaps never even been on that morning) that she finally found her voice. “Uhh, Doctor? What are you doing?”

His thumbs were already hooked into the waistband of his lower garments, but he faltered there as she spoke, as if only just remembering the existence of the thoroughly confused companion standing in front of him in no more than a frayed *Greenpeace* t-shirt and obnoxiously blue jogging bottoms. “Hm. Didn't I tell you? We're going on holiday!”

And with that, he whipped off his trousers.

The Doctor had told her once that the TARDIS was infinite, and then had quickly corrected himself to let her know that, no, it wasn't *actually*, but it may as well be. Her understanding, from his somewhat vague—and a little bit meandering—explanation was that the whole ship functioned on an as-needed basis. Hungry? Wander long enough through the corridors and you'd find yourself in the galley, pots bubbling away on the hob and a fridge fully-stocked with fruits you wouldn't recognise. Tired, after a long day of almost getting vaporised? Your bedroom would never be far, pillows fluffed and sheets always smelling faintly of lavender. In desperate need of a microscope? You'd find the Doctor's laboratory eventually, after a bit of trial and error. One of his experiments was probably on the verge of explosion by the time you did.

The only exception to this otherwise absolute rule, was that every morning, without fail, the TARDIS hid the bathroom from her. The first few weeks aboard had been nothing short of a nightmare in the mornings, when she'd wake up and plod off down the corridor and open the familiar door, only to be greeted by a room that would be spectacularly bare and infuriatingly silent if it wasn't for the shelves after shelves of metronomes that lined the walls, ticking away their own discordant cacophony that she was very sure set out to mock her. Another morning it had been an art gallery that might've been striking had every picture not been an impressionistic take on the exact same ginger cat. Of course, the TARDIS always relented eventually and usually by the third door, her feet found the reassuring tiled floor and she could finally seek the shower she so desperately needed. It was only after the fourth week of this infuriating morning routine that she had the absolutely genius idea of asking for an *en suite* washroom. Truth be told, she had no idea how to do it herself, so the Doctor was swiftly summoned and after a mere few moments wandering distractedly around her bedroom, he had emerged triumphant and gestured her over to a door that absolutely had not been there before. After this new addition, the ship seemed to have had enough of amusing itself at her expense, and the original bathroom she had struggled so hard to find would, from then on, always situate itself two doors down from her bedroom, on the immediate left. She never used it again.

Nowadays, she had a fairly solid grasp of the ship's inner workings, and never again struggled to find whatever

she went looking for (the only, and truly the *only*, exception to *that* rule was that the butterfly room always eluded her unless already occupied by the Doctor himself; it seemed as though that was a space quite personal to him, and she found within herself no reason to rebel against that fact) but, she had to question, in a ship whose inner workings based itself almost exclusively on need... what the hell was the requirement for a bloody *beach*?

The great expanse of blindingly white sand stretched out to the horizon on either side of her, the silvery waters ahead mostly calm and gently lapping, a thin layer of seafoam fizzing away at its boundaries. Behind, as she emerged into this unlikely landscape—her toes sinking in the softness beneath her—the dunes climbed gently, forming a sparsely-vegetated ridge that kept the coast at bay. Though she couldn't see above those hills, she knew that if she crested them she'd see a whole world laid out before her, touching the distant sky and spreading beyond. It was beautiful, and impossible, and for all that the TARDIS had shown her forests and meadows and the infinite vastness of space, somehow the sheer scale of the ocean itself had existed beyond her imagining in that tiny, battered blue box. She had to remind herself to breathe again.

“So, what do you think?”

The sudden voice made Sam jump—for a long moment, she had forgotten the Doctor was even there, standing proudly next to her, hands on his hips. She tore her gaze away from the seagulls wheeling above her, to regard the fashion disaster she called her best friend. He was wearing something not unlike that which he had donned so long ago at the water park on Kursaal; a form-fitting, short-sleeved, obnoxiously stripey jumpsuit that cut off at the thighs and buttoned up at the front. It was positively ghastly, but certainly wouldn't have been out of place in a time period far predating that which Sam was familiar with. It honestly wasn't what she had expected when he had started stripping down in the middle of the console room, but on the same note, she wondered why she was surprised at all. What sort of fantasy did she think she was still living in? She was past all that embarrassing teenage stuff. And yet, with a blush, she realised that for the past few seconds her eyes had been resting on somewhere rather inappropriate that had been accentuated by the oddly tight-fitting swimwear (it hadn't looked like that on Kursaal, had it?), and that the Doctor was patiently waiting for her response, seemingly oblivious to her predicament.

“What do you mean?” was the only thing she could come up with, dragging her gaze back up to the Doctor's face in time to see a flash of... *something*—an indiscernible emotion. It melted away before she could even try to properly place it.

“Well, I programmed this myself,” he said matter-of-factly, sweeping an arm out at the sparkling ocean before him, that uncertain expression from before being replaced by a beaming smile, “I think we both deserve a break, don't you?”

“Yeah, I guess I could do with one after...” Sam hesitated, remembering their recent run-in with a derelict spaceship, two warring factions locked in an impossible stalemate, and the unfortunate events that had sealed the fate of them all.

The Doctor seemed to sense her dip into despondency, and pressed a reassuring hand to her shoulder, squeezing gently. “Yes, well, the past is quite in the past, I should think, and I believe the universe owes us something for ourselves for once. No hostiles, no spaceships, no catastrophes in waiting, just—” he waved his free arm once more, “a beach, a picnic and all the time in the world.”

For the first time, Sam noticed the blanket laid out on the sand nearby—had that even been there before?—with room enough for two, and a quaint little basket half-buried in the sand beside it. With the sun beating down on her, looking out across this impossible, beautiful seascape, she felt her worries melt away to be replaced by a fuzzy sort of calm. The Doctor had shuffled off through the sand as she took it all in, picking his way down the beach towards the blanket and settling on it to begin spreading out the vast array of snacks he had no doubt packed within that deceptively small wicker basket. She watched him for a long moment, absorbed as he was in his miniscule task, before realising with a start that she was far from dressed for the occasion, clad in her hopelessly distressed jogging bottoms and a t-shirt she liked to jokingly refer to as her “Sunday best,” on account of how holey it was. The thought crossed her mind of nipping out into the TARDIS corridors and hoofing it back to her own room to pick out something more suitable, but just as she began to turn, the Doctor leaned up on his knees and waved her over excitedly, the food spread before him and a glass of some suspiciously orange beverage clasped in his free hand.

With a careless sort of abandon, she shoved aside all self-conscious thoughts, and stepped out of her ratty old trousers, dropping them in a fumbled pile at her feet. The artificial wind nipped at her newly exposed flesh, and she shivered. “Bloody Time Lords with their icy hearts and low bloody body temperature, thinking we could all do with a chill every now and again,” was all she could grumble as she grasped at the hem of her t-shirt, about to tug it upwards, before she caught herself and let it be. *Boundaries, Sam, boundaries*, she chided herself gently as she began to pick her way down the beachfront, her heels being sucked in by the ever-shifting sand on the way.

When she reached the edge of the blanket, the Doctor shuffled aside a little to give her more room to sit, and she did so, tucking her legs underneath her. She tried not to blush as he glanced over at her—so acutely aware of her exposure—but he, quite predictably, did not leer as any other man might’ve. Instead, his face creased in a grin as his gaze came to rest on her face, and she saw an unbidden joy in those impossibly old eyes, and she thought perhaps she had never felt quite as loved as she had in that moment. It did not escape her knowledge that he had done all this, in some part, for her, and she felt a bright swell of pride to know that she had the privilege of calling such a wonderfully sweet individual her friend. Better still, to know that he thought very much the same in return. Her heart felt fit to burst, so she glanced almost nervously away from that powerful gaze, and took in the grand tableau of foods that lay before her.

So vast and exotic was the spread of snacks, it defied description. Directly in front of her was a bowl of strange fruits that she would’ve mistaken for plums were it not for the faint incandescent glow they exuded whenever they fell into shadow. To their left, there was a board of various cheeses laid out in delicate formation, in colours so odd she’d almost think them unnatural had she not known better. A stack of Tupperware tubs contained what might’ve been some sort of soup—it sloshed about noisily whenever disturbed, but emitted an almost intoxicating aroma when she cracked the lid of one to take a proper peek inside. A half-empty bowl of jelly babies leaned against the Doctor’s knees, and when she glanced up from them, his hand was halfway to his face with a couple of the sweets clasped within it. He looked almost sheepish as he popped them in his mouth and chewed, and she flashed him a wicked smile—she barely saw him eat them, and they were often only produced from those cavernous pockets of his when necessary for tactical advantage, so to see him indulge in what was seemingly a guilty pleasure gave her no end of joy. The rest of the blanket was covered in various other unidentifiable dishes, from planets she probably had never visited, but when she reached out to sample them, she found that each of them was exactly to her liking. Some were sweet and tangy, others heady and rich

with exotic flavours she couldn't possibly find an Earth equivalent for. As she sifted through each snackfood, the Doctor would usually rattle off a name that was outright unpronounceable, and after about the fourth plate—stacked high with sweet-smelling, bright green buds from some sort of plant—where his only description was somewhere between a sneeze and a cough, she thought he might just have been making the names up to amuse himself. She started referring to each dish, from then on, with generic Earth food names (her favourite was a strangely textured flatbread, peppered with oddly-shaped grains, which she proudly proclaimed was actually just pizza) and would flash him a mischievous grin every time his face scrunched into a half-amused, half-impatient expression. Beaten at his own game.

When she had had her fun, and the varying needs of her body had made themselves known, she mimed a drink motion towards the Doctor, who had smiled and produced a bottle adorned with a font that the TARDIS could not seem to translate. There was a sharp *pop* and a gentle *fizz* as he snapped open the lid, and poured her a glass of the most delicious, refreshing drink she had ever had the good fortune to taste. At her not-so-subtle prodding, the Doctor had shyly informed her that it was actually from Gallifrey—hence why the TARDIS' translation matrix hadn't rearranged the circular fonts into something more legible to Sam's own eyes—and that he had been saving it for a special occasion. Her heart caught in her throat at this statement, delivered almost offhandedly, and she found all she could do was smile her gratitude and bury her face back in her latest alien delicacy (though not, thankfully, in the most literal of senses).

They ate and joked and recounted adventures they had shared together 'til the false sun began to dip below the horizon, exhausted by its long day of existing. At Sam's insistence, the Doctor had indulged her and told her a few stories of his own past—with all their absurdities, she couldn't actually be sure if he was telling the truth. Not because she thought he might lie to her, but because his memory was terrible at the best of times, and she often thought that he might just be making everything up as he went along. She wouldn't be surprised, and for all that she wished her curiosities to be settled, she doubted she'd be disappointed either. It was with another one of his fantastical may-not-be-quite-true tales that she found herself nodding off, though not for lack of interest. Her early start was finally catching up to her, and as far as she was aware, they had been sitting there talking on that beach for hours. The seemingly endless platters of finger-foods had paradoxically depleted their resources, with only the odd crumb left to indicate their contents had ever existed at all. So, as it was, when the Doctor began to quietly recount a particular misadventure he'd had in Paris in the year 1463, Sam felt her eyelids droop and her grip on her empty glass slacken, and sleep rose to meet her like an old friend.

When she came to, the pre-programmed sun had slipped fully below the horizon, and two moons shone brightly in the sky above her, framed by the colourful swirls of galaxies that reminded her of the holographic projection that hung weightlessly above the centre of the console room. She blinked to clear her eyes of the sleep haze that clung to her, and began to shuffle into a sitting position, noting somewhat absentmindedly the blanket that fell from her shoulders. It was different from the one she had been lying on—softer, almost—and she figured the Doctor must've tucked her into it while she had been dead to the world, not wishing her to get a chill in the now-frigid sea air. She wondered why he hadn't programmed this particular TARDIS landscape to be warmer, then berated herself almost immediately—what did it matter if it was chilly? He had done all this for her, she shouldn't find it within herself to be ungrateful. He probably didn't notice the cold himself, as cool to the touch as he was, so it had probably just slipped his mind.

As she cast her gaze about, she noted that her friend was nowhere in sight, but the plates and bowls and Tupperware that had previously lined the picnic blanket were now cleared away, without a trace. She wiggled her legs under the blanket, stretched them out as far as she could, then rolled awkwardly to the side and forward until she could get up onto her knees. A yawn forced its way out of her, tagging onto the last vestiges of sleep as she banished them from her system, and she pushed herself onto her feet, the blanket still clutched tightly about her waist. All she could hear was the gentle lapping of the waves at the shore, and the rest was silence, almost suffocating in its entirety. She furrowed her brow, then tentatively called out: "Doctor?"

There was no reply, and a bite of fear worked its way through her chest for the briefest of moments, before her eyes picked out a ripple on the calm silvery surface of the sea. A dark shape breached the water, shattering the reflection of the second moon hanging in the sky, sending its light skittering out across the water in dazzling shards. Her eyes stubbornly refused to adjust to the navy-blue hues of the beach at night, and she squinted towards the water until they finally relented and allowed her to identify the unmistakable outline of the Doctor, his long hair swept back and soaking wet, and his arms spread wide as if reaching for an embrace. "Sam! Come on in, the water's fine!"

A grin broke out across her features, and she started shuffling her way down to the water's edge, letting the blanket fall from about her hips and tumble dejectedly to the increasingly-damp sand. "Program it yourself, did you?" she called out to him, recalling an earlier statement from when they'd first arrived in this utterly false, yet enchantingly real landscape.

The Doctor's arms fell back to his sides, and a look halfway between pride and befuddlement skipped across his features. He scrunched up his nose. "Yes, I did, actually."

When she reached that indefinite threshold between land and sea, where the surf stretched to meet her toes but never quite made it, she hesitated - if the air itself was so cold, what must the water be like? She almost turned and marched right back up the beach at that uncomfortable thought, but a very obviously amused voice stopped her in her tracks.

"It's warm, I promise you that."

She glanced up to see the Doctor standing a few feet ahead, the waves lapping at his ankles and a hand outstretched towards her - a silent invitation in a stripey jumpsuit. He had moved forward just enough for her to reach for him, and her palm slid easily into his as she took that first nervous step forward, using his strong grip as leverage against the damp sands that seemed intent to suck her into their depths. *He was right*, she noted absently as she shuffled forward inch by inch, the water reaching further up her calves with every step, *it's warm*. She was still staring downwards, marvelling at the stark temperature difference between air and sea, when she suddenly bumped into something very real and very solid in front of her. It was—*oh*.

"Hi," she managed to choke out, caught by that impossibly blue-green gaze that, by all accounts ought to have made her shrink away from its intensity, yet filled her with such an embarrassing warmth that she almost ducked her face away for fear of blushing.

"Hello there," the Doctor murmured. At some point in the proceedings, her hand had slipped from his and he now had both of his own resting lightly on her arms, holding her in place against the tides, weathering them both against the pull of the ocean. She was submerged to her collarbone now, the seawater tickling her skin

as it eddied around these new, person-shaped obstructions.

It was a strange, charged moment, then. They both stared at each other, unflinchingly, each almost unwilling to be the first to break that which locked them both in place. Sam felt her mouth go dry, and she absently wished she still had some of that strangely refreshing Gallifreyan drink to hand, but they had consumed it all earlier and something told her that it was hardly easy to come by. So she just stood there, staring, barely blinking save to clear her eyes of the saltwater spittle that occasionally found its way there uninvited. The Doctor, in turn, just held her—his gaze wandered only a little more than hers, seemingly studying every inch of her face, mapping it carefully. For all that he was focusing intently, there was a distance in his eyes, and she felt her breath catch in her throat as though some terrible beast had sunk its claws deep within. Perhaps it had, for all her chest constricted and her heart thudded with a sudden, aching pain.

“When I’m gone,” she started, picking her words carefully, “will you remember me?”

The Doctor suddenly blinked as if torn from some sort of reverie, back to the present, and a terrible sadness slipped across his features. All at once, Sam found she regretted her question, but it was far too late to take it back, and the Doctor seemed to be lost in thought as he considered. Finally, in a quiet voice, he replied: “I wouldn’t let myself forget.”

The unspoken “*again*” forced her to dip her gaze from his, eyes burning with saltwater that was far from artificial. She knew she wasn’t the first, and she knew she wouldn’t be the last. As special as he made her feel, she was far from unique and that was simply the truth of it. She didn’t resent him for it, though—she had long since overcome such petty jealousy, quickly realising that to envy his companions of the past or the future would be to blame him for his loneliness, and she sure as hell didn’t have the heart for that. It was part and parcel of loving the Doctor, and being loved in return—to him, people like her were akin to shooting stars in the endless expanse of sky that stretched above them: bright, beautiful, but fleeting. A moment, a breath, an eyeblink in a lifespan that was so long as to be incomprehensible to someone as frighteningly mortal as her. But oh, what a privilege it was to exist by his side for so brief a time, to witness the universe as he saw it, to taste the adventure that dogged at his heels and swallow back the fear that reminded her of life in its most primal state. Maybe she didn’t matter, in the end. Maybe he’d lose interest in her eventually, and after she was gone, he’d find someone else and maybe they’d feel—just for the briefest of moments—wiser and kinder and far, far grander than they really were. The wheel would turn, the cycle would repeat, and he’d never really understand the difference he’d made. Or maybe, he’d forget. He told her once that there was a price for immortality, and she supposed that was it. One day, he just wouldn’t remember how important he’d made Samantha Angeline Jones feel, and the thought was in equal turns frightening and depressing.

“You are far, far more important to me than you could ever know.”

The voice startled her out of her quiet reflection, and she studied the face in front of her, crumpled in what could almost pass for agony, but she didn’t get to look for long, because suddenly she was being crushed into a hug, the Doctor’s strong arms winding round her, his fingers tangling in the sodden weight of her threadbare *Greenpeace* t-shirt. He buried his face in the crook of her neck, and as she held onto him just as tightly in return, she pretended not to hear the apologies he whispered in a broken, desperate mantra.

She was fairly certain they weren’t all for her.

It was unclear how long, exactly, they stood there—by the time they finally stirred, disentangling themselves from one another, the first light of dawn had begun to spill over the horizon, shot through with streaks of gold. She was puzzled at first, assuming she had slept much longer than she had originally thought, but the Doctor caught her eye, and the sheepish smile he offered her eased the confused knots from her brow.

“I haven’t quite worked out all the specifics of the day-night cycle yet,” he murmured, lifting a hand to pass it through his tangled mess of hair.

“Ah, it’s alright. I like it better this way!” she grinned at him, then let herself flop backwards, staring up into the gradually-brightening sky as the ocean currents gently rocked her to and fro. She may have been able to stare at the console room’s holograms for hours, but there was no substitute for the real thing—*well*, almost real, anyway. “We don’t have anywhere to be, right?”

She couldn’t see him from her position, and not even when she craned her neck to glance around, but she could tell by the shifting of the waters around her and the quiet splashes he made, that he was close by, probably swimming circles round her floating form. “I think the universe can get by for just one day without us, don’t you?”

A smirk slipped across her lips, and she felt as though she could drift off again—this time, perhaps, quite literally. “Mmm... I’d like to think so.” Then, suddenly, she pushed against the currents, swinging her legs down under her until she was bobbing precariously upright, a question on the tip of her tongue even as her eyes snapped open. “Doctor? Why in the TARDIS?”

He paused suddenly in the middle of what could only be described as his best goldfish impression, and wiggled his arms until he was roughly level with her again, an endearingly puzzled expression overtaking his features. “Why *what* in the TARDIS?”

“Well, you normally take me somewhere new for a bit of time off,” she stated quite matter-of-factly, flicking water in his direction even though she knew he’d duck away from it, “and there’s plenty of those leisure planets floating about. You hardly needed to go through all this trouble just for a little bit of relaxation.”

He splashed water at her in return, and she wasn’t quick enough to turn her head, getting a faceful of ocean spray as punishment for her utterly abysmal reaction times. “Well, no—but you’re always reminding me that trouble follows in my wake, and that I have a terrible penchant for getting us into scrapes and scuffles no matter where we go. I thought,” he paused here, scrunching up his nose, “I just thought that at least in *here* we’d be quite safe from whatever new troubles await us beyond the TARDIS doors.”

Sam found herself suddenly touched by his thoughtfulness—it was true enough that the last time they’d been on a leisure planet, things hadn’t exactly gone to plan. Hell, she’d almost ended up a bloody werewolf. Still, they’d managed to have good fun for the rest of their stay, lupine-related traumas aside... but she rather did get his point. No matter where or when they landed, he’d wander off and get stuck in the middle of some sort of government conspiracy or an ongoing alien incursion, and it’d be up to her to drag him back out by the ear. It was nice to not have to worry about that sort of stuff, and truly relax for once; no prickling feeling on the back of her neck, no measured glances round the room, just pure and simple bl— “Hey!”

The inflatable beach ball that had bounced off her face now lay, bobbing along quite innocently, a few feet from her. The culprit who had thrown it was not far off either, attempting to look similarly free of blame, with a smile so sweet it could've rotted her teeth. Oh, this was *war*.

The saltwater slid off her body, dripping noisily on the floor as she made her way through the hallway, a damp towel being kneaded gently between her hands. Part of her wondered why the TARDIS corridors stood in such contrast to the console room—where the latter was utterly archaic, all stone and wood and soft Persian rugs, the maze that was the former felt much more like she expected a time machine of its sophistication to be. Her gaze slipped along the dull metal walls, resting briefly on the roundels set into them at irregular intervals (what were those for, anyway?), everything stark and bare but almost clinically clean. She figured the stylistic disconnect had something to do with the state of constant flux the ship existed in, beyond that main room—with doorways never settled, and hallways twisting unexpectedly, it made sense that there was little clutter or decoration, lest sentimental objects fall prey to the TARDIS' depths following one of its architectural temper tantrums. She was still pondering this new revelation when the smooth metal of the hallway floor gave way to the dark hardwood flooring of the console room, and she was greeted by the sight of the Doctor hopping around the dais at the centre, pushing buttons and flicking switches seemingly at random.

"Hyspero!" he cried suddenly, and she wondered briefly if he was even aware she was in the room. He hadn't looked up from his frantic ministrations even once, his long fingers still working at an indecipherable keyboard and his brow furrowed in concentration.

"Hyspero?" Sam asked, tentatively, shuffling forward. The towel she had been absentmindedly scrunching up between her hands now hung limply, trailing on the floor, but she paid it no heed as the Doctor finally glanced up and away from the tiny scanner mounted in front of him. "What's Hyspero?"

"Ah... Sam, Sam, Sam!" He danced away from the six-sided console, coming to a wobbly stop in front of her. She noticed he was still wearing his swimsuit, but bizarrely, he'd tied his cravat neatly round his neck and his waistcoat flapped around, unbuttoned, but very much worn. "It's a desert planet, on the outer reaches of the universe—marvellous markets, a bit of a cultural hodgepodge, really. You could find anything your hearts desired there, or so I'm told."

The plural *hearts* didn't escape Sam's notice, and she smiled despite herself. "We're going shopping?" The question earned her an enthusiastic nod from the Doctor, and she stepped back slightly as the last vestiges of ocean water leapt from his hair at the motion, pattering on the floor to join her own rapidly-forming puddle.

"You know, some say—and I'm not quite sure I believe them, mind you—that Hyspero was the very planet that *invented* desire."

Sam blinked incredulously at this, then erupted into great peals of laughter, the dampened towel slipping from her hands and bundling on the floor, forgotten in her mirth. The Doctor didn't quite seem to get the joke, and truth be told, she wasn't sure she did either, but the bewildered expression his face, and the blush that had begun to creep up his cheeks, only made her laugh harder. "*Desire*? I always thought you were a bit too pure for that," she finally wheezed out, then lost it again.

The Doctor clasped and unclasped his hands, the confusion giving way to a gentle sort of concern as he

observed her, doubled over and crying with the hilarity of it all. He wracked his mind for a possible explanation for the delirium, before tentatively informing her: “Sam, I don’t wish to alarm you, but I think you might have heatstroke.”

No, not quite. She was just really, really happy.

Early mornings on the TARDIS still weren’t quiet times, they still weren’t really early, and they still weren’t really mornings. On this particular not-quite-morning, she was torn quite suddenly from her slumber by a door bursting open and a finger prodding gently at her forehead, cautiously, as if she were expected to bite. “Good morning, Ms Jones—will it be pancakes or croissants today? And how, pray tell, do you feel about pears?”

The sheer absurdity of this unexpected wake-up call didn’t escape her sleep-addled mind. The individual responsible was standing primly and properly by her bedside, a whisk clutched in one hand and a suspiciously scientific attachment in the other. His apron, splattered with pancake mix and garnished with raw egg, was on back-to-front, but she could faintly make out ‘KISS THE COOK’ inverted and overlaid in block capitals over his neatly buttoned waistcoat. His hair, wild and tangled as ever, was swept up off his brow, and he wore an expression that was halfway between charming and disconcerting.

“Making breakfast this morning, hm? Someone must be in a good mood.”

“A certain individual once told me that breakfast was the most important meal of the day,” his flour-dusted brow furrowed, “though I suspect he may have been lying to boost his cereal sales. Nevertheless, it’s early, I’m hungry, and we’ve got adventure ahead of us. I suspect we’ll need all the energy we can get.” He reached out with the whisk, patting the duvet where she lay under it, and flashed her what he often liked to call his ‘winning smile.’ Who the hell it was going to win over, she had no clue... but all the same, she felt her usual early-morning grumpiness wither away under its shameless intensity. Evidently, she wasn’t as immune to his charms as she liked to think.

As she swung her legs out of bed, and watched him amble off towards the doorway, she found she was suddenly arrested by a great amount of affection for this eccentric alien she had the privilege of calling her best friend—he was ridiculous, complicated, and just a little bit mad... but that was life with the Doctor summed up.

And honestly? She wouldn’t trade it for the world.

Time Enough And World

By Neo

[Part 1 of a 3-parter. Could work standalone I guess, but works much better with part 2.]

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“I’m old enough to know that a longer life isn’t always a better one. In the end, you just get tired. Tired of the struggle. Tired of losing everyone that matters to you. Tired of watching everything turn to dust. If you live long enough, the only certainty is that you’ll end up alone.”

- The Lazarus Experiment, Series 3, 2007

At St Luke’s University, the Twelfth Doctor and Bill sat beneath what was once a statue of a Monk.

“This is exciting, isn’t it?” said Bill. “You know, kind of, it’s like a turning point. Humans have learned that they can overthrow dictators and stuff. They just have to band together!”

“Well, it’s not quite as simple as that. You, appalling-hair,” said the Doctor, gesturing to a student walking by. The student looked up from her phone.

“This thing that we’re sitting on,” continued the Doctor, “what is it?”

“Uh, we thought that they were just like...filming something here or something?” she answered.

“Thank you, very helpful, now go away or something.”

She did.

“You see,” the Doctor said to Bill, “the Monks have erased themselves. Humanity’s doomed to never learn from its mistakes.”

“Well, I guess that’s part of our charm,” replied Bill.

“No, it’s really quite annoying. Anyway, I mustn’t keep you. Three thousand words. The Mechanics of Free Will. Now six months overdue.”

As the Doctor made to leave, Bill asked another question of him.

“Why do you put up with us then?”

“In amongst seven billion, there’s someone like you,” answered the Doctor. “That’s why I put up with the rest of

them.”

A week later, after Bill handed in her essay, the Doctor found another excuse for an adventure, and he, Bill, and Nardole were off together again.

“If you don’t mind me saying,” Nardole began to say, to a Doctor who very much minded, “something sounds a bit off with the TARDIS.”

“Oh the old girl’s fine, you just don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Actually...nah Doctor,” said Bill, “I think Nardole’s right, something does sound a bit funky with her.”

“Hm,” said the Doctor, fiddling with the console. “Perhaps the two of you are right. The temporal drift compensators do seem to be a tad-”

He was interrupted by an explosively loud bang, as sparks flew from the centre console, and the TARDIS suddenly grinded to a halt.

“Well, doesn’t that sound excellent!” yelled Nardole.

“Shut up,” barked the Doctor.

“What was that? Should we take a look outside?” said Bill.

“Hm...readings indicate whatever’s outside, it’s perfectly safe. But that really should not have happened.

Nardole, I volunteer you to go...check it out.”

“What me, be your guinea pig?”

“Quite right.”

Nardole rolled his eyes, mumbled under his breath, but did indeed exit the TARDIS doors.

“Ooh!” Nardole exclaimed after making his way outside.

“Doctor, I think we should follow him.”

“Well, he does seem to have survived. For better or worse. Oh, alright then.”

The Doctor and Bill joined Nardole, in what turned out to be a vast, empty white room.

“I couldn’t possibly put a price on the TARDIS monsieur, it’s my home! Complete with temporal drift compensators that appear to be on the blink...”

The Eighth Doctor was bargaining with Monsieur Christian De Roche at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, 1851. It wouldn’t be long now until he was reunited with his two companions Charley and C’rizz.

“Everything has its price, Doctor,” replied De Roche.

“The Duke of Wellington has been looking for you; I believe that you’re needed downstairs rather urgently,” said the Doctor.

“Christian,” exclaimed De Roche’s wife, the lady Madeline, “we mustn’t keep the Duke waiting! Au revoir, Doctor.”

“Au revoir! And be careful you don’t bump into anything on the way, you might set it off by accident.”

Right on time, C’rizz sauntered over, as the De Roches left.

“What are those two looking at?” C’rizz asked the Doctor.

“Probably...you, C’rizz.”

Charley was walking over to the Doctor now, the three of them back together at last.

“Hm, you’ve put a bit of weight on since I last saw you Charley!” The Doctor merely referred to the body-swapping antics of this latest adventure, of course.

“Oh!” gasped Charley in mock shock. “Be off with you, my good man. You have a lot of explaining to do.”

“Oh dear...” murmured the Doctor, as he walked towards the TARDIS.

“Well, C’rizz, that was 1851!” said Charley, beaming.

“Hmm...freakish,” replied C’rizz, very much not beaming.

The two of them followed the Doctor as he unlocked the TARDIS doors and walked in.

“Where to this time? Shall we ask our resident Edwardian adventuress?” asked C’rizz, trying to muster up some enthusiasm.

“What a splendid idea!” said both the Doctor and Charley together.

The Doctor fiddled with the console, launching them into the time vortex as Charley rattled off a list of places she was interested in visiting, while C’rizz shot down each one with typical sarcasm.

The two of them were interrupted by an explosively loud bang, as sparks flew from the centre console, and the TARDIS suddenly grinded to a halt.

“That doesn’t sound good,” said C’rizz.

“Indeed C’rizz, I rather think you’re right,” replied the Doctor, moving around the console.

“What an awful racket that was!” said Charley.

“Seems it was those temporal drift compensators after all,” murmured the Doctor. “Really ought to have checked those before I took off...”

“I do wonder where we landed, what a mystery,” mused Charley.

“Well, we could always...check,” said C’rizz.

“Are you volunteering, C’rizz?” smiled the Doctor.

“Ah...well...suppose I don’t see the harm.”

“I’m only teasing! The TARDIS certainly seems to think it’s safe. We’ll all go out together!”

“Not sure we’ll fit through the doors...” said C’rizz.

“How dare you!” said Charley.

The Doctor laughed, and the three of them proceeded to exit the TARDIS in single file, to what turned out to be a vast, empty white room.

The Twelfth Doctor had been berating Nardole, when Bill had suddenly hushed them, as she began to inexplicably hear the sound of a TARDIS materialising. Sure enough, a TARDIS - his TARDIS, though not in the same state it was now - materialised, at the other end of the room that now wasn’t quite so empty.

“What’s going on Doctor?” asked Bill.

“I have a feeling we’ll find out very soon,” said Nardole.

Sure enough, out of the new - well, old - TARDIS walked the Eighth Doctor, Charley, and C’rizz.

“Yes, I suspect this will require a great deal of explanation,” muttered the Twelfth Doctor.

“Another TARDIS!” exclaimed the Eighth Doctor, sauntering over to his future self excitedly. “Charley, C’rizz, I have the great honour of introducing what I expect to be one of my future selves!”

“Oh, so yours already understand regeneration, how convenient for you,” the Twelfth Doctor complained, but then the Eighth Doctor was clasping his hand in both of his, beaming at him, and he couldn’t help but smile a little at his enthusiasm.

“Uh, can someone please explain what’s going on?” asked a very confused Bill.

“Well,” replied Nardole, “it’s like what you saw on the Monks’ prison boat innit? Big glowly gold explosion? That’s him regenerating, that is. When a Time Lord like him dies, they pop back up with another face, another personality. Just my luck, the one I get saddled with...”

“Glowly gold explosion?” asked the Eighth Doctor. “I don’t know all about that, but your friend is spot on on everything else, miss...?”

“Bill. Ah, Potts. Bill Potts.”

“Pleasure to meet you miss Bill Potts Bill Potts!

Bill laughed nervously, but the Eighth Doctor embraced her in a hug before he had a chance to see her confused expression.

Charley and C’rizz made their way over to the conversation, a bit slower than their Doctor as they hadn’t immediately ran over in joy.

“A new you then, Doctor?” asked C’rizz, looking at the Twelfth Doctor.

“Yes, yes! Oh how terribly rude I’ve been, let me make introductions. Doctor, whichever number you are, these are my companions. Charley Pollard, Edward adventuress extraordinaire, and C’rizz, a Eutermesan from a universe far from our own. Charley, C’rizz, this is Bill-”

“Just Bill,” jumped in Bill quickly.

“And he’s Nardole,” said the Twelfth Doctor, gesturing towards Nardole. “Irritating butler extraordinaire.”

“Oi!” exclaimed Nardole.

“I say, I rather like your jacket!” said Charley to Bill.

“What, really?” grinned Bill. The two of them began to chatter away happily.

“I knew someone with a rather similar one, once,” remarked the Eighth Doctor, to no one in particular.

“Yeah, well, so did I!” said the Twelfth Doctor quickly.

“That would go without saying, would it not?” asked C’rizz.

“Well, I’m not going to let this pudding brain here take the credit for everything,” said the Twelfth Doctor.

“Pudding brain?” laughed the Eighth Doctor. “Did you just call me a...pudding brain?”

“Ooh, pudding? Remember Mrs. Baddeley’s plum puddings Doctor?” said Charley, breaking away from her conversation with Bill.

“Yes,” answered the Eighth Doctor.

“Wouldn’t you remember that too, erm, Doctor?” C’rizz asked the Twelfth Doctor.

“No. Well, yes. Kind of. It was a great deal of time ago, you understand? The details fade. You wouldn’t believe how long it’s been...”

“Ooh, what’s coming up for me?” asked the Eighth Doctor.

The Twelfth Doctor hesitated and didn’t meet the Eighth Doctor’s eyes, but the Eighth Doctor had already distracted himself by examining the newer TARDIS.

“Actually, you know what,” said the Twelfth Doctor to C’rizz, “I can remember! I can remember perfectly! Charley! Plum puddings! Edward Grove!”

“Ooh, how delightful!” piped up Charley, enjoying the novelty of the situation.

“That’s strange Doctor,” said Nardole, furrowing non-existent eyebrows. “You don’t usually recall things that long ago so easily.”

“It’s...it’s...ah,” the Twelfth Doctor muttered, spinning around, holding a hand to his forehead.

“Doctor? You alright?” asked Bill, making her way over to him.

“Oh, cheer up,” said the Eighth Doctor to his future self. “You must know by now that when more than one of us get together some strangeness can result. Time differential shorting out, memories going a bit haywire, the TARDIS-”

“Shut up, no, it’s not that,” said the Twelfth Doctor. “It feels...different this time. Almost like when I was... when I was...the Confession Dial...”

“Doctor...” hesitated Nardole.

“No, it really is. All those lives, all those memories, all those nightmares, swirling around me. My own bespoke torture chamber. A world designed to suck the bad dreams from your mind and feed them back to you, again and again, things hung around you see...like billions of years of memories fizzling around in the air around you. Trapped in the Wi-Fi of memories...”

“Wi-Fi?” asked Charley.

“Nightmares?” asked Bill.

“Torture chamber?” asked C’rizz.

“Memories fizzing around?” asked Nardole.

“Billions of years?” asked the Eighth Doctor.

Before the Twelfth Doctor could reply, all four companions vanished.

The Eighth Doctor yelped, the Twelfth Doctor started, and both of them whipped out their sonic screwdrivers and began to scan the room.

“Safe,” sighed the Twelfth Doctor, relieved. “They’re safe.”

“Indeed,” replied the Eighth Doctor. “They seem to have been transferred right back to where we last left them,

just a few hours later. Shouldn't be any problem to just go and pick them right back up!"

"Yes, well, pleasure seeing you again and all," said the Twelfth Doctor, "but I'm off to do just that. Duty of care, you understand."

"Oh, quite right."

The Eighth Doctor made to stick out his hand for the Twelfth Doctor to shake, but was interrupted by a vision suddenly overtaking his mind.

He saw himself, not with his current face, or his face before that, but his very first face. He was picking up a rock, quite ready to murder a cavemen slowing down himself, his granddaughter, Ian, and Barbara.

"What are you doing?" asked Ian with disgust.

"Well," he had stammered, "I was going to get him to draw our way back to the TARDIS."

Ian returned the Doctor's excuse with a long, withering stare.

Then Ian and Barbara melted away, and while he was still looking at Susan, she wasn't accompanied by the First Doctor, but by...by him, the Eighth Doctor. In his future.

"Grandfather..." she had said. She would say.

"Do you remember that time," he said, so long into the future, "long, long time ago, we were escaping from a bunch of murderous cavemen. You, me, Ian, Barbara. And that wounded man was holding us up - remember that? And for one moment, just...I entertained the possibility...I picked up a rock..."

"But you didn't do it, did you? You didn't kill that man."

"Only because Chesteron stopped me. Direct action, that's what that was. Maybe I should be more like that now. Maybe I've gone soft."

Then he was jolted back to the white room, with a future self that didn't wear his own face.

The Twelfth Doctor eyed the Eighth Doctor.

"You saw that too?" he asked.

"It...you said before, memories fizzling around you, like Wi-Fi in the air...I understand you now. It...it's my future, but I can see it, I can remember it...oh...oh..."

The Eighth Doctor collapsed to his knees. The Twelfth Doctor walked over to him and awkwardly patted his shoulders.

"I know. Believe me...I know."

Then the two of them were overtaken by another vision, the memories in the air burrowing into their minds.

The Eighth Doctor saw the Fourth Doctor, surrounded by Sarah Jane and Harry, so long ago. They were on Skaro. This day had already come up again in his life before.

"What are you waiting for?" yelled Sarah Jane.

"Just touch these two strands together and the Daleks are finished," said the Fourth Doctor. "Have I that right?"

"To destroy the Daleks? You can't doubt it."

"Well, I do. You see, some things could be better with the Daleks. Many future worlds will become allies just because of their fear of the Daleks."

"But it isn't like that."

"But the final responsibility is mine, and mine alone. Listen, if someone who knew the future pointed out a child

to you, and told you that that child would grow up totally evil, to be a ruthless dictator who would destroy millions of lives, could you then kill that child?"

"We're talking about the Daleks!" exclaimed Sarah Jane. "The most evil creatures ever invented! You must destroy them. You must complete your mission for the Time Lords."

"Do I have that right? Simply touch one wire against the other and that's it. The Daleks cease to exist. Hundreds of millions of people, thousands of generations can live without fear, in peace, and never even know the word Dalek."

"Then why wait? If it was a disease or some sort of bacteria you were destroying, you wouldn't hesitate."

"But if I kill, wipe out a whole intelligent lifeform, then I become like them. I'd be no better than the Daleks."

The vision shifted, still in the past but now in his, the Eighth Doctor's past, when he'd confronted Davros soon after exiting the Divergent Universe with Charley and C'rizz.

"At least you will have a home to return to, Doctor," Davros had said.

"True," he had replied.

"You feel no guilt or shame at the atrocity you committed?"

"You mean destroying Skaro? You reckon I should be wallowing in angst or something? 'Did I have the right,' yadda, yadda, yadda - I had the right! I've seen what the Daleks are capable of! I had the right to destroy them." Then the vision jolted forward again, still of his face, but in his personal future, back around the time he saw his granddaughter again. He was confronting the Dalek Time Controller.

"Did you know I once had the chance to avert your creation?" he would say.

"Evidently you failed," the Dalek Time controller would reply.

"No, I hesitated. I thought I could claim the moral high ground, and I let the Daleks live."

"You lacked the courage."

"Yes, yes, I did - but you listen to me. You better hope you don't give me one single chance to escape, because I will take it. No matter what, I'll take it, and I will go back in time, and I will wipe the Daleks from the face of history."

Then his mind was pulled back into the present, the white room. He began to weep, silently.

The Twelfth Doctor paced around the room.

"Who's doing this?" he asked. "The visions, they're too direct, too coordinated to just be a natural consequence our memories dispersing through the room. No, this is planned, controlled."

"Who would do such a thing?" moaned the Eighth Doctor.

"Hm...more than one of us together, visions of pasts and futures projected around us...it reminds me very much of a certain day on Gallifrey. There were three of us then - neither actually you or me, mind you, just most of the ones in-between."

In this room, with his memories fizzling all around him, and so long after the actual event had taken place, the

Twelfth Doctor could remember the Moment, the Bad Wolf, projecting herself to him. And, dimly, he could remember, almost remember, other timelines with her, alternate lives, different timestreams, roads not taken. “There’s this woman. Well, I say woman, more of a...weapon? God? It’s complicated. Shut up. Anyway, I think she could play around with our timelines. For our own benefit, ostensibly. This might just be that. Ultimately harmless, just a projection to try and get us to come to some greater understanding. You’ll forget it after we part ways anyway.”

“Well, I’m certainly good at that,” said the Eighth Doctor glumly. “But you don’t sound convinced.”

“No. Well, it’s perfectly possible. Could be harmless. But...you see, I just had an encounter with some very nasty aliens, the Monks we called them. They delighted in manipulating memories, stories, contexts. My companions and I, we beat them pretty soundly, but I suppose...it’s possible they eventually honed their techniques even further, and this is another sick game of theirs.”

“Sick game?”

“Well, we might not even be rea-uh, that is, well...”

“There’s no point hiding anything, I’m sure I could tap into your memories buzzing around the air too if I tried hard enough.”

“Right. Yes. Well, these Monks, once they created this Shadow World, this simulated Earth, complete with a simulated me, simulated TARDIS, simulated companions. They were testing the best way to conquer the Earth, defeat everyone, you understand. When people realised they were just simulations, they, well, they killed themselves.”

“How could they tell? How did they find out? How do we find out?”

Before the Twelfth Doctor could answer, they were both struck with another vision.

“Why were you smiling?”

“Was I? No I wasn’t.”

The Twelfth Doctor and Clara were in the TARDIS. It was early days for him. He was so unsure of himself, so angry, so self-loathing.

“You were smiling at nothing. I’d almost say you were in love, but to be honest...”

“Honest?”

“...you’re not a young woman any more.”

“Yes, I am!”

“Well you don’t look it.”

“I do look it.”

“Oh that’s right, keep your spirits up. Clara, Clara, Clara...I need something from you. I need the truth.”

“Okay. Right, what is it?”

They sat on the steps near the console together.

"You're scared," said Clara, surprised.

"I'm terrified," he replied.

"Of what?"

"The answer to my next question, which must be honest and cold and considered, without kindness or restraint. Clara, be my pal and tell me - am I a good man?"

"I...don't know."

"Keep away!"

Charley didn't pay any mind to the Doctor - what looked like the Doctor, at least - said, and walked over to him.

"Doctor! Doctor, it is you! Is this the TARDIS? I mean, what's happened? It's all been like a dream...I found myself here, when I was last in the Time Station with those awful Neverpeople, and...oh Doctor, come on, let me help you."

"I said keep away!"

"Oh! Doctor, what's wrong? Have you been injured or something?"

"Injured? No, I have not been injured. This TARDIS contained all of the Time Station when it exploded. This ship was filled to bursting with a great mass of the fiercest, fizzing energy."

"What, Anti-Time?"

"A crude term for such a matter of life and death. But now that the breach is resolved, now that the problem of you is resolved...well, all that remains of that stuff in this whole reality is held...in here."

"What, in the TARDIS?"

"No. In...here..."

"Y-you're scaring me now. Stop it, Doctor, please-"

"'Doctor?' 'Doctor?'" I hold the last vestiges of the most awesome power ever imagined. Imagined, yes! How much better if I should take my title from a work of imagination, a creature willed to power by the undying anger of an unreal race!"

"Doctor, I haven't got the faintest idea what you're on about, but I really think you need help, so if you'll just let me-"

The Eighth Doctor slapped Charley hard across her face. She screamed, and fell to the floor.

"Doctor, Doctor, what's wrong with you?"

"I told you girl, I AM NOT THE DOCTOR! I am become he who sits inside your head, he who lives among the dead, he who sees you in your bed, and eats you when you're sleeping. I am become...ZAGREUS!"

“That’s when I remember! Always then, always then, always exactly then! I can’t keep doing this Clara, I can’t! Why is it always me? Why is it never anybody else’s turn? Can’t I just lose? Just this once? Easy…it would be so easy. Just tell them. Just tell them, whoever wants to know, all about the Hybrid. I can’t keep doing this. I can’t! I can’t always do this!” It’s not fair! Clara, it’s just not fair! Why can’t I just lose?”

In his own bespoke torture chamber, the Twelfth Doctor raged against the billions of years of trauma swimming through his mind, buzzing through the air, the Wi-Fi of nightmares.

“I can remember Clara…you don’t understand, I can remember it all. Every time. And you’ll still be gone. Whatever I do, you still won’t be there.”

The vision blurred, jumping back, doubling forward. There was so much concentrated pain here. Presumably, it was difficult for whoever was directing the vision - the Bad Wolf, the Monks, someone else, whoever it was - to maintain the project perfectly linearly. The vision of the Confession Dial broke off, and another vision took its place.

“Lights! That’s better, now we can see-” started the Eighth Doctor.

“Oh, turn them back off!” groaned Samson Griffin.

“Samson,” the Doctor laughed, “oh dear, someone’s looking a bit green.”

“Bless, my brother the lightweight,” said Gemma Griffin.

“Oh ssh, you’re both very lovely people, but please…ssh.”

“What a party though, it was just…oh, I’m actually lost for words!” said Gemma.

“Really?” asked the Doctor. “You? They know to have fun on Valuensis; best birthday I’ve had in centuries! Oh and thank you both for the present, first edition too.” He drummed his fingers over the Agatha Christie novel he’d received from them as a birthday gift.

“You haven’t read it already?” asked Gemma.

“Not…as far as I can remember,” the Doctor replied. “Of course, Agatha travelled with me for a while. Lovely woman, but always looking for clues. You couldn’t eat your breakfast without her noticing which hand you buttered your toast with.”

“Surely you’d use a knife?” offered Samson.

The Doctor smiled, but Samson staggered, and clutched his stomach.

“Oh Doctor, don’t you have some kind of magic space pill to stop my stomach swirling so much?”

“Magic space pill?” the Doctor laughed. “No, no Samson, the hangover is part of the experience.”

“That’s easy for you to say, you don’t have one!”

“Well that’s my magic space physiology!”

The TARDIS console began to beep persistently.

“Something wrong?” asked Gemma.

“What? Ah, I’m sure it’s nothing,” dismissed the Doctor. “The TARDIS has found something in the vortex.”

“So not nothing then?” remarked Samson. “What is it?”

“See for yourself,” said the Doctor, and opened the TARDIS doors.

“A spaceship!” exclaimed Gemma.

“Nothing gets past you, does it!” said Samson.

“Now, now, children,” said the Doctor, “looks like it’s been in the wars that one. What do you think - explore? Or ignore?”

“Explore!” said Gemma.

“Oh, whatever,” said Samson.

Preparations followed.

“You both suited and booted?” asked the Doctor.

“Check!”

“Let’s stick together, and...actually, I had best come along too.”

“Honestly, Doctor,” started Samson, “we’ll be fine. You stay and read your book. We’ll be back before Monsieur Hercule Poirot has found the killer.”

“Alright, well be careful. Gemma, I’m looking at you when I say that!”

“Oh, yes dad!”

“Dad,” muttered the Doctor, walking to the TARDIS console as the siblings ventured out, “I’d rather be the cool uncle.”

He paced around with his book.

“Now, where was I?” he said, flipping the pages. “Ah yes, chapter three - The Man Who Grew Vegetable Marrow.”

The visions splintered and jolted back to the Twelfth Doctor, like it couldn’t stay on either of them too long.

The Confession Dial again. Endless pain.

“People always get it wrong with the Time Lords. We take forever to die. Even if we’re too injured to regenerate, every cell in our bodies keeps trying. Dying properly can take days. That’s why we like to die among our own kind...they know not to bury us early.”

The rest of his words swam by him, and then there he was, electrocuting himself again, dying by his hand to birth himself anew.

“How long can I keep doing this, Clara? Burning the old me, to make a new one?”

Four and a half billion years.

"I'm stumped!" exclaimed the Eighth Doctor to himself. "I mean, the girl and her mother are obviously red herrings, and I'm fairly sure the butler didn't do it...ah, ha, oh Agatha, it couldn't be...not him!"

Footsteps sounded in the TARDIS.

"Oh, you're back, how was it?" asked the Doctor, turning around to face the Griffins.

"Dark," replied Davros, "but it's going to get darker."

"What have you done to them?" the Doctor demanded.

"I felt it was time *I* had companions, Doctor."

"Samson, Gemma, can you hear me?"

"Doctor," Davros continued, "can you hear me?"

"I remember...I remember what you did to me...to us..."

"You remember our destiny?"

Time swayed, one conversation with Davros bleeding into another.

"I was alone! The force of the explosion sending my escape pod hurtling into the vortex. I screamed as the time winds ravaged through the pod, then through me. I saw the past, the present, the future, I saw destiny. And then..."

Davros went on to detail his schemes around a ship floating in the time vortex. The same ship the Griffins then went off to explore, alone. He went on to describe how he'd hurt them, brainwashed them, operated on them.

"With you unconscious," Davros went on, "and your companions in my thrall, I was able to operate-"

"My TARDIS," said the Doctor, realising.

"Operate on your TARDIS," corrected Davros, "and on your companions."

Davros had violated Gemma, violated Samson, violated the TARDIS.

"I wanted more than just your death. I wanted to break you. I wanted to take everything you held precious and violate it."

And he had.

The Doctor awoke with no memory of the encounter, noticed some vortisaurs in the vortex, and went off to have his first (in a sense) adventure with Charley. But it felt spoiled now, tainted, coming off the back of two of his companions being stolen, violated. In the fight with Davros and his Daleks that followed, Gemma died, and Samson would never be the same. It wasn't the first time the Doctor ruined the lives of his companions, and it was far from the last.

"Well, if Danny Pink can do it, so can I."

"Do what?"

"Die right. Die like I mean it. Face the Raven."

Clara was going to die. It was all his fault. The Twelfth Doctor couldn't take it.

"Not. This isn't happening. This can't be happening."

“Maybe this is what I wanted. Maybe this is it. Maybe this is why I kept running. Maybe this is why I kept taking all those stupid risks. Kept pushing it.”

“This is my fault.”

More words. They changed nothing.

Clara stepped out into the street.

“Let me be brave. Let me be brave.”

The Raven flew, and Clara died.

The Divergent Universe. Cut off from time. The Eighth Doctor hated it all, hated where he saw, who he was now, who was with him.

“This shouldn’t be how it ends. I should have had the universe to explore. Or death. One or the other, that’s all I wanted, and it’s your fault,” he said to Charley.

“Doctor!” she gasped.

“If it weren’t for you, I’d be dead or alive, not this halfway point. If it weren’t for you - WHY ARE YOU HERE, CHARLEY?”

“But I don’t-”

“WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?”

“What do you want from me? You’re the one who rescued me in the first place. You were the one who took me aboard your TARDIS. What did you do it for? If I have so obviously ruined everything for you, if you really think that...why did you bother?”

“It’s a good question. You will have realised, of course, that you’re not really the only human who has travelled with me in the TARDIS.”

“Yes, well, I hardly expected to be your first.”

“The Time Lords often wondered why I bothered. After all, we are capable of living for thousands of years, you can barely reach a hundred. And they came up with a theory, do you want to know what it is?”

“You need friendship, companionship. You must get lonely travelling the universe with no one to share it with.”

“They thought you were all memento mori.”

“What?”

“Reminders of death. Quite common things, really. On medieval Earth, courtiers would often keep skulls on their mantelpieces. They were very much the in thing. No matter how powerful you were, death was inevitable. You still had to remember your morality. And Time Lords need to remember all the more. I denied that was the reason, of course. And, as you said, friendship, companionship. But over the years, over my many lifetimes, as my friends all left me, one by one, I began to wonder whether they really might have had a point after all. Especially when I found you, Charley. A companion who was already dead. The ultimate Time Lord fashion accessory.”

The Doctor was on Gallifrey, again. He'd come the long way 'round.

Rassilon was in charge of Gallifrey, again.

The Doctor could not hear it, but in the Capitol, Rassilon, more god than Time Lord according to some, and Ohila, ancient of the Sisterhood of Karn according to all, exchanged barbed words.

"What is he doing?" asked Rassilon, wondering at the Doctor's antics, standing squarely out in the Gallifreyan sands with the Shabogans, refusing to answer his fellow Time Lords. "What does he want? Revenge?"

"The Doctor does not blame Gallifrey for the horrors of the Time War," said Ohila.

"I should hope not," said Rassilon.

"He just blames you."

When Rassilon came to the Doctor, the Doctor was not welcoming.

"Get off my planet," he said.

"We needed to know. You have information about the Hybrid. A danger to all of us. If you'd told us what you knew, you could have walked out of there."

"Get off my planet."

"You have nothing, Doctor. Nothing! Do you know what I have, out here in the Drylands, where there's nobody who matters? No witnesses."

Nothing had changed. For all the Doctor had done, for all his saving of Gallifrey, nothing had changed.

Lucie had died. Tamsin had died. His great-grandson Alex had died. Yet he, the Eighth Doctor, lived on.

"The Dalek warp motor drive is breached," he said despondently. "It's sucking everything in, crushing it into a singularity."

"Will it destroy the Earth?" asked Susan

"No, its power shouldn't last that long. But it will be enough to destroy the Daleks. Their entire fleet. And us."

"You saved the universe grandfather."

"You're lucky Susan. Lucky I left you behind. I've seen so many people die. I've got used to it. I just move on. But today feels like a different day. One lost life too many. Today I just want to say 'enough'. I'm sorry you had to die too Susan."

"Although you are currently conscious and aware, in fact, you died billions of years ago", said the General, in an

Extraction Chamber.

For all his efforts, he still wasn't there. Clara wasn't properly alive.

"Doctor?" Clara asked.

"We have extracted you at the very end of your timestream to request your help," the General continued. "Once we're finished here, you will be returned to your final moments. Your death is an established historical event and cannot be altered. I'm sorry."

"Doctor, will you just talk to me!"

"I'll try not to break your jaw," said the Doctor.

"My jaw?" asked Clara.

"I wasn't talking to you," he replied, before punching the General and snatching his sidearm. He brought the weapon up and aimed it squarely at the General.

"Doctor, you can't do this," he said. "You know you can't."

"No, General, I don't know that. Everybody, stay exactly where you are! No moving about. On pain of death, no one take a selfie!"

"These people are unarmed," said the General, looking at the other Time Lords with them in the Extraction Chamber.

"So are you," the Doctor replied.

"Doctor, I will not let you leave here. That's the sidearm of the President's personal security. There isn't a stun setting."

"I will not let Clara die."

"She's been dead for half the lifetime of the universe. If you tried to change that, you could fracture Time itself. Doctor, Lord President, are you really going to take that risk?"

"Doctor," said Clara, "please, I don't want this. Put it down, please."

"Regeneration?" the Doctor asked the General.

"Tenth," the General replied, resigned.

The Doctor shot him.

The Eighth Doctor raged against the universe. Lucie, Tamsin, Alex, all dead. Fellow Time Lord Straxus, of the Celestial Intervention Agency, had intercepted the movement of his TARDIS to the end of the universe, but he couldn't hold him for long.

"Was it Susan? Hm? Did she betray me?" asked the Doctor, wondering how Straxus had found him.

"Betray you? Oh, she loves you Doctor, you must know that," replied Straxus.

"So much for love Straxus, what did love ever do for Susan? Or Lucie? It left them grieving or dead. Because the universe, in its infinite wisdom, gives way to creatures like the Daleks."

"You blame the universe?"

“Well then who, what, who’s to blame?”

“So you set course for the end of everything...did you really think we wouldn’t notice a TARDIS tearing through the vortex, heading to a time and place beyond all that we forbid?”

“You forbid us from seeing the ultimate end of the universe - why?”

“That knowledge is forbidden. Why did you want to go there?”

Straxus felt he already knew why the Doctor was heading there.

Suicide.

“You know, I never thought that was possible - ‘dying well’. Who wants to die well? Surely the aim should be not dying well?”

The Twelfth Doctor strolled into the room in Coal Hill where some strange teenagers, a strange woman, and a stranger alien faced each other.

“You,” said Quill.

“You, said Charlie.

“Who?” asked April.

“Who? Who?” asked Tanya.

The Doctor dealt with the alien, Corakinus of the Shadowkin. Same old problems, same old genocides. The Time War might have ended, but did anything ever change?

Eventually he dealt with the teenagers too, best he could, but this lot were not fit to be companions, and Coal Hill was so empty. It was so long since he’d seen Ian. The hole in his memories...he knew there was so much he’d lost to this school, beyond even Ian, Barbara, his granddaughter. Time had marched on, and he was alone.

“Are you alright?” Liv asked the Eighth Doctor.

Liv was his newest companion. His other new companion, Molly, had died. Like so many others.

“I’d hoped, somehow, if the Dalek Time Controller could survive throughout history, then why couldn’t Molly?” asked the Doctor.

They exchanged further words.

“What about the Dalek Supreme?” asked Liv.

“Dalek Supreme, Dalek Emperor, Dalek Time Controller - doesn’t matter which of them thinks it’s in charge, the Daleks are always slaves to their own hatred. They’ll never stop.”

“Which of you is human?” asked Jorj, the blue man, frantically.

The Twelfth Doctor, Missy, Bill, and Nardole were on a massive colony ship near a black hole. It was a test run for Missy. The Doctor hoped very much things would go well.

Currently, things were a bit rocky. The lift with some manner of threat was coming up, and tensions were rising.

“Me,” answered Bill, “me, me, I’m human. I’m the only one. Just, just me.”

“Please stop this,” said the Doctor. “Stop right there, now.”

“I’m sorry,” said Jorj. “I’m so sorry, but you’re the reason that they’re coming.”

“Put it down. Put that down now,” said the Doctor.

“They won’t come if she’s dead,” said Jorj.

“You don’t need to do this,” pleaded the Doctor. “I can get her off this ship. I can shield her life signs.”

“You know what Doctor?” said Bill. “I said this was a bad idea.”

“Please, listen to me,” the Doctor continued, “look at me, go on, look at me. That’s good. That’s very, very good. Now, do you see this mad woman sitting in this chair? Her name isn’t Doctor Who. My name is Doctor Who.”

“It’s not, is it” piped Nardole.

“I like it,” said the Doctor. “You don’t know it yet, but in a short time, you will trust me with your life. And when I save you and everyone on your ship, one day you will look back, and wonder who I was, and why I did it.”

The lift arrived. Jorj fired the weapon at Bill. A great hole burned through her chest. She fell to the ground. Again. He’d failed them, again. All he brought was death.

The Time War raged. Nothing the Eighth Doctor did helped. The universe was bleeding. At one point, he found himself thrust back into his own past, his own face, but so much younger. The younger him, Mary Shelley, and all their friends, they’d seen him as a monster, it had all played just like he was Frankenstein’s monster.

“This happened before didn’t it?” he said, the future him. “The other way round? I was you. And now, I’m-”

“The other one,” his younger self said. “Yes.”

“It’s all coming back to me. The temporal storm. The Villa Diodati. And you. No, don’t tell me - aren’t you with Samson and Gemma at the moment? Didn’t you abandon them in Vienna?”

Didn’t you abandon them? The question resounded in his head. He wasn’t just the monster of Mary’s story. He was the monster of his own.

A Mondasian Cyberman zapped the Twelfth Doctor. Finally, one blow too many. He’d appealed so hard to

Missy. He'd felt the knife in her hand. He had so much hope she would pull through, that she'd turn good. But she never came.

"Ah hello, I'm the Doctor," he said to the Cyberman.

"Doctors are not required," the Cyberman replied.

"No, no, I'm not *a* Doctor. I am *the* Doctor. The original, you might say."

The Cyberman said nothing, but zapped him again. So much pain.

"Doctor, Doctor," he said to himself. "Let it go. Time enough."

He raised his sonic screwdriver and detonated the massive explosion of that floor of the colony ship. He was already dying, what was one blast more?

He was on the ground, surrounded by fire. There were only flames above. Trapped.

"Pity," he muttered with what life he had left, "no stars. I hoped there'd be stars."

The Eighth Doctor's life had always been a tangle in time, but towards the end of the Time War, it became an impossible mess. Was it he who used the Moment? Was the Moment used at all? Was the Moment a de-mat gun, was it an ancient sentient box, was it just a vital period in spacetime?

In his conscious mind back in the white room, the Eighth Doctor wondered about what his older self had said, of the Bad Wolf, the godhead who toyed with his lives, with his timestream. Perhaps this was her work. Or perhaps it was a false reality projection from the Monks, perhaps none of it was real. The only thing he was sure of was the pain.

In this vision, at least, he was indeed the one to use the Moment. Full of self-loathing, he did what he'd taunted Davros about doing, what he'd threatened the Dalek Time Controller with doing, and committed genocide, except not of one race, but of two, including his own.

The only saving grace was that he regenerated in the process, and didn't have to live with his face, his mind, himself anymore.

The Twelfth Doctor's mind reeled. He'd regenerated so many times that he was instinctually regurgitating last words he'd said before. Eventually he came to just repeating "no, no, no," as he'd done at the end of his second face, except this time he did manage to stall the regeneration.

The TARDIS stopped, just as he did.

"Where have you taken me? If you're trying to make a point, I'm not listening. I don't want to change again. Never again! I can't keep on being somebody else."

The white room. Both Doctors staggered around, then collapsed to the floor.

“Was it real? Are we real?” asked the Eighth Doctor. There was no hint of the enthusiasm, joy, exuberance that had lit up his face mere hours ago.

“Who knows?” replied the Twelfth Doctor. “We’re all stories in the end.”

They didn’t look at each other. They didn’t look at anything in particular, their thousand-yard stares revealing little else than now numb they both felt.

Then, in unison, they both spoke at once.

“Time enough.”

The Doctor Rises

By Neo

[Part 2 of a 3-parter. Could work standalone I guess, but works much better with part 1.]

“Time! Time doesn’t pass. The passage of time is an illusion, and life is the magician.

Because life only lets you see one day at a time. You remember being alive yesterday, and you hope you’re going to be alive tomorrow, so it feels like you’re travelling from one to the other. But nobody’s moving anywhere.

Movies don’t really move. They’re just pictures, lots and lots of pictures. All of them still, none of them moving.

Just frozen moments. But if you experience those pictures one after the other, then everything comes alive.

Imagine if time all happened at once. Every moment of your life laid out around you like a city. Streets full of buildings made of days. The day you were born, the day you die. The day you fall in love, the day that love ends.

A whole city built from triumph and heartbreak and boredom and laughter and cutting your toenails. It’s the best place you will ever be.

Time is a structure relative to ourselves. Time is the space made by our lives where we stand together, forever.

Time and relative dimension in space. It means life.”

- The Pilot, Series 10, 2017

The Twelfth Doctor was noodling on his guitar in the TARDIS when the TARDIS doors opened, and Clara walked in.

“Hey! Hello?”

“Oh, hello, hi!”

“Did you miss me?” asked Clara brightly.

“Be more specific,” said the Doctor, “who are you?”

“Ha ha - I’ve got a present for you!”

The two of them bantered for a while.

“So, where are you going to take me?” asked Clara.

“Wherever you want,” said the Doctor, earnestly.

“Hm...somewhere, somewhere magical. Somewhere new.”

“Ah, there is nothing new under the sun...above it, on the other hand...”

Clara hugged the Doctor, and he dematerialised the TARDIS into the time vortex, off for the next adventure.

“Sounds a bit different, doesn’t she?” asked Clara.

“Who? The TARDIS?”

“Yeah! Kinda like when you, the old you - well, the young you - used the HADS, back in the day.”

“Well I don’t see how it could be that. Then again, you might have a point on the old girl sounding different... hm, it’s been a while since I checked the temporal drift compensators, I wonder if-”

He was interrupted by an explosively loud bang, as sparks flew from the centre console, and the TARDIS suddenly grinded to a halt.

“Ooh, exciting,” said Clara.

“That’s one word for it. Well, we’ve certainly landed somewhere. I could run some tests, see if it’s safe...?” He looked at Clara expectantly.

“Nah,” she laughed, “c’mon, let’s go.”

The two of them strode out the TARDIS, in what turned out to be a vast, empty white room.

“That’s not normal is it? No one remembers what happens on their second birthday?”

The Eighth Doctor and Molly O’Sullivan stood together in the TARDIS, their great adventure in the great war finally over, at least for now. The villainous Kotris had been vanquished, by his own younger hand, when he was called Straxus instead.

“Yes, well, strange things happen in the TARDIS.”

“Oh, do they now?” said Molly cheekily.

“I wonder if the Dalek Time Controller survives, given that there was no Kotris to rescue him,” mused the Doctor.

“What do we do now?”

“Well, the Time Lords aren’t going to be very pleased with me. Not now they know I know the depths they were prepared to sink to to wipe out the Daleks. So...Molly?”

“What’s the matter?”

“Your dark eyes!”

“Right!” barked Molly furiously, “That’s it!” She began to pummel the Doctor.

“No no, no no,” laughed the Doctor. “Molly, they’ve gone! They’re not dark anymore.”

“Oh.”

“You seem a bit sad?”

“No. It’s just this...no. I won’t recognise myself, will I? Strange.”

“Yeah, just talking about your eyes changing, imagine what it’s like when your whole mind and body changes!”

“That regeneration lark you were on about. Not planning on doing that anytime soon are you?”

“No.”

“Hm. You lead a strange life don’t you, ‘the Doctor’?” Molly absent-mindedly flicked some switches on the TARDIS console.

“Molly, please, leave the controls alone.”

“Sorry,” she said, laughing at herself. “Old habits!”

“Right, well, with all that time-shifting in the vortex, I’m going to have to do some serious recalibrating. I wonder how the temporal drift compensators have fared...”

The two of them were interrupted by an explosively loud bang, as sparks flew from the centre console, and the TARDIS suddenly grinded to a halt.

“Now what the bleeding hell was that?” yelled Molly.

“You know, I really have no idea,” said the Doctor.

“Well you’re not just gonna stand around, are ya? Shouldn’t we...go investigate or something?”

“Hm, quite right you are Molly. I’ll walk out first, you follow.”

“In your dreams mister!”

The Eighth Doctor followed Molly out the doors, smiling. They entered what turned out to be a vast, empty white room.

Clara was chattering away happily to the Twelfth Doctor, so much so the two of them nearly missed the sounds of the new - the old, rather - TARDIS arriving. They walked over to it curiously, as it finished materialising.

“I wonder which one of you is gonna come out,” said Clara.

“Hm, so do I.”

“Funny thing, I’ve been around more of you than you have, isn’t that right?”

“Clara, Clara, Clara, that is very right indeed. Those little escapades are in my past. Or at least, so I thought.

Let’s see who we have here.”

Molly walked out of the TARDIS, followed by the Eighth Doctor.

“Who - what - why’s there another TARDIS here then?” blustered Molly.

“Another me!” exclaimed the Eighth Doctor, looking between the Twelfth Doctor and Clara.

Clara laughed, then pointed at the Twelfth Doctor.

“Him, not me!”

The Eighth Doctor grasped one of the Twelfth Doctor’s hands in two of his own, beaming at him.

Seeing Molly’s face screw up with rage and confusion, the Twelfth Doctor hurried to explain.

“Ah yes, Molly isn’t it, I remember - actually, that’s strange how quickly I remember. But yes, Molly O’Sullivan, you’d already know all about regeneration, all that business with Straxus and Kotris. I’m a future, older version of your Doctor. Molly, this is my companion Clara. Clara, this is my former companion Molly O’Sullivan, Molly ‘dark eyes’ -”

Molly yelped with rage and slapped the Twelfth Doctor, much to Clara and the Eighth Doctor’s amusement.

“Don’t you be calling me that, ‘the Doctor’, no matter which one you are! And I don’t appreciate the condescending attitude either, I understand what’s going on rather well, please and thank you.”

“Ooh, maybe you can explain for us then,” said Clara. “Where are we? And yeah, you don’t normally remember your old lives this easily Doctor, what’s going on?”

Molly looked around, flustered.

“Ah, I’ll leave it to ‘the Doctor’ to explain, he’ll get more enjoyment out of it than me,” she muttered.

“Well, I certainly have no idea,” laughed the Eighth Doctor.

“How about you try to recall a very early memory, like the Doctor - well, the future Doctor - did just now?” suggested Clara. “Maybe there’s something funny going on with two of you in the same spot.”

“Hm, yes, could be,” mused the Eighth Doctor. “Molly, pick a number.”

“Four,” said Molly, with suspicion in her eyes.

“Four, yes, good choice, good choice...my fourth face...yes, yes! I do recall events with a kind of...sharpness that doesn’t normally come as easily. ‘Do I have the right?’ How unusual!”

“This doesn’t normally happen when there’s more than one of you together,” said Clara, intrigued. “The oldest you remembers that encounter where the younger ones don’t, but you don’t all gain a...general heightened memory. Doctor, what do you think?”

The Eighth and Twelfth Doctors exchanged glances.

“My Doctor, I mean,” laughed Clara. “No offence!”

“None taken, Clara!” said the Eighth Doctor, eyes twinkling.

“Oi,” growled Molly.

“Right, well,” started the Twelfth Doctor, “people talk about premonition as if it’s something strange, but it’s not. It’s just remembering in the wrong direction. Perhaps it’s the room itself triggering some form of temporal premonition like that. Our memories are amplified here. Like our very minds are buzzing in the air...our own personal Doctor Wi-Fi. Surrounded by our own memories.”

“Wi-Fi?” asked Molly.

“Personal Doctor?” asked Clara.

“Surrounded by our memories?” asked the Eighth Doctor.

Before the Twelfth Doctor could reply, the two companions vanished.

The Eighth Doctor yelped, the Twelfth Doctor started, and both of them whipped out their sonic screwdrivers and began to scan the room.

“Safe,” sighed the Twelfth Doctor, relieved. “They’re safe.”

“Indeed,” replied the Eighth Doctor. “They seem to have been transferred right back to where we last left them, just a few hours later. Shouldn’t be any problem to just go and pick them right back up!”

“Yes, well, pleasure seeing you again and all,” said the Twelfth Doctor, “but I’m off to do just that. Duty of care, you understand.”

“Oh, quite right.”

The Eighth Doctor made to stick out his hand for the Twelfth Doctor to shake, but was interrupted by a vision suddenly overtaking his mind.

He saw himself, back in his fourth face just as he'd remembered before. He was with Sarah Jane and Harry, so long ago. They were on Skaro.

"What are you waiting for?" yelled Sarah Jane.

"Just touch these two strands together and the Daleks are finished," said the Doctor. "Have I that right?"

"To destroy the Daleks? You can't doubt it."

"Well, I do. You see, some things could be better with the Daleks. Many future worlds will become allies just because of their fear of the Daleks."

"But it isn't like that."

"But the final responsibility is mine, and mine alone. Listen, if someone who knew the future pointed out a child to you, and told you that that child would grow up totally evil, to be a ruthless dictator who would destroy millions of lives, could you then kill that child?"

"We're talking about the Daleks!" exclaimed Sarah Jane. "The most evil creatures ever invented! You must destroy them. You must complete your mission for the Time Lords."

"Do I have that right? Simply touch one wire against the other and that's it. The Daleks cease to exist. Hundreds of millions of people, thousands of generations can live without fear, in peace, and never even know the word Dalek."

"Then why wait? If it was a disease or some sort of bacteria you were destroying, you wouldn't hesitate."

"But if I kill, wipe out a whole intelligent lifeform, then I become like them. I'd be no better than the Daleks."

The vision shifted, now in his future, the life of his future self right with him in the white room. He was with Davros in a small room, with a small panelled screen on the wall.

"Doctor."

"Davros."

"I approve of your new face, Doctor. So much more like mine. Colony Sarff, untie our guest's hands."

Colony Sarff did so.

"You may leave us."

Colony Sarff did so.

"You came, then," continued Davros.

"Clearly."

"Did you suspect a trap?"

"I still do."

"Then why are you here? Did you miss our conversations?"

The screen on the wall lit up, showing other Doctors, most younger than the Eighth, one older.

"If you had created a virus in your laboratory," said the Fourth Doctor.

"I'm not here as your prisoner, Davros," said the Fifth Doctor.

"Unimaginable power! Unlimited rice pudding!" said the Seventh Doctor.

“Everything we saw. Everything we lost,” said the Tenth Doctor.

“But did you bother to tell anyone they might be eating their own relatives?” said the Sixth Doctor.

“Yes, yes, okay, you’ve made your point,” said the actual Twelfth Doctor, in the actual room with Davros projected in the vision.

“Have I?” replied Davros.

The screen lit up again.

“If someone who knew the future pointed out a child to you, and told you that that child would grow up totally evil, to be a ruthless dictator who would destroy millions of lives, could you then kill that child?” asked the Fourth Doctor.

The vision shifted. The Twelfth Doctor was out on the fields on Skaro, rife with Hand Mines. There was a young boy there. Instinctively, the Eighth Doctor recognised it was a young Davros.

“Help me!” shouted the young Davros. “You can’t leave me, you promised. You said I had a chance.”

The TARDIS materialised behind him.

“Who are you?” asked the young Davros, confused. “How did you get there.”

“From the future,” answered the Twelfth Doctor.

“Are you going to save me?”

“I’m going to save my friend the only way I can. Exterminate!”

With a Dalek weapon of his own, the Doctor blasted all the Hand Mines away.

“Come on, I’ll take you home,” said the Doctor to Davros.

“Which side are you on?” asked Davros. “Are you the enemy?”

“I’m not sure that any of that matters, friends, enemies. So long as there’s mercy. Always mercy.”

The vision shifted. It was the Third Doctor, and the Master he’d fought for so long.

“I want to restore this city and this planet to their former glory,” said the Master to the Guardian.

“Don’t listen to him, sir,” he had said.

“You have here a wonderful weapon!” appealed the Master. “Why, with it you could bring good and peace to every world in the galaxy!”

“On the contrary,” he had countered, “he’ll only bring death and destruction.”

The vision shifted again. It was the Eighth Doctor, but young, very young. He was with Grace, in San Francisco. They were talking about the Master.

“And this Master’s like the Devil?” asked Grace.

“The Master is a rival Time Lord,” he’d answered.

“Time Lord? Oh my God.”

“Pure evil,” he had said.

The vision shifted, back to the Twelfth Doctor’s lifetime, to the Master, or Missy as she now liked to be called.

“I know I’m going to die,” she said to Doctor. “I have to say it, the truth. Without hope. Without witness. Without reward. I am your friend.”

The vision shifted forward.

"I want to ask if you've had any dealings with the Monks before," the Twelfth Doctor would ask Missy. She answered. The vision zoomed back and forth through all the Twelfth Doctor's dealings with the Monks. Then, forward again.

"I keep remembering all the people I've killed," Missy said to the Doctor. "Every day I think of more. Being bad...being bad drowned that out. I didn't know I even knew their names. You didn't tell me about this bit."

"I'm sorry," he would reply, "but this is good."

Missy turned away, hiding her tears.

"Okay."

Forward again. Missy in the TARDIS, but happily going back to the Vault when the Doctor requested. The Doctor relaxing the rules and letting her stay in the TARDIS. Her being grateful, and not pushing the boundaries. The Doctor giving her the chance to be the hero.

The vision pushed farther still. Missy literally killing her past, a destructive Master of old.

"Missy, seriously, why?" the Master would ask.

"Oh, because he's right. Because it's time to stand with him. It's where we've always been going, and it's happening now, today. It's time to stand with the Doctor."

The visions ended, and the Doctors were back, consciously, in the white room.

"Wow," said the Eighth Doctor.

"I know," said the Twelfth Doctor, "that was my future too."

"It's scary, isn't it," said the Eighth Doctor. "But the order of those visions, it was almost..."

"Vindicating," agreed the Twelfth Doctor. "That...that was good that we'd do. Have done. Will do."

"Where exactly are we? What is this?" wondered the Eighth Doctor.

"Hm...more than one of us together, visions of pasts and futures projected around us...it reminds me very much of a certain day on Gallifrey. There were three of us then - neither actually you or me, mind you, just most of the ones in-between."

In this room, with his memories fizzling all around him, and so long after the actual event had taken place, the Twelfth Doctor could remember the Moment, the Bad Wolf, projecting herself to him. And, dimly, he could remember, almost remember, other timelines with her, alternate lives, different timestreams, roads not taken.

"There's this woman. Well, I say woman, more of a...weapon? God? It's complicated. Shut up. Anyway, I think she could play around with our timelines. For our own benefit, ostensibly. This might just be that. Ultimately harmless, just a projection to try and get us to come to some greater understanding. You'll forget it after we part ways anyway."

"Well, I'm certainly good at that," said the Eighth Doctor. "But you don't sound convinced."

"No. Well, it's perfectly possible. Could be harmless. But...you see, those visions...you saw the one with the Monks too, I take it?"

"I'm sure I saw all you did. Yes. But feel free to think aloud. I know that helps us."

"Well, yes, these Monks, they delighted in manipulating memories, stories, contexts. My companions and I, seems we end up beating them pretty soundly, but I suppose...it's possible they eventually honed their techniques even further, and this is another sick game of theirs. In the past."

"Sick game? Oh, wait. I'm getting that too. We might not even be real. Quite the thought."

"Right. Yes. Well, these Monks, these Shadow Worlds, these simulated realities they create, complete with simulated us, simulated TARDIS, simulated companions, it's quite the ingenious way to test the best way to conquer planets. Of course when the jig is up, and people work it out, they tend to kill themselves."

"Refusing to aid their captors, even as virtual projections. Truly inspiring."

"Indeed."

"How did they find out though? I'm still a bit hazy on that. My memory's not quite as sharp as yours, you know, even here."

Before the Twelfth Doctor could reply, they were both struck with another vision.

"Oh, are you really so obtuse, Miss Clairmont, not to have realised I have no interest in you whatsoever. You bore me."

Claire Clairmont broke into tears at the harshness of Lord Bryon's words.

"Byron, you beast!" she cried.

"Byron, as you know, I respect you as a friend and poet," started Percy Shelley, "but I cannot allow you to address Miss Clairmont in such a manner."

"Cannot allow?" laughed Byron mockingly.

The Eighth Doctor closed to the door, muffling the argument, and turned to Mary Shelley.

"I think we'll leave them to it," said the Doctor. "Can I ask you a question?" His eyes were twinkling.

"Go on," said Mary, her sharp eyes peering at him curiously.

"Will you come with me?"

"Come with you?"

"Travel with me, in my TARDIS. Be my companion. In an entirely platonic, no strings, separate sleeping arrangement sense."

"I don't know, it seems, well, quite wildly irresponsible..."

"You said you wanted a life of adventure. That's what I'm offering you. A chance to see the marvels of the universe."

"What about those friends of yours? Samson and Gemma?"

"Don't worry, I'll be back in Vienna before they've noticed I've gone. That's the thing about time travel - you could spend months, years, in other times, other worlds, and I could still have you back here a mere five seconds after you left!"

“Your future self told me I had travelled with him. It seems it is my destiny. It appears I have no choice in the matter.”

“Oh, there’s always a choice. You can always stay here, with your husband. If that’s what you really want.”

“He’s not my husband.”

“Well then.”

He opened the TARDIS doors.

“But,” continued Mary, “before we depart, I have one question for you.”

“Yes?”

“Your name - how should I address you? Doctor ‘Frankenstein’?”

“No, no, no. Just ‘the Doctor’ will be fine.”

“The Doctor?”

“Yes. You have to remember, it’s very important - Frankenstein is the name of the monster, and not the name of the Doctor!”

“Why were you smiling?”

“Was I? No I wasn’t.”

The Twelfth Doctor and Clara were in the TARDIS. It was early days for him.

“You were smiling at nothing. I’d almost say you were in love, but to be honest...”

“Honest?”

“...you’re not a young woman any more.”

“Yes, I am!”

“Well you don’t look it.”

“I do look it.”

“Oh that’s right, keep your spirits up. Clara, Clara, Clara...I need something from you. I need the truth.”

“Okay. Right, what is it?”

They sat on the steps near the console together.

“You’re scared,” said Clara, surprised.

“I’m terrified,” he replied.

“Of what?”

“The answer to my next question, which must be honest and cold and considered, without kindness or restraint.

Clara, be my pal and tell me - am I a good man?”

“I...don’t know.”

The vision rippled months forward. The Doctor stood in a graveyard, talking to Missy.

“Thank you. Thank you so much,” he said. Then he gently kissed her.

"I really didn't know. I wasn't sure. You lose sight sometimes. Thank you! I am not a good man! I am not a bad man. I am not a hero. And I'm definitely not a president. And no, I'm not an officer. Do you know what I am? I am an idiot. With a box and a screwdriver. Just passing through, helping out, learning. I don't need an army. I never have, because I've got them. Always them. Because love, it's not an emotion. Love is a promise."

The vision shifted to Rassilon's Foundry, in the Anvil Room. When the Eighth Doctor had been possessed by Zagreus.

Charley ran into the room.

"Doctor? Doctor? Where are you - oh, Doctor! Oh, Doctor, I never thought I'd see you again."

"I never thought you'd want to," croaked Zagreus, "Miss Pollard."

"Oh, no," squeaked Charley, "not you, not again."

"Did you miss me?" rasped Zagreus. "Did your little human heart ache every moment I was gone? Did you have bad thoughts about me, in the small dark hours before the dawn? Give in to them, Charlotte. Give in to me. You know you want to!"

"Get back you, you monster!"

"Monster, am I? Monster? I'm what monsters have nightmares about!"

Zagreus' voice broke, his eyes seemed to shift, and the Eighth Doctor seemed to inhabit himself again.

"Help me Charley," he said.

"Doctor?"

"I can't control it, not anymore," the Doctor continued, "each time it bursts over me, it's like I'm drowning. Going under for the last time."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to...I want you to..."

"I do believe he wants you to kill him, Miss Pollard," said Rassilon, entering the conversation.

"Kill you..? No!"

"Dear Zagreus here has agreed to be my state executioner," drawled Rassilon, "my Witchfinder General. I can just see it - 'are you now, or have you ever been, a Divergent?'"

He rolled his eyes and looked over at Charley expectantly.

"Take the blade, Miss Pollard. You two have played out this farce before, I believe?"

"Kill me."

"I can't."

"Kill me," said the Doctor.

"I love you," said Charley.

“Well, if Danny Pink can do it, so can I.”

“Do what?”

“Die right. Die like I mean it. Face the Raven.”

Clara was readying herself to die. She was so brave.

“Not. This isn’t happening. This can’t be happening.”

“Maybe this is what I wanted. Maybe this is it. Maybe this is why I kept running. Maybe this is why I kept taking all those stupid risks. Kept pushing it.”

“This is my fault,” he despaired.

“This is my choice,” she clarified.

More words.

“You,” Clara said, “now, you listen to me. You're going to be alone now, and you're very bad at that. You're going to be furious and you're going to be sad, but listen to me - don't let this change you. No, listen, whatever happens next, wherever she is sending you, I know what you're capable of. You don't be a warrior. Promise me. Be a Doctor.”

“What’s the point in being a Doctor if I can’t cure you?”

“Heal yourself. You have to. You can't let this turn you into a monster. So, I'm not asking you for a promise, I'm giving you an order. You will not insult my memory. There will be no revenge. I will die, and no one else, here or anywhere, will suffer.”

The Doctor’s eyes welled with tears.

“What about me?” he asked.

“If there was something I could do about that, I would. I guess we're both just going to have to be brave.”

“Clara...”

They embraced.

“Everything you are about to say,” she said carefully, “I already know. Don't do it now. We've already had enough bad timing.”

“Don’t run. Stay with me.”

“Nah. You stay here. In the end, everybody does this alone.

“Clara...”

“This is as brave as I know how to be. I know it's going to hurt you, but, please, be a little proud of me.”

Clara touched the Doctor’s cheek. He took her hand and kissed it.

“Goodbye, Doctor.”

The Raven cawed. Clara steps out into the street.

“Let me be brave. Let me be brave.”

She was.

"I thought you were the bravest person I ever knew," said Charley, back in Rassilon's Foundry.

"Kill me," the Doctor repeated.

"Put the knife down, girl!" barked Rassilon.

"Thing is, you're not," continued Charley.

"Kill me," the Doctor repeated.

"Put it down!" yelled Rassilon.

"It's me. I'm the bravest person here," she went on.

"Kill me."

"No, Charley!" shouted Leela.

"Charley, no!" yelled Romana.

"No, no!" boomed Rassilon.

"Goodbye, Doctor."

Charley stabbed the Doctor out of love, just as he'd asked.

"Goodbye, Charley. Thank you." He sighed, peacefully.

Eventually Charley would follow him into the Divergent Universe, and he would have many words to say on that, but for now, he was just content.

"That's when I remember! Always then, always then, always exactly then! I can't keep doing this Clara, I can't! Why is it always me? Why is it never anybody else's turn? Can't I just lose? Just this once? Easy...it would be so easy. Just tell them. Just tell them, whoever wants to know, all about the Hybrid. I can't keep doing this. I can't! I can't always do this!" It's not fair! Clara, it's just not fair! Why can't I just lose?"

In his own bespoke torture chamber, the Twelfth Doctor raged against the billions of years of trauma swimming through his mind, buzzing through the air, the Wi-Fi of nightmares.

"I can remember Clara...you don't understand, I can remember it all. Every time. And you'll still be gone. Whatever I do, you still won't be there."

Clara appeared to him, like a vision of her own.

"Doctor, you are not the only person who ever lost someone. It's the story of everybody. Get over it. Beat it. Break free. Doctor, it's time. Get up, off your arse, and win!"

He got up, and - billions of years later - he won.

The Divergent Universe. Cut off from time. The Eighth Doctor couldn't stand it.

"This shouldn't be how it ends. I should have had the universe to explore. Or death. One or the other, that's all I wanted, and it's your fault," he said to Charley.

"Doctor!" she gasped.

"If it weren't for you, I'd be dead or alive, not this halfway point. If it weren't for you - WHY ARE YOU HERE, CHARLEY?"

"But I don't-"

"WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?"

"What do you want from me? You're the one who rescued me in the first place. You were the one who took me aboard your TARDIS. What did you do it for? If I have so obviously ruined everything for you, if you really think that...why did you bother?"

"It's a good question. You will have realised, of course, that you're not really the only human who has travelled with me in the TARDIS."

"Yes, well, I hardly expected to be your first."

"The Time Lords often wondered why I bothered. After all, we are capable of living for thousands of years, you can barely reach a hundred. And they came up with a theory, do you want to know what it is?"

"You need friendship, companionship. You must get lonely travelling the universe with no one to share it with."

"They thought you were all memento mori."

"What?"

"Reminders of death. Quite common things, really. On medieval Earth, courtiers would often keep skulls on their mantelpieces. They were very much the in thing. No matter how powerful you were, death was inevitable. You still had to remember your morality. And Time Lords need to remember all the more. I denied that was the reason, of course. And, as you said, friendship, companionship. But over the years, over my many lifetimes, as my friends all left me, one by one, I began to wonder whether they really might have had a point after all. Especially when I found you, Charley. A companion who was already dead. The ultimate Time Lord fashion accessory."

"That's what I was to you? Something to kick against your vanity?"

"I didn't expect to care for you as much as I did. That was my mistake. When it came to it, with the Web of Time hanging in the balance, having to make a choice between you and the universe, I'd say hang the Web of Time. You're more important. Let the universe rot. Charley, you're worth more than all that. I sacrificed myself for you, to save your life. And I did it gladly, I thought I'd never see you again, but it wouldn't matter so long as I knew you were safe."

"I don't understand, you're saying you did care for me after all? That you...loved me?"

"OF COURSE I LOVED YOU, I KILLED MYSELF FOR YOU, DIDN'T I? Of course I loved you...of course I love you."

The Doctor was on Gallifrey, again. He'd come the long way 'round.

Rassilon was in charge of Gallifrey, again. For now.

"Get off my planet," the Doctor said to Rassilon, when he came to him, out in the Gallifreyan sands.

"We needed to know. You have information about the Hybrid. A danger to all of us. If you'd told us what you knew, you could have walked out of there."

"Get off my planet."

"You have nothing, Doctor. Nothing! Do you know what I have, out here in the Drylands, where there's nobody who matters? No witnesses."

"Me too."

"Take aim!" roared Rassilon. "Aim at the Doctor. Fire on my command."

"Sir?" the General said to Rassilon.

"Step forward and take aim," said Rassilon, ignoring the General. "What's the matter with you?"

"Lord President, he's a war hero," said the General. "Some of these men served with him."

"These men serve me! All of you! On my command! Fire!"

They fired.

But not at the Doctor.

Rassilon was not pleased, but then, he never did need soldiers to deal with the Doctor. He could do that perfectly well himself.

"How many regenerations did we grant you?" asked Rassilon, activating his gauntlet. "I've got all night".

Four gunships flew low, arriving to the scene.

"Excellent, General. You sent for reinforcements."

"No," said the Doctor, "he didn't. I did."

The soldiers turned their weapons towards Rassilon.

"What? I am Rassilon, the Redeemer! Rassilon the Resurrected! Gallifrey is mine!"

The General moved in front of the Doctor, blocking Rassilon's path.

"Lord President, with respect...get off his planet."

Lucie had died. Tamsin had died. His great-grandson Alex had died. Yet he, the Eighth Doctor, lived on.

"The Dalek warp motor drive is breached," he said. "It's sucking everything in, crushing it into a singularity."

"Will it destroy the Earth?" asked Susan

"No, its power shouldn't last that long. But it will be enough to destroy the Daleks. Their entire fleet. And us."

"You saved the universe grandfather."

"You're lucky Susan. Lucky I left you behind. I've seen so many people die. I've got used to it. I just move on."

But today feels like a different day. One lost life too many. Today I just want to say ‘enough’. I’m sorry you had to die too Susan.”

“Hold me grandfather.”

“Here. I’ve got you. Now I remember when you were so young.”

“And you were so old. I’m glad you came back.”

In the end, the two of them made it out alive. For all their losses, neither of them died.

The Doctor and Nardole were in New York, in the apartment of Lucy Fletcher. Grant Gordon - the Ghost - was there as well. Harmony Shoal’s plot had been foiled.

“So, no more Ghost then?” the Doctor asked Grant.

“Nah, laid to rest.”

“Are you sure?” asked Lucy.

“Yea, of course I’m sure. I mean, life’s not a comic book, right Doctor?”

“Possibly I’m not the right person to ask.”

“What if something happens?” asked Lucy. “What if the whole world is in danger?”

“Well, you know, maybe I’ll keep the outfit then. You know. Just in case.”

“Hmm.”

“The world will be fine,” interjected the Doctor. “I’ve been away for a while, but I’m back. I’ll take care of anything that comes up.”

“You were away?” asked Grant.

“Uh-huh,” said Nardole. “Twenty-four years. What a night.”

“Where’d you go?” Grant inquired.

“Wrong question,” said Lucy, placing the squeaky Mister Huffle toy on the table. “What was her name?”

“I’m sure that I must be busy, I better go,” deflected the Doctor.

“You okay?” checked Grant.

“Yes, yes, I’m okay,” the Doctor assured.

Lucy squeezed Mister Huffle.

“Things end,” said the Doctor. “That’s all. Everything ends, and it’s always sad. But everything begins again too, and that’s always happy.”

Many, many, many years earlier, a different Doctor suffered the questions of a different Lucie.

“What did you say it stood for again,” Lucie Miller asked of the Eighth Doctor, “Time and Relative

Dimension...”

“Yes...” said the Doctor, careful not to prod.

“Time and Relative Dimension...in...Shed.”

“That is not what it stands for.”

“Yes it does. It’s a shed.”

The Twelfth Doctor, Missy, Bill, and Nardole were on a massive colony ship near a black hole. It was a test run for Missy. The Doctor hoped very much things would go well.

“Hello”, began Missy, “I’m Doctor Who. And these are my plucky assistants, Thing One and the Other One.”

“Bill, Nardole,” corrected Nardole.

“We picked up your distress call,” winked Missy, “and here we are to help, like awesome heroes!” She twirled for the camera.

“Yeah, we’re not, we’re not assistants,” corrected Bill.

“Okay, right, so, so what does he call you? Companions? Pets? Snacks?”

A rhythmic alarm began to sound.

“Ooh, someone’s watching.” She began to move to the beat. “Well that’s quite a good beat isn’t it?” she said, dancing.

The Doctor remembered a time when a rhythmic beat would have sent her mad, not sent her into in a carefree dance. He smiled.

The Eighth Doctor pushed his TARDIS farther than he could ever remember pushing her. Lucie, Tamsin, Alex, all dead. Fellow Time Lord Straxus, of the Celestial Intervention Agency, had intercepted the movement of his TARDIS to the end of the universe, but he couldn’t hold him for long.

“Was it Susan? Hm? Did she betray me?” asked the Doctor, wondering how Straxus had found him.

“Betray you? Oh, she loves you Doctor, you must know that,” replied Straxus.

“So much for love Straxus, what did love ever do for Susan? Or Lucie? It left them grieving or dead. Because the universe, in its infinite wisdom, gives way to creatures like the Daleks.”

“You blame the universe?”

“Well then who, what, who’s to blame?”

“So you set course for the end of everything...did you really think we wouldn’t notice a TARDIS tearing through the vortex, heading to a time and place beyond all that we forbid?”

“You forbid us from seeing the ultimate end of the universe - why?”

“That knowledge is forbidden. Why did you want to go there?”

Straxus felt he already knew. Suicide.

But he was wrong.

“Perspective. I’m told its a wonderful view. No, I mean it, I really hoped it would be a wonderful view. To look back from the end of everything. To see how things finally turned out. Straxus, I was looking for hope.”

A Mondasian Cyberman zapped the Twelfth Doctor. Finally, one blow too many. He’d appealed so hard to Missy. He’d felt the knife in her hand. He had so much hope she would pull through, that she’d turn good. But she never came.

Back in the white room, the Twelfth’s Doctor’s mind twitched. She did try to come, he knew that now. She hadn’t betrayed him. Quite the opposite.

“Ah hello, I’m the Doctor,” the Doctor said to the Cyberman.

“Doctors are not required,” the Cyberman replied.

“No, no, I’m not *a* Doctor. I am *the* Doctor. The original, you might say.”

The Cyberman said nothing, but zapped him again. So much pain.

“Doctor, Doctor,” he said to himself. “Let it go. Time enough.”

He raised his sonic screwdriver and detonated the massive explosion of that floor of the colony ship. He was already dying, what was one blast more?

He was on the ground, surrounded by fire. There were only flames above. Trapped.

“Pity,” he muttered with what life he had left, “no stars. I hoped there’d be stars.”

The Doctor was too unconscious to see, but later, across the charred wasteland that was Level 507, Bill the Cyberman trudged through the ashes, limping her way across to the Doctor. Once she found him, she fell to her knees and began to weep.

From a nearby puddle emerged Heather, the girl from university, the Pilot, the girl with a star in her eye.

“Are you alright?” Liv asked the Eighth Doctor.

Liv was his newest companion. His other new companion, Molly, had died. Like so many others.

“I’d hoped, somehow, if the Dalek Time Controller could survive throughout history, then why couldn’t Molly?” said the Doctor.

“But she did. We know she did. She lived a full life. And maybe she remembered that life. All those different lives.”

“You understand. You really are a natural with this whole time travel business.”

“I’m beginning to see what it’s like for you. What about the Dalek Supreme?”

“Dalek Supreme, Dalek Emperor, Dalek Time Controller - doesn’t matter which of them thinks it’s in charge, the Daleks are always slaves to their own hatred. They’ll never stop.”

“Will you go after them?”

“I’m not looking to start a war. I’ll fight them, if and when I have to, just as I always have.”

“I’ll stay, you know. As long as you need me.”

“We all need someone. That’s what hope is. Other people. Come on, Liv. Let’s take Molly home.”

So many of his companions had died, but finally, the Eighth Doctor felt he could transcend the tragedy and honour their memories.

The Twelfth Doctor’s mind reeled. He’d regenerated so many times that he was instinctually regurgitating last words he’d said before. Eventually he came to just repeating “no, no, no,” as he’d done at the end of his second face, except this time he did manage to stall the regeneration.

The TARDIS stopped, just as he did.

“Where have you taken me? If you’re trying to make a point, I’m not listening. I don’t want to change again.

Never again! I can’t keep on being somebody else. Wherever it is, I’m staying.”

He ran outside, as the Cloister Bell sounded.

“No. No. No!” he yelled as regeneration energy began to stream from his hands again. He plunged them into the snow. They sizzled, then stopped.

“I will not change!” he sputtered with pain.

Off in the distance, amongst the snow and the ice, someone else was speaking similarly.

“I will not change, I will not! No, no, no, no, the whole thing’s ridiculous.”

“Hello?” called out the Twelfth Doctor. “Is someone there?”

“Who is that?” replied the other man.

“I’m the Doctor.”

The figure stepped closer, and the Doctor suddenly realised who he was.

“The Doctor,” repeated the First Doctor, “Oh, I don’t think so. No, dear me, no. You may be *a* Doctor, but I am *the* Doctor. The original, you might say.”

Once, lifetimes ago, he’d told a man who - much like him - had lived too long that when you live long enough, the only certainty is that you’ll end up alone.

The Doctor now knew that he was very much wrong.

The white room. Both Doctors staggered around, then leant on each other to regain balance.

“Was that all real? Are we real?” mused the Eighth Doctor, wonder in his eyes.

“Who knows?” replied the Twelfth Doctor. “We’re all stories in in the end.”

“Well,” the Eighth Doctor replied, “at least we made them good ones, eh?”

“Will make them,” corrected the Twelfth Doctor, with a furrowed brow.

They both sat down on the floor and looked at each other for a while, reflecting what they’d seen.

“You know,” said the Twelfth Doctor, “when I drive off the Monks, it strikes me how they didn’t talk at the end. There was no defence.”

“No context,” the Eighth Doctor agreed.

“If I only knew of the Monks from that first encounter, that reality simulation, they’d be terrifying. But in that greater context, they seem almost...ordinary.”

The Eighth Doctor recognised where the conversation was going.

“So much of what we saw, if we’d only seen a part of it, it would have seemed nothing but tragic,” the Twelfth Doctor continued.

“But you add a little narrative, change the context, why, you can get something entirely different,” replied the Eighth Doctor. “I say, my dear friend Mary would have a field day with this.”

“I’m not sure who brought us here, what it was for, what the context was for all this, but I know that there are more important things to remember. And to forget. It’s time to return to my friends,” said the Twelfth Doctor.

They nodded at each other and grasped each other’s shoulders for balance as they picked themselves up off the floor.

Together, the Doctors rose.

CHUMBLEYS vs ABZORBALOFF

by Lym

An adventure starring the Second Doctor, Jamie, and Zoe

[AUTHOR NOTE TO READERS: THIS STORY MUST BE READ IN BLACK AND WHITE.]

PART ONE

A barren wasteland, an empty sky. White and orange, the daylight begins to fade away. Or is it beginning?

On the horizon, a murky shape fades into view. Dark blue. Rickety. Something off an old street corner. It doesn't belong on this landscape, not at all.

A large blue box? How absurd.

With a creak, the door opens inwards and a short little man steps out, followed by a slightly taller younger man wearing a kilt, and a rather diminutive young woman in a spandex catsuit. They begin walking away from the box, seemingly exploring.

"...Yes, well you see, Jamie," the little man says, clasping his hands together. "It's not just any quarry! This is a legendary salt quarry on the planet Clom!"

"Oh, aye," the kilt boy, Jamie, says in a Scottish accent, pretending not to be bemused. "Well all this salt's makin' me hungry, Doctor! Can we not stop for some food?"

"Oh, Jamie," says the girl harshly whining. "You just ate half an hour ago! Can't you go any longer without eating?"

"Space travel can make ye hungry! It must be all those wee space particles," Jamie replies.

"Space particles?", the girl, Zoe, questions. "You haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about!"

“Aye maybe not,” he wags his finger. “But what I do know is that I cannae go much longer!”

They come to a rather large hill looking to the distance and stop. The Doctor reaches into his impossibly large pockets and produces a pair of impossibly small binoculars, putting them to his eyes and surveying the horizon, hair blowing madly in the wind.

“Jamie...” the Doctor begins. “You might just be in luck!”

“Oh aye?” He snatches the binoculars out of the Doctor’s hands, causing the Doctor to look very miffed. “Why you’re right, Doctor! Look over there! It’s— it’s a building!”

The Doctor looks shocked and panicked. “Oh my word!!”

In the distance, a building fades into view through the fog, accompanied by the ethereal sound of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

ROLL CREDITS

PART TWO

[Missing episode]

PART THREE

[Missing episode]

PART FOUR

The Doctor and his companions are in the middle of the firing line, covered in Abzorbajuce and looking like they just crawled out of a swamp. Abzorbaloff on the left, Chumbleys and Chumbley cardboard cutouts on the right.

He fumbles his hands around and looks mildly disgusted. Head darting from side to side and Jamie clinging onto him, he whispers an “oh dear” under his breath.

“Now now,” the Doctor shouts to both sides of the war. “I don’t think this is a very good idea!”

“An wot’s it ta you, lih’ul man?” the Abzorbaloff gurgles in a faint Mancunian accent.

“Well, ahh, you see...” the Doctor stutters, his head lowering. “It’s, ah, it’s...”

Jamie whispers in the Doctor’s ear. “D’ye not know what t’ say?”

“Well, ah...” the Doctor’s head lowers further “No.”

The Abzorbaloff and the Chumbleys edge closer, the Chumbleys shouting several words that the BBC probably wanted to become catchphrases to compete with the Daleks.

“Doctor, why don’t we jus’ make a run fer it?” Jamie says hastily.

“Ooooh, that one’s got a luv’ly arse! If I absorb that, I’ll double in size!” The Abzorbaloff laughs, pointing at Zoe.

“Now, now, Jamie,” the Doctor begins in his “lecturing” tone. “We must stop this violence at once!”

“Doctor,” Jamie lashes out. “There’s no violence! They’re jus’ shoutin’ bloody murder at each other!”

“Allow me to handle this,” Zoe says smugly before the Doctor or Jamie can get a word in edgeways. With a commanding tone, she speaks. “This war is useless. The Abzorbaloff is completely outnumbered and has no need to absorb the Chumbleys as they aren’t natural creatures and therefore have no use to an alien whose entire life force is sustained by living beings. The Chumbleys, likewise, have no use for the Abzorbaloff as it is merely a single being and - once again - has no use for the Chumbleys; in fact, waging a war would be completely pointless as there is no success for the winner and as far as I know, no opposing viewpoints between both sides. It reminds me of the Third World War in the early 21st century - an entire planet in battle solely for the purpose of, what, female cast members in a children’s show? To be quite honest, I—“

By the time Zoe had reached this point, the Chumbleys had fucking exploded as their tiny minds couldn’t comprehend what she had just said. Likewise, the Abzorbaloff had fallen asleep and cracked his head on the quarry rocks, causing a large pool of blood to drip slowly down. He had vomit coming out of his lifeless mouth, and all the faces of the sieged base’s crew members were crying out in pain as they would be stuck there forever, never being able to move, and never being able to die, just to look at a quarry for the rest of eternity.

“Ahhhh...” the Doctor says, assessing the damage. “I think we’d best get back to the TARDIS.”

“Aye,” Jamie replies, followed by a long silence. “Actually, Doctor, d’ye have one of those memory wipe things? I’ve seen corpses of hundreds of Englishmen, but I’ve never wanted to kill meself until now.”

“Ah, yes, Jamie. As a matter of fact, I do.” They start walking back to the TARDIS, and suddenly the Doctor’s solemn frown turns into a smile of glee as he claps his hands together. “After that, how about a game of Tiddlywinks?”

The New Bedroom

By Comfy Anon

The walls were painted with an ancient, alien design, breathing with crimsons and limes and oranges, all perfectly arranged into a canvas displaying the most beautiful array of color and artistic expertise that she had ever seen. It was blindingly beautiful.

“This is the bedroom?” Amy asked, sitting down on the bed inside the small room. Beyond the alluring design on the wall, there was only this bed and a small rocking chair in the corner.

“Do you like it?” The Doctor asked. His eyes gleamed with hope - he did one more quick gaze across the artistry before returning to Amy, holding back a smile as much as he possibly could.

“It’s...nice.”

“Nice?” The Doctor’s hope fell to devastation in an instant. “I painted this myself!”

“No you didn’t,” Amy corrected. “The walls are beautiful, it’s just...have you ever seen a bedroom before? It’s more than just a bed and a chair. Why a chair, of all things?”

“Sometimes you just need to sit. I’ve seen a bedroom before, Amy.”

“I need a dresser. And a mirror! Or even just a bedside table. Oh, and I need a toilet connected to the room. I’m not going to go wandering through the TARDIS in my nightie every time I need to use the loo.”

“I’ve seen you in your nightie before, Amy.”

She glared at him. She had momentarily forgotten their first adventure together. “Well, what about Rory?”

“What about Rory?” The Doctor demanded.

“Sometimes he sleeps without pants. You don’t want to see that, do you?”

The Doctor plunked down on the bed next to Amy. “No, I suppose he wouldn’t like that. Okay. What if I put the toilet in the corner over there?”

“No, Doctor. A separate room for the toilet.”

“Why?”

“What do you mean, why?” Amy stood up, feeling excessively attacked over her toilet preferences.

“Why can’t you do more than one thing in your bedroom? Why can’t you use the toilet in here? You humans use a whole room for just sleeping! Why do you have a whole room for not being awake in?” He shook his head. “I’m never going to get over that.”

“Trust me, Rory and I do more in the bedroom than sleep.” She sat back down on the bed.

The Doctor gave her a confused look, barely processing her statement. “I’m not an interior decorator, Amy! You said you wanted a new bedroom and I got you one. I had to fight the TARDIS on it, too. She didn’t want to get rid of the bunk beds. I can understand why.” The Doctor became proud, straightened his bowtie, and said, “Bunk beds are--”

“No, they’re not. And they’re especially not when the TARDIS lands and Rory is thrown out of bed. This floor isn’t even carpeted! It’s a rather rude awakening.”

“The TARDIS doesn’t have carpets! It’s a time machine, not a five-star hotel. It’s a three-star hotel, at best.”

“Look, Doctor, the bedroom’s great. I don’t need a carpet. Or a dresser. Just a toilet. Please, for the love of God, we need a toilet. I’m not letting this go.”

“You don’t need a toilet! Just use the one down the hall. I’m not going to be waiting outside your room every night to see Rory without any pants.” The Doctor stood up to leave, visibly frustrated. His handiwork was never appreciated.

“Has it always been this difficult being with you?” She called out before he could leave. The Doctor stopped. “Your other friends - the ones before me, I’ve seen pictures of them. Did they sleep here?”

“Yes, they stayed with me. And none of them had toilets connected to their rooms! Or carpets. Actually, my interior decorating skills have gotten better over the years. You should be grateful - the walls used to be all white in here, you know. White walls and roundels. Some would call it lazy, I call it minimalist.” His hand flourished as he emphasized the last word, and he smiled as he reflected on the past. He stared at the chair in the corner of the room, losing his mind to the memories.

After a moment, Amy asked, “Do you miss it?”

He snapped back to reality. “Miss what?”

“That. The minimalist TARDIS. Your old friends. Do you get nostalgic for the past like humans do?”

The Doctor thought for a moment. The question was a complicated one. Amy noticed the strain running through his mind and patted the bed, inviting him to sit down again. He did.

“It’s different with Time Lords,” he said quietly. “My reasons for travelling have changed over the years - at first I ran away to be a part of the universe. I was a rebel. Didn’t want to stay on Gallifrey. I just ran for a while - seeing what I could, and enjoying it, but it was always done to spite the Time Lords. I made some friends over the years, and they showed me how beautiful the universe is. I learned to see it from their perspective. It was fresh. And exciting. And I loved it.” He went quiet. “Time passed. Things happened. I stopped travelling. Then I started again. I made friends. They taught me, again. How wonderful it all is. But now, I travel for a different reason. To escape the bad things.” He paused, gazing at the chair again. “Sorry, I got a little off topic there. To answer your question, yes. I miss it. Sometimes I wish it could be simple again. It all started out as a mild curiosity in a junkyard, and sometimes I just wish it stayed that way. But then I see your face. And I see Rory’s face. And I see the universe and the joy it puts on your faces. And I don’t need anything else.” He stopped and gazed blankly at the rocking chair.

Amy didn’t need to say anything. She didn’t deserve to say anything to that. She simply hugged the Doctor. “Thank you,” she said after a moment.

“For what?” He asked quietly.

“The bedroom. But I think we’re going to miss the bunk beds a little. Between you and me, it’s

hilarious when Rory falls out of the bed.”

The Doctor sprung back to life. “Well, we can certainly fix that!” He said, waving his arms in the air in excitement.

Amy quickly lowered his arms for him. “No, no. No need for that. But the toilet?”

He smiled, whirling off the bed. “Amelia Pond,” he smiled and straightened his bowtie once more. “I will get you a toilet!” He swaggered towards the door before stopping suddenly. “That sounded a lot more dramatic in my head.”

Amy laughed. “Get out of here, ya big loaf. And don’t forget to pick up Rory. Lord knows what he’s going to bring home from that Star Wars convention.”

The Doctor exited gracefully. Amy sprawled across the bed; if there was one thing the TARDIS had going for it, the beds were always comfortable. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw that old rocking chair staring at her in the corner. She went over to inspect it. The wood was old and dusty. The Doctor could have at least cleaned it before putting it in the room. Looking at the back, she noticed that there was a name carved into the wood: “Victoria”. Amy wondered if Victoria had had difficulty getting the Doctor to let her carve her name into his furniture.

Amy sat down in the chair, rocking back and forth. She may not have been the first person in the Doctor’s life, and she certainly wasn’t going to be the last, but she appreciated that she had the opportunity to be a part in that magnificent man’s life at all. And she appreciated that he still cared enough to connect a toilet to the room.

Silencio

By Gallifrey_Immigrant

Reconstruction of Shona's interview based on audio and visual record:

V: Tell me your name.

S: Shona McCullough.

(A cough. Sounds like Shona's.)

V: Do you remember why you were inside the blue object?

S: The TARDIS?

V: Answer the question.

S: I don't remember why exactly. The Doctor left me in there, I think.

V: Explain who this Doctor is.

S: Who are you people? Tell me why I woke up with dead people all around me! Where's Frank?

(A rustling of paper. Then, V sighs.)

V: I'm part of a private unit that researches unusual and possibly dangerous items. That blue object has unknown properties. You are the first person to be found inside.

S: So, you're like the X-files?

V (laughs): I suppose. So, what do you know of the ship?

S: The Doctor got us landed somewhere. She looked really tired, like she needed a nap. I've never seen him sleep, but--

V: Him?

S: Sorry. Yeah, she used to be a he. I still mix up the gender pronouns sometimes. Anyway, the Doctor was in bad shape. She was talking to Frank—the engineer—telling him that the radiation outside was messing with the TARDIS. She didn't even notice me at first....

V: Tell me more about the Doctor.

S: She's like fire and ice. Or I dunno, that's what I heard someone else say. I'm not good at describing things. She's weird, she's fun, she wears a black cap, and she likes to sit on tables.

V: Okay. What's her opinion on humans?

S: I never told you she wasn't human.

(A long pause ensues.)

S: Where's Frank? And what have you done with the Doctor? And why do I remember waking up beside dead people?

(A rustling of paper. Or at least it sounds like paper. It might be something else).

V: Hello, Shona. My name is Director Vera. Tell me about the TARDIS.

S: ...Where am I? Something feels weird...

V: Please answer my questions.

S: I...I travel with the Doctor and Franklin. At least I think I do. Something went wrong with the TARDIS...or something had gone wrong...at that time, the Doctor will go and was trying to fix it.

V: You mean she was going and trying to fix it.

S: No. She will go, and was trying to fix it. She was trying to fix a mistake in the past, that she will do in the future.

V: What was the mistake?

S: Letting you all live.

(Shona lets out a high-pitched scream. The rustling sounds start, and get louder. But Shona keeps screaming.)

V (HARD TO HEAR OVER S's SCREAMS): What the...my amnestics? Why aren't they working?

(Shona stops screaming.)

S: Sorry about that. I have a headache....ugh. By the way, I take offense to memory wipes. Not cool.

[Note: Vera wants it to be known that Shona's eyes are glowing bright blue at this point. Shona seems unaware of this.]

S: Why are you looking at me like that?

V: Why do you think you've been memory wiped?

S: Because I'm not stupid. I may not have finished college yet, but I'm not stupid. I could sense you intruding on my mind. I can remember what you said before. Plus, you said amnesiacs or something. Are those like Men in Black thingies?

V: We thought that would be best to avoid you remembering harsh details. We were concerned about memetic hazards.

S: You're afraid of cat pictures?

V: Never mind. Just know that I'm not the bad guy here. I just want to know who the Doctor is, and what she has to do with the TARDIS.

S: Come closer. I can show you.

A loud static appears in the recording. According to later analysis, the signal originated from the blue object known as the tardis. The recording picks up 20 minutes later.

B: Tell me who those dead people were. Did they just show up in there from freakin' Narnia?

V: Calm down, Barron.

B: Oh piss off, Vera. We're gonna need to quarantine you anyway. We don't know what that girl did to you in there.

S: I don't even remember--

V: You told me earlier that the Doctor was scared of you. Was scared when you appeared in the TARDIS. Why?

S: I...told you that?

V: Yeah. Before the tape got screwy.

B: Vera, shut up. Listen, who were those dead people?

S: I don't know. I woke up with you weirdos surrounding me, while I was in a pile of dead people. Before that...I just remember the Doctor being angry, and desperate. And she and Frank were messing with the TARDIS engines. They were malfunctioning. I wanted to help, but the Doctor didn't let me. She never lets me do cool stuff.

B: That's all?

S: Yeah. Sorry. Um...do you guys know where Frank and the Doctor are? Please don't wipe me again. It tickles in a bad way.

B: You're the only recorded living person in that blue box for over 100 years.

(A short pause.)

S: Shite.

B: Shite indeed.

V: Shona. One more question. Why was the Doctor afraid of you?

S: Eltyibvo theya Uroli

B: Huh?

V: Oh god. Stop her.

Vera begins to scream, and vomits blood, then appears to have a seizure. Barron starts to scream, and collapses on the ground. Shona looks horrified, but can't stop herself from talking in an unknown language.

A man appears in frame, with earmuffs on. He's an older man, and wears a plumbers' clothes. Has the look of a working class man. He points a cylindrical device at Shona, who stops muttering.

S: Frank! You're alive!

F: Suppose so. She said this might happen.

S: What now?

F: I'm not sure. I think the Doctor's bitten off more than she can chew this time.

S: Oh no...I can feel it again...Ertiolps agtioko lopinastayuolaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Frank falls down, his body jerking. Shona begins to close her eyes, and then falls down herself.

Silencio.

After report:

This footage was recovered from the dead body of a Director Vera...by a Professor Vera. A few years ago, in the radiation zone, a group of dead bodies appeared, along with a mysterious blue box. After investigating, these bodies appear to be perfect copies of all the staff of this facility. Furthermore, upon reviewing the belongings of all these perfect clones, it appears these dead people, when alive, were studying the sudden appearance of dead bodies that looked exactly like them. It appears our clones were working in an alternate universe version of our agency, and were studying the anomalous properties of a blue box. The description of that blue box matches the

blue box that appeared in our reality.

Every single dead body matches someone within the agency. Interestingly, the man known as Frank has not appeared among the dead. Professor Vera has requested, and been denied, a chance to investigate inside the blue box. We feel that might not be prudent, as the effects on Professor Vera upon watching footage of Shona's conversation with Officer Vera has been startling noticeable. Barron has advised shutting off all contact to the blue box. That has been denied.

Note: A few days ago, a redheaded nude woman appeared in the blue box. She identifies herself as Amy Pond. Approval to communicate with her is pending.

Marshall BTFO...Again!

By FNA AND FNA's Sibling

“Huh...” The Doctor tapped the screen impatiently with his finger. “That doesn’t make any sense”

“What doesn’t make sense?” called Clara from the console room balcony, where she was browsing the bookshelves.

“These atmospheric readings, they’re funny. They’re funny atmospheric readings.”

Clara pulled an old emerald colored tome off a shelf and held it aloft, half paying attention. “Could you be a tiny bit more specific than that, Doctor?”

As the Doctor started to respond, however, the Tardis veered sideways with a groan. Clara’s book fell out of her hands as she clung tightly to the railing. “*Doctor?!*”

“I’m working on it!” he called, flipping switches madly.

Zwhorp! Crash! Boom!

The Doctor and Clara lunged sideways as the TARDIS shook, the console exploding in their faces. The TARDIS groaned to a halt as they got up from the floor. The lights slowly dimmed until they went out. Red lights activated, barely illuminating the console.

“Doctor, what’s happened?” asked Clara

“The Tardis seems to be having another one of her episodes” the Doctor said as he tried to pull the takeoff lever to no avail. “We’ve lost all power to the console”

“Well, what do we do?” asked Clara

“Well, we’d have to verify what caused this, which worries me since there’s not many things in this universe that can just drain the Tardis of its energy” the Doctor replied while making his way to the door.

The Doctor gazed at the door and grinned. “Even after so many years, you know what’s one thing I never get tired of, Clara?” He looked back at the young woman, not waiting for an answer.

“Wondering what’s on the other side of that door.”

The door opened and the Doctor slowly exited the Tardis, followed by Clara. They immediately found themselves in a gigantic gray room full of boxes of all sizes.

“Where are we?” asked Clara

“Seems to be some sort of ship or station” said the Doctor as he put his finger in his mouth and then held it up.

“Recycled oxygen... We’re in space”

Suddenly creatures appeared from behind the boxes.

“Oh look Clara, they’ve got *guns*. How brave they are.”

“Charming, this lot is,” she agreed.

The Doctor pulled the sonic screwdriver from an inside pocket and held it toward Clara. “Do you want to do the honors this time?”

Clara took the sonic and aimed it toward the ceiling of the large room they had walked into.

Immediately after, all the guns in the hands of these new extra-terrestrials flew into the air and stuck to the extremely large magnet that was apparently there. The creatures looked around and at the ceiling in momentary confusion.

“Run, Clara!”

And they ran out of the room.

And into another room.

This one much larger.

So large, in fact, that they were standing on a platform far enough from the ground that a fall would result in one or at least several legs broken. A long tightrope connected their platform with the next.

“I hope you went to circus camp as a kid, Clara” said the Doctor, turning to his companion.

“I... didn’t. Did you?”

“I did. It was actually quite illuminating.” The Doctor noticed something lying on the ground and picked it up. It was a black umbrella with a red question sign handle. “This reminds me of something I once had...” he mused. “Ah, but it can’t be!”

He tossed the umbrella to Clara. “You’re up first, circus girl.”

“What, to cross *that*?” she asked, gesturing towards the tightrope and the void that lay below it. “Are you insane?”

“We need to get to the other platform so we can get on *that* ship” The Doctor pointed to a smaller spaceship that was indeed parked on the platform across the void.

Somehow, Clara made it across.

Without dying, to be exact.

The Doctor approached the edge of the platform, readying himself.

“*Stop them!*” A voice boomed.

The voice seemed familiar to The Doctor but he couldn’t quite place it. Meanwhile, the creatures had caught up to him. A small group emerged onto the platform the Doctor stood on.

The Doctor did the only thing he could. He flung the old umbrella at the creatures and managed to nail one in the forehead with the tip. The creature fell flat on its back.

Fueled by the adrenaline of such a shot, the Doctor ran the length of the tightrope.

Somehow, he made it across.

Without dying, to be exact.

With a loud hiss, the ship’s door opened and more creatures emerged from it.

“It was supposed to be me, Doctor...” muttered one of the creatures as it walked forward

“Huh? Silunns aren’t supposed to talk...” said The Doctor

“I know, Doctor. But I can” said the creature as it started pulling it’s face off.

“*Kris Marshall?!?*”

“Anyway... You!” exclaimed the Doctor turning to point at the woman “Why was Kris Marshall

threatening me? And all the way out here?”

“Well... He was very hurt after you regenerated into me. Every prediction and betting site was rooting for him... Guess he truly believed he was the only viable choice at the end” she shrugged. “But it ended up being me and now he seeks to destroy you to prevent me from ever happening.”

She chuckled. “Some poor souls thought he’s gonna be a companion too... Poor bloke.”

“Well he somehow managed to somehow drain the Tardis’s power, I wonder what he’s doing with the Silunn...”

“That doesn’t really matter. To you, anyway. Here’s what you need to get her working again” she said as she handed the Doctor a ball shaped object. “Put that in the Artron input and you should be good”.

“Thank you? But that doesn’t help me at all with the situation, I need to know what’s happening”.

“Don’t worry about that now. In time, it’ll be your turn to do all of this” said The Doctor as she walked back to her Tardis.

“Now go!” she said, closing the door.

THUD VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP

The Doctor and Clara were left standing there... confused.

“Well that was certainly something wasn’t it?” Clara sighed.

Suddenly, noises were heard. More Silunn started emerging from the shadows.

“Come on, time to go!” The Doctor exclaimed.

Snarling and crying echoed from behind them as they hastily ran back to the Tardis.

Clara opened the door as the Doctor rushed in behind her, slamming the door shut behind him.

BANG! The Tardis shook harshly.

“Boy, they are really trying to get rid of you”

“Yeah well, I’m a dangerous man”

“Not for long it seems...” she said rolling her eyes.

“Piss off, Clara”.

As the Doctor managed to fit the object into the artron input, the console room suddenly sprung back to life.

“Let’s get the fuck out of here” he said, pulling a lever.

THUD VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP VWORP

Variety

By Helm

An adventure with the Ninth Doctor, Rose Tyler, and Jack Harkness

A dusty breeze rippled through the stalls and shops of the marketplace. Flags and tarpaulin bristled and shook, rickety stalls were creaking with age. Men, women and problematic androids bartered, argued, and traded. Hands shook and arrangements were made, although pinkie promises and palm spitting were outlawed out of consideration for those with tentacle grafts and over active xenothyroids. It was among this busy marketplace clamour that the sound of materialisation appeared unnoticed. Just off the main concourse a blue police telephone box had appeared, out of place and out of time, an unknown quantity on this alien world.

The doors of the box opened and the Doctor strode out, leaving the door ajar. He was humbly dressed in dark clothes with a battered leather jacket. His hair was black and cut short. The simplicity of his clothes served to accentuate the absurdity of his features. There was an alien nature to the size of his nose and ears, as if the upper half of his face had been replaced with a model of a sensory homunculus. He was followed by a blonde teenage girl wearing grey jogging bottoms and a bright red Manchester United football strip emblazoned with the word "Vodafone". She was followed by a tall, strapping, middle-aged man in black jeans, a white vest and burgundy suspenders. His face was chiselled with a seemingly perpetual expression of cheek and scandal. His trousers were at least 3 sizes too small.

"The year is 4852 and we're in the marketplace district of Panhandelion, a small outpost in the Mandelbulb galaxy." The Doctor spoke with a thick, but understandable Northern accent.

"Everyone feeling the heat?"

"Boiling," said Rose, the blonde girl. She grabbed the ends of her strip and tied them into a knot behind her back, exposing her midriff.

"Glad I left my coat in the TARDIS," said Captain Jack, the sun gleaming across his biceps, coated in a thin layer of sweat.

"You'll both burn," said the Doctor condescendingly, seemingly unfazed by the heat.

“Factor fifty on the twins Doctor?” joked Rose as the trio left the alleyway, Jack lightly flicking one of the Doctor’s ears.

“Yes, very funny,” scowled the Doctor as the three time-travellers merged into the crowd. “Let’s not forget that we’ve got a job to do.”

“Why do we need this ‘Layer-root-thing’ again?” asked Rose, the heat distracting her from the task at hand.

“I found a hole in my memory Rose, little thing in my head blacked out. Should be nothing, people forget things all the time. Except this is me. I don’t just have blank spots for no reason. So this Layscreep extract, it will let me uncover this memory.”

“I had a run in with a Layscreep once,” Jack added. “Slippery little things but pretty safe. Knew a guy, he bred them for sale. Great moustache. Slippery little thing, but slightly less safe.” Jack cracked a smile thinking of more simple times.

“And that’s why I got the TARDIS to scan your memories and locate our slippery little friend,” said the Doctor with a smug expression resting on his face. Jack’s smile vanished. “When we meet him, Rose and I will hang back, you can go forward and remind him of how good a dancer you are. Five minutes and we’re done.”

“So just to clarify, we finally have a plan that involves me flirting and you not stopping me?”

“Don’t get any ideas. This is strictly a one-off situation. Just don’t make a scene.”

Rose snorted slightly. If there was anything that Captain Jack Harkness could be relied upon to do it was making a scene.

The stall came into sight soon enough. The man was as Jack had described. He was exceptionally thin with bones like twigs. His skin was a rather unpleasant shade of yellow and coated in sweat but his most prominent feature was an oversized handle bar moustache dyed the most wondrous shade of green.

“Hey, Rapabold isn’t it?” spoke Jack in the voice he reserved for his most intimate encounters. The

man looked up and beneath his moustache a toothy grin unfurled.

“Jack Harkness? My oh my this is a pleasant surprise!” with a voice deeper than a bass trombone. The two then entered a conversation of the sort only former lovers can have, while the Doctor and Rose watched from a distance. She had a slightly concerned expression on her face.

“Are you sure in the future that everybody is like Jack?” she asked.

“Pretty sure,” replied the Doctor. “You get better at knowing when and how to talk to people though. It would never work in 21st century Britain, everybody is using the mouths and not their brains. In the future though, you start to change, you start to advance.”

The pair could see that the man had brought out a small cage with an odd creature inside. It was as if a camel and a potato had been fused together and then crumpled down to the size of a grapefruit. This was the Layscreep. Jack moved to take a closer look but the Doctor could see that Rapabold’s grip around the cage was tightening.

“Of all the body parts I don’t think Jack uses his brain in these situations,” said Rose, a coy smile creeping across her face.

“No, I imagine in these situations he uses his legs,” whispered the Doctor, grabbing her by the hand. It was at this moment that Jack tore the cage and the Layscreep from Rapabold’s grasp, stumbling back towards them.

“RUN!” shouted the Doctor as the three ran back to the TARDIS, the booming voice of the moustached Rapabold cursing at them from behind his stall.

Inside the TARDIS, the Doctor was busy working amongst a flurry of cables, searching for the extension leads suitable for non-sentient life. He grabbed the cyan cable and tossed it to Jack.

“Jack, find a port in the Layscreep and plug the cable in,” said the Doctor, plugging one of a splitter cable into the console and the other into his own ear.

“I don’t think the ears are big enough on this thing Doctor.”

“Captain Jack, you’re from the 51st century. Find a port and lets go.” The Doctor had a tone of both embarrassment and exasperation. As he turned back to the console controls the creature gave a small yelp and with one throw of a lever, they were in flight.

“What’s happening Doctor?” asked Rose as the timeship rattled them from side to side as it flew through the vortex.

“I haven’t got enough power to refill the full memory. I’m using the TARDIS to take us to where the memory can be resolved. Where we can find the truth.”

Suddenly the engines stopped. Filled with excitement the three travellers left the TARDIS once more. The Layscreep whimpered.

“Where are we now Doctor?” asked the Captain, “The décor looks 21st century but the underlying structure looks much more modern.”

“I’d say around 3200, though I might be wrong. No idea where we are. Bit colder though.”

They wandered slightly down the corridor, away from the safety of the TARDIS. The lights were dim, emergency power only. There was just enough light to see the items mounted to the walls. Items which were all too familiar to Rose.

“Doctor, why are there football strips on the walls?”

“Don’t be ridiculous...” started the Doctor, but she was right. All along the walls were strips. Leicester, Everton, England, even Barcelona. There were more than just strips though. The walls were covered in photographs, trophies, certificates and memorabilia.

“I take it football means something different in Rose’s time then?” asked Jack, with that corny little smile of his.

“Lights Captain, try and find the light switch,” instructed the Doctor, taken aback by the sights he was seeing. His Gallifreyan mind was racing, desperately trying to piece things together. It didn’t make sense. The temperature was cold, but not naturally. He could feel it moving through the body of the structure, carried in the pipes above his head. The football strips. Why would he be brought here. Why would he have black spot in his memory to do with this. Unless...

The puzzle clicked together in the Time Lord’s mind just as Jack flipped a switch illuminating the room. The corridor extended to an end chamber, which contained a cube lined with pipes and tubes. The Doctor looked up and his fear was confirmed. A large yellow sphere, wrapped in a red label bearing the word he had been dreading.

Walkers.

At this signal three identical androids, each bearing the visage of Wayne Rooney, emerged from the shadows and with inhuman speed and strength they restrained the time travellers.

"Doctor I don't understand," gasped Rose, "why do these robots look like Wayne Rooney?"

"He was always a robot Rose, but that's not the point," said the Doctor, his voice filled with panic. "This place, the cold, the pipes, this is a cryogenic station!" The centre cube hissed and its front face began to slide apart, a blue light emanating from it.

"But this technology is old," shouted Jack. "Whoever built this built it centuries ago. Who could do that?"

"A cryogenic stasis chamber, a retinue of android Wayne Rooney's and the universes greatest collection of football memorabilia, all financed by Walkers? There's only one man it could be."

And from the centre chamber, nude and dripping with defrosted vital fluids, came the goatee bearing man known throughout the universe as Gary Lineker.

"You must be joking," muttered Rose, suddenly very conscious of the strip she was wearing. But Gary was not interested in her.

"After all this time Doctor. Have you come to confess?"

"What is he on about Doctor?"

"Before I met you Rose, I wasn't always as caring. I wasn't always as kind. I hurt people Rose. That's why I'm here, isn't it Gary? That's why I'm here?"

"This facility is many things Doctor. Part of it is the most powerful transmitter that the licence fee could afford. Everything you say now shall be transmitted across all of space and time. Do this. Confess, repent, and all shall be forgiven. If you do not, then Rooney shall dispose of your companions." Gary Lineker smiled at the Doctor with a grin which spoke of one purpose. Vengeance.

"Then I confess," spoke the Doctor, tears bursting from behind his eyes. "Rose, I was bullied at school, from the age of five by a girl who was seven. It happened every play time. Play time would become terror time for me. She would trap me against the wall. She would make me do sums or maths as we would now call it. It really coloured my life. I didn't want to go to school, I certainly didn't want to go out to playtime. But I was a bully too. There was a very sensitive boy. And at break time I would make him give me some of his crisps. I did it a few times. And I am very ashamed of it. But that's not all. When I travelled through time I didn't go to see stars and galaxies, and planets of wonder and excitement. No Rose, I went back in time and took that child's crisps. The sick pleasure of a thousand versions of myself asking this child continuously for his crisps. And this child was Gary Lineker."

"The confession is complete," said Gary, walking back towards his stasis chamber. "Look upon the Doctor now, and know that he feels shame."

The three walked back to the TARDIS, the Doctor still wiping tears from his eyes.

"It's alright Doctor," said Rose, desperately trying to comfort him. "It's only crisps."

The Doctor said nothing, only giving her a look with his dark, alien eyes.

A Crow in the TARDIS

By Grand Wizard Miller

A short adventure with the War Doctor

It was a rare moment of peace in the TARDIS, the Do- Warrior was relaxing, possibly for the first time since he joined the war, and then he heard something, "CAW, CAW". The Warrior got out of his seat and put down his tea to go find the source of the sound. As he was walking around the console of his machine, just as he was passing by the Zigzag plotter he saw the source of the sound. A... crow? "What are you! Did the daleks make you? What about the high council? Do they want to spy on me?" The Warrior shouted at the crow, he pulled out his Sonic Screwdriver to scan it. It was... just a earth crow, no secret weapon, no spying device, no bomb, just... a crow.

At that moment the crow jumped onto the Warrior's shoulder, which made him jump, something not trying to kill him was a new feeling, a feeling of, happiness, or was it affection? Either way, the Warrior calmed and went back to his seat, "Now what should I name you little one", the Doctor no more said to the crow, "I know! How about something few have anymore?"

He continued, "I shall call you... Hope!"

The Doctor no more happily exclaimed this, and he even felt something he had not felt since the start of the war, a smile on his face. In this small moment of peace, it was as if the War was stopped, as if none had died, as if peace was in the universe again, as if all the fighting, all the death, all the pain and suffering ever happened. The War Doctor, for once, was happy.

The Late Tuesday Afternoon of the Doctor

By Doctor Winston O'Writing

“What’s happening? Where am I?”

The Seventh Doctor wheeled about on his heels, lost in the fog. His paisley scarf fluttered in the medium-strength wind. Gravel crunched underfoot as he desperately searched for some sort of clue. “Hello? Ace? Mel?” Nothing. He patted his umbrella against his head in concentration, then dashed away, hoping to catch the fog off guard. He didn’t. Worry etched itself onto his imp-like features.

Then, he saw a figure, back turned to him, standing alone in the swirling tendrils of mist. He called out, but the shape did not twitch. The shape was that of a grey-haired man in a drab coat and trousers.

“Excuse me! Can you hear me?” The Doctor cried, scrambling towards him. Then, a booming voice sounded through the fog like an arctic vessel cracking through a sheet of ice.

“Doctor,” it said.

The Doctor stopped in his tracks. “Yes? What do you want?”

“You have been requisitioned.”

“And to whom do I owe the pleasure?” The Doctor said, resolute.

“We are the Gradeans,” the voice bellowed, “you already know much about our race, Doctor.”

“Ah yes, the Gradeans,” the Doctor began, “inter-dimensional quality controllers. If an unsuspecting galactic hero is behaving in a below average or patently offensive manner, you are liable to appear and punish them for their transgressions.”

“Correct, Doctor,” said the voice. “Then you know why we have brought you here to this foggy rock quarry intended to deliberately evoke the beginning of your most narratively engaging and enjoyable adventure so far.”

“You’ve done a very admirable recreation,” the Doctor conceded, “even the mysterious figure in the fog over there. What’s this fellow’s business here?”

“Doctor, as you know we are sixth-dimensional beings. We cannot confront you in your paltry three dimensions. Therefore we have also requisitioned one of your future incarnations in order to properly interface with you.”

The Doctor hesitantly walked towards the man, who still stood facing away from him. “How far in my future?”

“Six regenerations, but technically five if one agrees with the Gradeans’ judgement that Moffat’s decision to insert a previously-hidden incarnation between the eighth and ninth was tacky and unnecessary. But also technically seven if one counts the pointless and deliberately manipulative tenth-to-tenth regeneration at the end of Series Four,” the voice rambled, leaving the Doctor somewhat confused.

“He’s a ways off from me, then?” The Doctor asked, looking for clarity.

“He is over two thousand years older than you, which is quite bizarre when you consider Moffat allowed the Doctor to be in his eleventh body for over half of his total life. The Gradeans consider this to be aggressively self-indulgent.”

The Doctor regretted asking. “Right. Are you going to speak through him, or have I got the wrong end of the stick here?”

“The Gradeans ask for patience. Compacting our meta-dimensional intellect into such a primitive configuration takes time and thought. This incarnation is played by actor Peter Capaldi, who is well known for his role as Malcolm Tucker in the political comedy *The Thick of It*.” The Gradeans stopped. “You should know that the requisitioning of future incarnations is slightly... problematic.”

“How so?”

Another break from the Gradean voice. “Actually, it is irrelevant. Do not worry about it. Forget we said anything.”

There was a pregnant pause.

“Are you in there?” The Doctor asked, creeping up on the grey-haired man. Suddenly, the man bolted around, and fixed his angry Scottish glare on the Doctor.

“Fuck me,” he sighed angrily, “do you know what that fucking meta-beam has only gone and done?”

“What’s-”

“It’s fucking requisitioned the wrong fucking character. It’s got one fucking function, maintained by the most advanced sixth-dimensional race in existence and they still cannot sort out their shitty fucking meta-beam.”

“Is that the Gradeans talking now?” The Doctor said, growing more concerned by the second.

“Of course it fucking is. Who else is it gonnae be? Fucking K-9?” The future Doctor spluttered.

“Haven’t you invited me here for a reason?”

The future Doctor raised his terrifying eyebrows. “You’re right there. We Gradeans have got some very serious business with yourself.”

“I see,” said the Doctor, hoping to get things back on track, “a secret mission for me? A covert assignment?”

“I suppose it’s a sort of mission,” nodded the future Doctor. “We’ll give you the big fucking neon headline of the whole mission right here.” He raised his hands, gesturing along with each word. “You’re. Fucking. Dogshit.” The Doctor was taken aback. “What was that?”

“I’m sorry, did I fucking stammer? Is it my fucking dour Scottish accent making it hard tae fucking understand what I’m saying?” He let that colourful phrase hang in the air for a moment. “You’re not here tae conduct any secret fucking MI6 mission for the Gradeans. You’re a fucking item on the Gradean tae-do list. ‘Take out the bins.’ ‘Record The fucking Apprentice.’ ‘Sort out that fucking herniated bowel of a Doctor Who.’ Get your head out of your paisley-patterned arse.”

“I’ve been detained by the Gradeans? But why?” The Doctor’s jaw dropped.

“Have you not been listening to me? You’ve been detained by the Gradeans because you are the shittiest Doctor Who we’ve ever fucking seen.” The future Doctor seemed to calm down for a moment. “We’ve really enjoyed watching Doctor Who, you know. It’s meant a lot tae us. It’s an important character tae the Gradeans,” instantly,

the rage boiled up above the surface, “then a fucking nasally-voiced cunt comes along and fucking tramples on twenty years of solid television. The fact is, one Tom Baker is worth a fucking TARDIS full of your fucking paper-thin interpretation. And you know the thing about TARDISes.”

“They’re bigger on the inside,” the Doctor reeled off without thinking.

“I mean, even Peter fucking Davison had more gravitas than you. And he was a fucking embryo.”

“Don’t I get a chance to defend myself?”

The future Doctor pondered this a moment. “You know what? I’m feeling generous today. Why not. You’ve got thirty seconds.”

The pressure of a time constraint barrelled down on the Doctor like the force of fifty Earth atmospheres. “Well, Remembrance of the Daleks was pretty decent. Ace is a good companion, and er, the theme music at the start is a bit different.”

“Time’s up.” Silence. “You suggested three things tae the Gradeans for consideration, Doctor. Let me go through them in order for you. First, Remembrance of the Daleks. The Gradeans will allow you that, because it’s the sole fucking highlight of your entire time as the Doctor. The sole fucking highlight,” he repeated deliberately. “It’s a fucking sorry state of affairs when the fucking outtake reels and blooper videos on YouTube are a more fucking appealing and engaging viewing experience than the fucking end product.”

“So a solid yes for the first one?”

“Second,” the future Doctor continued, completely ignoring the Doctor’s request for assurance, “the Gradeans are of the opinion that Ace is a fairly strong character, but it’s a waste of fucking effort because she shares the screen with a fucking twat in a question mark jumper. That’s you, by the way,” he added. “Thirdly, your opening music sounds like a cat getting a fucking unanaesthetised colonoscopy. It’s shit, even by Doctor Who music standards.”

The Doctor looked about in horror. “Does that mean my defence has been rejected?”

“Too fucking right, it does,” the future Doctor replied almost gleefully. “You have been deemed ‘massively under-par’ by an official Gradean quality control commission. The sentence is eternal detainment.”

“You can’t do this! In a couple of regenerations I get good again!” He pleaded on his knees with the future Doctor.

“One more thing, Doctor. This is strictly personal, not an official observation.”

The Doctor looked up at him, a sparkle of hope in his eye. “Yes?”

“You dress like the uncle who used tae sexually abuse me. You’ve got the whole fucking look sorted. But even a fucking slimy old cunt like him would have the good grace tae do his fucking top button up.” The Doctor, shellshocked, lowered his gaze in defeat. “Fuckity bye.” And with that, the future Doctor abandoned the Seventh Doctor to an eternity of wandering a Welsh gravel pit.

To Kill A Moose

By Grand Wizard Miller

A short adventure with the Fifth Doctor

On a quiet street corner, wedged between a park and broad high street, the TARDIS seeped into being. The groaning echoed up the road, but the no-one was around to hear it. The TARDIS door flew open, and Peri Brown, in a white blouse and flowery skirt, peered outside.

“It’s America, Doctor.”

“How can you tell?” came the muffled reply.

“Oh, the colour of the sky, the scent on the breeze,” she stifled a laugh, “and the big poster of Woodrow Wilson over there.” The Doctor, in his boyish, fair-haired fifth incarnation, appeared behind her, squinting. He brushed his fringe from his eyes and donned his red banded hat, which perfectly matched his Edwardian cricket gear.

“Right you are,” he said simply.

“Go on then, Doctor,” she said, grinning at the novelty of it, “what year is it?”

“I should’ve thought, as an American, you might tell me,” he joked, and followed her into the street.

“I’m a little rusty pre-World War Two is all.”

“Woodrow Wilson was elected twice, in 1912 and 1916. Either one of those I’d imagine.” The Doctor locked the TARDIS door. “Still, not quite sure *where* in 1912 or 1916 she’s brought us.”

“Let’s ask around,” Peri glanced down at the high street as it began to fill with figures in suits and bonnets.

The pair made their way up the street, as the daily bustle started. A few carts trundled by. It was all very quaint, Peri thought. Then, on their right, a woman in formal dress emerged from a building, and was taken aback by the two strangers. Peri approached, beaming.

“Good morning, I’m Peri and this is the Doctor,” she gestured to her friend, “we’ve just arrived in town and weren’t sure where we are.”

“Didn't you see the signs? You're in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.”

“Ah, of course,” the Doctor nodded.

“I suppose you're here for the speech at the Auditorium tonight,” her gaze jumped between the two rapidly.

“Whose speech would that be?” Peri asked.

The look of befuddlement reappeared on the woman's face. “Why, Theodore Roosevelt. He'll be at a fundraising dinner at the Gilpatrick Hotel tonight too,” she frowned slightly, and her eyes hovered over the British-sounding man before her, “the election is next month.”

“That's our evening plans settled, Doctor,” she turned to him, “some classic political theatre.”

“Thank you for your help,” the Doctor said.

“Not at all,” she replied perfunctorily and went on with her business.

Taking some time to wander, Peri and the Doctor found the signage for the Gilpatrick Hotel, but had failed to answer another question.

“Why didn't you ask that lady back there what year it is?” said Peri as they walked.

“I'm sorry Peri. It's quite difficult to ask a stranger what the year is without... upsetting social norms. You saw what a fright we gave her, and that was us acting naturally.” She eyed the celery stick on his lapel.

“You don't strike me as someone who cares for social norms, Doctor.”

“I have my moments,” he replied.

“We could find that Wilson poster again, see if it has the year on it.”

“That's not so prevalent in the early 20th century, I'm afraid. They need to make room for those really obtuse political slogans,” muttered the Doctor.

“The more things change,” Peri said.

Eventually, the pair had meandered back to the park near to the TARDIS. At the other end of the park was a beautifully ornate building – a bank or a hall, Peri guessed. It had a wonderful clock face, gilded and sparkling. Hoping to kill some time, the Doctor had retrieved a cricket set from one of the

TARDIS' many rooms and tried to get a cricket game with the locals going. Peri watched on in stitches as the Doctor stopped to explain the rules for the seventh time. The endeavour was abandoned after a player loosened his grip on the bat and catapulted it into a pond. Absentmindedly, Peri looked up at the clock. It read 6:45 pm. She stopped.

"That's not..." she breathed, walking over to the Doctor. He stood on the edge of the pond, looking forlorn. The worry on Peri's face was plain.

"What's the matter?"

"Doctor, it's 6:45. But that doesn't make any sense! We've only been here a few hours at most!" The Doctor's brow furrowed.

"They say time flies when you're having fun," he equipped his half-moon spectacles and inspected the clock on the opposite building, "but not that much."

"From where I was, it didn't look like you were having much fun anyway."

"Quite right. Something's wrong here, Peri," he said firmly, secreting the glasses away again, "and I intend on finding out what." He turned away and began jogging toward the TARDIS, but caught his foot on something laying in the grass. He regained his footing lithely, craning his head over the object. "The cricket bat?" Peri exclaimed, bewildered. "I saw that guy throw it in the pond not ten minutes ago." The Doctor knelt as he spoke.

"I only brought one bat; no-one else here had even heard of cricket, let alone owned a bat." His face was grabbed by a momentary look of madness. He took the hat off his head, and, full of precision and deliberation, threw it like a frisbee into the pond. It splashed down, floated for a second, and with a near-audible *pop* appeared back in the Doctor's grip.

"I was hoping that would work," said the Doctor, placing it back on his head, "Andy Warhol gave me this hat, and I'm loath to ask for another."

"What's going on, Doctor? Is this some pond-based anomaly? A 'time-pond'?"

"Not a pond-based anomaly, no," he said, "but I can give you a pond-based analogy."

"This ought to be good."

"A common misconception is that time runs linearly, with one event after another," he walked briskly

out of the park and back to the street, Peri in tow, “like a coursing river. Actually, it's more like a pond. All the water is there, but it doesn't necessarily *flow* around. You can drop in and out, you see.”

“I think I follow,” said Peri.

“If you throw a stone in a river, you disrupt the flow but only in one linear direction – the ripple will follow the stream. But throw a stone in a pond...”

“It ripples in all directions. A circle.”

“Exactly. Something around this temporal location has been disrupted. Not yet, but soon. We are feeling the first ripples.” Peri’s mind raced.

“Could it have something to do with Roosevelt’s speech tonight?”

“I'd stake my lives on it,” he said, “we've got to get to the Gilpatrick Hotel, and quick.” As the clock struck seven, they ran along the street and into the encroaching night.

Peri knew they were in the right place when she saw the crowd. Well-wishers, journalists scribbling in notebooks, photographers with unwieldy cameras, and a sleek black car all camped outside the hotel entrance, under dim street lights. It was another fascinating building – a stoic stone-and-metal design capped off with what looked like the tower of a castle reaching skyward. The windows were emblazoned with ‘Gilpatrick Hotel’ in flamboyant script. Even in a city of eyecatching architecture, this was a standout. She and the Doctor stood on the other side of the road, keeping watch.

“What time is it, Peri?”

She looked through a shop window and strained to read the clock on the adjacent wall. “Ten past eight,” she relayed gravely.

“The time dilation is getting worse,” said the Doctor, as the crowd came alive with cheers, camera snaps and applause. A figure, dressed in black, climbed into the car. “I think we've got our man.”

“Let's get closer, Doctor! I can barely see.”

The Doctor was quiet a moment, then spoke slowly. “I know what year it is.”

“Can it wait?” She started to walk forward, but was stopped by the Doctor’s outstretched arm.

“Don't go any closer, Peri!”

“What's happening?” She cried, seeing the sober apprehension on his face.

“It's October 14th, 1912”, he managed, “and Theodore Roosevelt is about to be assassinated.”

Bang.

Peri shut her eyes tight. She felt a deep, subterranean movement, a sort of *gliding*, only she knew she was stood still. She ventured to open her eyes, and saw she was now on that quiet street corner by the TARDIS. It was morning. She was OK.

“That was... bizarre,” she said, shaken.

“Someone has been throwing stones in the pond,” the Doctor stroked his chin, “more like a boulder in this case.”

“Is Roosevelt dead?”

“For the briefest of moments, yes. Only, Roosevelt was never assassinated on October 14th, 1912. He is shot today, that much is true, but lives. He's got another six years in him, and even then he's killed by a blood clot, not a bullet.”

“I'm guessing time didn't like that very much and pulled a reset.”

“Essentially. This is a fixed point. Quickly solved I should think.” He produced the TARDIS key and clicked open the door. “Oh.”

Peri arrived at his side. “I'm not sure this is the right police box.” The TARDIS was empty. A shell. A regular box.

“The ripple, Peri, the ripple in time,” he stammered, “it's swept away the TARDIS' interior dimensions. It needs to be solved if we want to leave, and the Gilpatrick Hotel is our best bet.”

“I'll admit I'm better at botany than early 20th century political history, Doctor. What else do you know about the attempt?” Peri pressed as they traced their path to the hotel.

“Roosevelt comes here on the campaign trail for his new party, the Bull Moose Party. He's seeking a third term - he's already been President from 1901 to 1909. He leaves the hotel, gets in his car, and *bang*, a man named John Schrank shoots him in the chest from close range. Being a keen hunter, he realises the wound is not mortal. He forgoes medical attention and delivers his ninety minute speech as planned.” The Doctor broke off, building suspense. “Roosevelt is saved by the contents of his coat

pocket – his glasses case, and his rolled up script if memory serves. The bullet’s course is sufficiently diverted to save him from any serious damage,” he said, impressed.

“*Serious damage?* I think I’d call getting shot in the chest ‘serious damage’.”

“Roosevelt wouldn’t,” the Doctor remarked.

They came to the Gilpatrick as the clock reached noon. The entrance was mostly clear, and radiant orange light spread out from the door.

“I don’t like the idea of grappling with some lunatic with a gun, Doctor.”

“Agreed,” he said, putting his hands in his pockets, “and directly intervening with the shooter may only make the schism worse.”

“Then we should talk to Roosevelt,” suggested Peri, “tell him to go out the back way or something.” The Doctor looked shocked.

“You can’t do that Peri,” he stressed, “that’s like trying to stop the stone from making ripples in the pond by filling it in with cement. Roosevelt must be shot tonight, but we have to ensure the bullet is deflected.”

“That means getting into the hotel,” Peri thought a moment, “but then what?”

“An ex-President is visiting, so security will be tighter than usual. It might not be as simple as making a reservation.” Then, struck by inspiration, he began rummaging in his coat pocket. “A few hundred years ago I was very kindly given some psychic paper by my people. Could be useful in a situation like this.”

“Psychic paper?”

“A blank bit of paper that says *exactly* what the reader wants it to say,” he explained, retrieving a little wallet from his pocket and showing it to Peri.

“A little cheap don’t you think, Doctor?” she teased.

“That’s why I stopped using it; makes things far too easy.”

They crossed the road, and strolled through the hotel doors. A charming lobby awaited them, as did a moustached receptionist in a gleaming red waistcoat.

“Welcome to the Gilpatrick,” he started, “can I help you?”

“Hello there,” the Doctor said, “I’m the Doctor and this is Peri. I suspect you will want to see our papers.” He handed over the wallet containing the psychic paper, grinning. The receptionist read it intently.

“Thank God you’re here,” he passed the wallet back, “I’ve lost five waiting staff this month, and it’s the biggest event of the year tonight.”

“We do have an impeccable sense of timing.”

“Changing room is through those doors,” the receptionist pointed brusquely to a set of double doors at the far end of the lobby. The Doctor thanked him, and the pair went where they were told.

“Waiting staff, Doctor?” Peri whispered. “I was hoping for a VIP dining experience.”

The Doctor looked bashful. “I’m sorry. I’m a little out of practice with it,” he said, inspecting the protective wallet.

“Still,” she continued, “we can get close to Roosevelt this way.”

“We’ll think of something,” the Doctor held open the door, and they went inside.

When they reappeared, dressed in curt waiting outfits, the clock was striking 5 pm. The dilation was increasing by the second.

“Now, the main hall,” said Peri, her voice echoing in the empty lobby.

“It shouldn’t be far.” They set off, following the stragglers and the sounds of merriment. Eventually, the trail led them to a set of doors, with golden handles and an intricate design on the glass. “Brave heart, Te- oh, never mind.” He pushed open the door, and walked into the centre of the dinner party. Table after pristinely laid-out table of suited gentlemen and their wives, under a blinding chandelier.

“We haven’t got long, Doctor.”

“I know,” he said measuredly, and pointed out the clock on the far wall, “less than three hours – but realistically only about twenty minutes. Picture Mount Rushmore and go from there.”

“Hold that thought Doctor, I think that’s him.” Peri pointed out a hulking man in a sleek black suit, guffawing loudly on a small table near the centre of the room. The Doctor and Peri charged forward through a maze of tables.

“I’ll make a small distraction, then you can rearrange his personal effects.”

He glided over to Roosevelt’s table, and she watched him speak breathlessly to the ex-President, hand outstretched. “Mr Roosevelt, sir,” he gushed, “what an honour to meet you.”

“A pleasure,” Roosevelt shook the waiter’s hand, perturbed by his forthrightness, “judging by your accent, I won’t be able to count on your vote next month, will I?”

“Well observed, Mr Roosevelt, but rest assured I would give you my vote if I had one.” Roosevelt was almost blushing, but the Doctor would not relent. “I have a favour to ask of you.” Roosevelt stayed silent. “I promised my late American father-in-law – who voted for yourself in the 1904 election - that I would challenge you to a boxing match should I ever meet you.” The hall fell quiet. Peri was horrified, first that the Doctor might come to some harm, and second that he would think such a dreadful plan could possibly work.

“I hardly think that is appropriate,” came Roosevelt’s hushed reply.

“Oh, come on, Mr Roosevelt,” the Doctor insisted, “what was it you said? ‘Don’t hit at all if it is honourably possible to avoid hitting, but never hit soft’.” Roosevelt looked around at the expectant faces. Sighing, he stood, taking off his overcoat and draping it over his chair. The Doctor said, “Do not take Mr Roosevelt for a thug, ladies and gents,” and turned to the uncertain spectators. “I have asked this of my own free will, without coercion and with full knowledge of the consequences.” He span on his heel once more to see Roosevelt with fists raised to his face. The Doctor scarcely had time to raise his own before the ex-President let fly a thudding left hook.

Rocked, the Doctor fell to the floor, pulling a table down on top of himself. Some sections of the crowd gasped; others cheered at the welcome introduction of violence to an otherwise dry political dinner. A small distraction, Peri thought. Several staff stepped forward, attempting to free the Doctor from the table’s weight. Roosevelt, who had turned slightly red, roused the men on his table and ordered them to help. Peri leapt forward, rifling through the pockets of Roosevelt’s coat. Finding the glasses case and script in the left-side pocket, she transferred them over to the other side and threw it over the back of the chair once more. By this point, the table had been moved and the Doctor lifted to his feet. He sported a small cut on the right temple, and was still bobbing around, disoriented. Roosevelt steadied

him, offering a hand.

“My apologies, sir,” he said.

“No need, Mr Roosevelt. That was a truly impressive hook.” The Doctor lightly patted his temple, flinching as his hand came back bloody.

Peri reached the Doctor, and he slumped onto her shoulder. “I’ll take him to the back,” she frowned, leading him out of the hall.

“Out of all the Presidents I’ve been hit by,” whispered the Doctor, “I think he might hit the hardest.”

“How many Presidents have tried to knock you out, Doctor?”

“Only ten or eleven,” he winced, “aiming for the whole set, you see.”

By the time they had changed back into their street clothes, the lobby was filled with the sounds of Roosevelt’s departure. The guests had come to see him off, forming a human blockade at the door, just as the clock ticked over into 7 pm.

“You definitely put the case and the script in the right pocket?” The Doctor pushed open the changing room door.

“It’s fine, Doctor,” Peri assured him, “I just want to know – who threw the stone in the pond, so to speak?”

“I’ve been wondering for a while now. There’s no way a divergence like this was random. It was calculated. Someone is to blame, I just can’t see them.” He gritted his teeth in frustration.

“Who is going to gain from Roosevelt dying now, and not in six years?”

“There’s nothing to be gained. Roosevelt must survive, otherwise the timeline clicks back, like it did earlier.”

“We’re in a dead end.”

“Unless...” the Doctor’s eyes widened, “unless you weren’t looking to change history at all.” He turned. “Unless you were just looking to *stop* history completely.”

“But we’ve corrected it,” Peri said, “I put the case and the script in his pocket.”

“Whoever this is, they’ll have back-ups. Failsafes. Little changes, barely perceptible, piling up until history simply must change. Too many to change – the calibre of bullet, the angle the shooter fires

from. You called it a dead end, but it's more like a dam; the ripples in the pond can't flow past it, so they collect together, bouncing off each other, making more ripples. Concentrated temporal energy."

"When he gets shot it'll go back to the start, then he'll get shot again, and again..."

"The culprit isn't looking to change human history, Peri. They're farming an infinite resource of energy, nestled away in a rather inconspicuous event in human history. After only a few cycles, the energy amassed, and the damage to time itself, would be unthinkable." The Doctor sounded as though he could barely believe what he was saying. Peri had gone very quiet. In fact, everything had gone very quiet. The Doctor looked around, to see the room frozen still. He heard echoing footsteps behind him, and then a familiar voice.

"The Doctor. It's been so long."

He faced her. "The Rani. Too long." She stood, imposing, at the other end of the lobby, in her vibrant red suit.

"When I saw that a Type 40 TARDIS was blundering into my carefully organised set-up, I almost blasted you out of the vortex," she smirked, "but when I realised it was you, I had a change of hearts."

"That was thoughtful of you," the Doctor said.

"I couldn't bring myself to harm my only intellectual equal. And besides," she gestured to the paused room, "I thought you might be impressed."

"This is nothing to be impressed about, Rani. This is incredibly dangerous, unethical too."

"Unethical? The man dies, and is instantly revived by the self-correction of the time stream. You said yourself earlier, Doctor, he is only dead for nanoseconds."

"And this freezing time trick, it's a bit tired I must say. I suppose we immune from its affect due to our proximity to the device and exposure to the time vortex."

She revealed a small black gadget, the size of her palm. "Very good. The Temporal Refractor *is* one of my more basic designs, inefficient too. That's why I've gone to all this trouble. It doesn't run on electricity, Zeiton-7, or anything so easily obtained."

"Temporal energy."

"It could prove crucial to my experiments. The possibilities are truly unlimited."

“Unlimited?” The Doctor frowned. “Maybe I could have a better look in your TARDIS. Just to be sure.”

“Absolutely,” she purred, “you will not be disappointed.”

She led him through the changing room’s emergency exit, and into a back alley. The Rani’s TARDIS, a pyramid of glass, was huddled next to a shed.

“I trust in return for my co-operation my TARDIS will be restored.”

“An easily-corrected side effect of the loop. My TARDIS is at the epicentre, so is mostly undisturbed. I would advise against straying too far from the console room, though. The dimensioning forces are under considerable stress.”

“I’m not surprised. By all accounts, your TARDIS should’ve been pulled apart at the seams. A time loop like this, I thought it was impossible.”

“Not impossible,” she opened the TARDIS door, “strenuous. As the loop begins anew, I must travel back to a preprogrammed point, freeze time with the Refractor, and move the pieces to my liking. Repeat ad infinitum.” They both went inside the dimly lit console room.

“You have to *use* the Refractor to get the energy to charge it? Seems flawed.”

“Once it has cycled a mere handful of times, I will have acquired enough temporal energy to charge the Refractor until the end of my regeneration cycle.” The Rani walked over to her TARDIS console.

“Speaking of which, you’ve been going through yours at an unenviable pace. On your fifth body already, only eight hundred years young.”

The Doctor grinned, pocketing his hands. “The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long.”

The Rani did not laugh. “Still on body number one, I take it?”

“Yes, Doctor. All science is observation. I observe,” she noted the cut on his head, “from a safe distance.”

“And what have you observed in regards to your Refractor?”

“It’s quite simple – if one has mastery over time’s very flow, one has mastery over everything that is. We can control time with far more precision than any TT Capsule, I can guarantee that.”

“Precision is not the word for this thing. The fissures it creates could pull the interior dimensions of

your TARDIS straight into the vortex, as it did mine.”

“My prime concern at the moment is ensuring it has charge,” she replied, tapping a few controls. “Once it is sustainable, I can refine the effect to be less...”

“Devastating? Volatile?”

“Problematic,” she spat. “I see you remain unconvinced of its benefits.”

The Doctor sauntered over to the console, saying, “I propose another course of action, if you’ll hear me out.”

The Rani was sceptical. “Go on.”

“Take this,” he pointed to the Refractor in her hand, “to the Omega Arsenal on Gallifrey, where it belongs. As far as I know, I am still the President-elect. You will be rewarded, I can see to it personally,” he pleaded. “Anything you want – more regenerations, a new TARDIS, clemency.”

The Rani almost chuckled. “Two Presidents in the same Milwaukee hotel. Sounds like the start of bad joke.” At that, the warmth left her voice. “I am not welcome on Gallifrey,” she said sternly, “which suits me perfectly, as I have no desire to set foot on that pathetic rock ever again. Refractor or not they would have me arrested.”

The Doctor sighed, defeated. “May I have a look at it?” She thought for a second, then reluctantly handed it over. Donning his spectacles, he inspected the casing and the solitary button. He held it to his ear curiously. “To call it primitive is to be too kind,” he said.

“It is no different to the process by which a TARDIS absorbs rift energy, reverse-engineered on a smaller scale.”

“Yes, but a TARDIS doesn’t usually cause the sort of time dilation I’d expect from three paradoxes occurring at once. This Refractor does.”

The Rani raised her voice in its defence. “That is besides the point. The advances to be made with this device to time travel, engineering, lengthening lifespans...”

“Since when have you ever cared for ‘lengthening lifespans’?” The Doctor removed his glasses and glared at her accusingly. “In the name of progress you’d gladly throw any lifeform to the wolves, sentient or not!”

“This is your last opportunity, Doctor,” the Rani said deliberately, “with our expertise combined, we can and will iron out these *minor* issues and pioneer a new age of scientific advancement.”

“That sounds tempting,” the Doctor said, returning his attention to the Refractor in his hand. Idly, he clicked the button down, and outside the normal passage of time resumed. Like a flash, he thumped the emergency dematerialisation trigger on the console, and the rotor came to life. “But I’d much rather iron out the *major* issues you’ve already created,” he declared, triumphant.

“What have you done?”

“I figure if I can’t correct all your meddling, I can at least prevent you from meddling in the first place.” The Rani rushed him, clawing for the Refractor, but he prised open the quickly-dematerialising door. The Doctor was caught at the threshold, vortex winds whipping all around him.

“I can’t let you do this,” the Rani cried, gripping his arm. If her TARDIS dematerialised now, he would be dispersed across the vortex. “If I have to kill you, so be it!”

“This isn’t science,” he shouted above the wailing winds, “you talk about observing the universe, but all you’re doing here is destroying it! Peri! Peri!”

Peri was dazed, alone, confused. The Doctor had vanished. She looked around frantically but couldn’t see any sign – but then heard the unmistakable sound of a TARDIS. Then, listening closer, she heard her name being yelled desperately - the Doctor. She sprinted in the direction of the sound, back into the changing room. The fire exit door was ajar, creaking back and forth wildly. The Doctor’s voice was clearer, his fear palpable. She emerged into the alley to see a glass pyramid, rapidly fading amid the howl of the wind and the groans of a TARDIS. The Doctor clung to the outside, but was entrapped by something – or someone – within the pyramid.

“Doctor!”

He looked to her, and found renewed strength. He brought out a free arm; Peri grabbed and pulled. The weight gave, and he tumbled out into a cream-coloured heap. With a sigh, the pyramid finally dematerialised, leaving the two of them in the windswept alley. They had only started to collect themselves when the shot rang out, and that unnatural movement of the Earth began. It rolled away, and then came whirling back to meet them. Only it was not the alley way, it was again the street corner

where it started.

The Doctor sat up, exasperated. He looked over to Peri, and said, “thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” she said, helping him to his feet, “care to explain how you ended up in some weird space triangle?”

“Wayward time traveller,” he dusted himself down, “needed some persuasion before they would leave. Their TARDIS was so racked by temporal distortion that I’m amazed it even found the power to dematerialise.” He felt inside his pocket. The Refractor was still there. “Also managed to confiscate this,” he presented it to her.

“This was causing all the problems?”

“A Temporal Refractor, being used to freeze time, and set up the perfect conditions for a fixed time loop. Endless temporal energy to keep it topped up forever.” He threw it up and caught it like a cricket ball. “The boulder in the pond.”

“So history will happen normally now?”

“I believe so. The reset takes us to the established timeline, before it was disturbed. No time traveller, no Refractor...”

“No time loop. A job well done, Doctor. Well, except for when you nearly got stuck in a moving TARDIS.”

“If you hadn’t come along, I don’t know what would’ve happened,” said the Doctor as he put the Refractor back in his trouser pocket.

“Good thing I did,” she laughed, “where to next?”

He unlocked the TARDIS, and was relieved to hear the console humming gently within. “We need to make a quick, discrete trip to Gallifrey.”

“Is that in Ireland?”

“It’s quite close,” he entered, “cosmically speaking.”

Right in the Nards

By bookanon

"Doctor this is stupid why are we climbing a volcano," Nardole said, "and why didn't we just take the TARDIS up there?" The Doctor paused in his ascent for a moment, realizing that this was in fact totally stupid, but obviously it was too late to admit to that. "Well, Nardole, the reason we're climbing this particular volcano is..." "Yes? Would rather you not be mysterious and vague if I have a choice in it." "...the volcano is a Dalek!" "...Sorry what" "Look Nardole it's fine I know what I'm do-" And then the volcano erupted and they died and then Nardole woke up shouting "NEVER AGAIN, NEVER AGAIN WITH VOLCANOES!" The Doctor, in the console room, looked at the viewers and shrugged.

The End

Simultaneity

By An Embarrassed Anon

A short adventure with the Tenth Doctor, Metacrisis Doctor, and Rose Tyler

Now

The first thought that came to Rose Tyler was that the two Doctor's cocks actually looked different.

The original Doctor's penis looked thicker, slightly more veiny. If she had asked, the Doctors probably would have said something about “genetic variance” or some technobabble. But today was not a day for that. She grabbed the original Doctor's face, brought it to hers. He tasted like her fiancée, but slightly grimmer. More torn down, more weary. He fumbled underneath her touch, and she held him steady, keeping him still. His cock pressed against her leg, moving slightly.

She released him. He looked shocked.

“Rose, I--” started the original Doctor. She pressed a finger to his lips. There wasn't enough time for what he had to say. They only had one night.

She grinned at him. Then she looked back at her fiancée. Despite the fact that this had been his idea, she needed to make sure he was okay with this. Was he mad at her, for lusting after the other version of him?

He gave her a grin. A grin that said “It's okay, Rose. Have your fun.”

“Then come over here, and shag me,” said Rose.

Before

“What are we gonna do for the honeymoon?” asked Rose. Her fiancée put on the thinking face she had come to love.

“Well, we could go on a trip. Though, really, once you've been to the Jovian Arch Party, nothing compares,” said the fiancée.

“Too bad the TARDIS is still growing. We could have gone to see that Arch ,” said Rose.

The Doctor, her fiancée, nodded. His face went serious, and his deep eyes looked at Rose.

“What?” asked Rose.

“Do you miss him? The other me?” asked the Doctor.

“Oh come on. I have him, right here. But even better, because I've gotten to know you even better,” said Rose. She kissed him.

He smiled, but his eyes were still thinking.

Now

She grabbed her fiancée into a strong kiss. Behind her, she felt the other Doctor kissing her neck, rubbing her back. Her shoulders relaxed into it, and she moaned into her fiancée's mouth, grabbing him even closer.

“Enjoying your honeymoon, Rose?” whispered the original Doctor.

Her fiancée began to kiss lower. First her chin, then her neck, stopping at her breasts. Licking her nipples, he looked up at her, and winked. She winked back.

Then he trailed his tongue down to her stomach, then her pelvis, then *lower*. She moaned again, louder this time.

After

“How exactly did you manage this without blowing up a hole in the universe?” asked Rose.

“Trade secrets,” said her fiancée.

Now

Rose brought both the Doctors in front of her. In the darkness, they looked like twins. And suddenly, an dirty fantasy crossed her mind.

“Kiss,” she said.

Both the Doctors raised their eyebrows, and rolled their eyes.

“Humans,” said her fiancée, with a smile on his face.

The Doctors kissed. First slowly, with trepidation, then faster. The original Doctor pushed her fiancée on the bed, kissing his mouth hungrily. Their chests rubbed against each other, as the original Doctor straddled her fiancée. Rose approached them, wrapping her arms around the original Doctor, and stroking the cock of her husband, while applying soft kisses on the original Doctor's face.

“You always wanted to do this with me,” said Rose to the original Doctor. She grabbed his cock, rubbing it slowly while licking him.

Her fiancée pushed the other Doctor off, accidentally flinging him off the bed.

“Ow!” said the original Doctor.

The fiancée grabbed Rose, and moved till he was on top. He slowly entered her, looking her in the eyes the whole time. She pulled him closer, kissing him and wrapping her legs around him.

“Thanks for asking about me, guys,” muttered the original Doctor on the floor. Rose extended a hand, beckoning him forward.

“We'll—uh--make it up to you,” said Rose, speaking between moans.

The original Doctor moved forward. Bending over behind her fiancée, he kissed her fiancée, and entered him from behind.

“Ow!” said her fiancée.

“Oh, sorry. Inexperienced with this sort of thing,” said the original Doctor, looking sheepish.

“There's lube on the desk, you know,” said her fiancée.

“How was I supposed to know that?” said the original Doctor.

Rose watched the image of the two Doctors arguing, and laughed at the absurdity. The Doctors looked at her, and began laughing themselves.

“Now boys, there's no need to quarrel,” said Rose, bringing them both in close.

“Ooh, I've got an idea,” said the original Doctor, tapping his forehead.

Before

Rose sat in her hotel room. She could just barely see the ceiling fan in the pitch black room. Her fiancée was out of the room, which was good for him, because she was pissed at him.

For his “wonderful honeymoon” idea, he had taken her to a history museum. Now, she liked history. She even liked it when he nerded out about historical inaccuracies. But that was not her idea of a sexy trip. She hadn't argued with him yet, because he was having fun, but boy, was she pissed.

The Doctor walked inside. Someone walked in behind him, and she couldn't see him in the darkness.

“What's going on?” said Rose.

The Doctor turned on the light. And the Doctor stood beside him.

“What?” asked Rose.

“Hello, Rose,” said the Doctor. His eyes looked tired.

There was such deep grief in the way he said it. Such sadness.

She knew immediately.

“How did you get to this universe? And why are you here?” said Rose.

“Well, the answer to your first question is complicated. I'll explain later. And as for the second question...” said the Doctor, looking at the other one.

“You didn't think I'd forget about your honeymoon present, right?” asked her fiancée, eyes twinkling.

Now

Both Doctors were moving inside her now. (DP wasn't really her thing, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime event). The two Doctors kissed each other, and Rose blessed her stars.

Her body overloaded, and she came, biting her lip and gasping. After a moment, she stroked the Doctors off, watching them squirm and moan. The original Doctor came first, his semen coating her hands. As she licked it off, the original Doctor went down on her fiancée, who simply laid back.

“Mmhm”, said her fiancée. The original Doctor traced his mouth over her fiancée's cock, eyeing him hungrily. She felt herself getting aroused again, watching her fiancée's toes curl, and his eyes flutter. He extended his hands toward Rose's exposed belly, and traced a finger around her belly button.

She yelped, as she felt something warm engulf...something down there. The original Doctor took his mouth off her fiancée's penis, and grinned at her.

“I can project my sensations into other people's minds. For example,” said the original Doctor (in his usual boasting way), as he brought both Rose and her fiancée to him. He kissed Rose first, and she felt his lips, tasting sweet...as well, as feeling her own lips, and tasting her own tongue. It was her own mouth, but it wasn't unpleasant. She heard her fiancée gasp.

Out of reflex, she touched herself down there, rubbing slowly. The Doctor moaned into her mouth, and tried to push her off. She grabbed him closer, rubbing herself. He squirmed underneath her, his moans getting louder.

She felt her fiancée enter her bum. She turned around, to smile at him...and saw no one there. Instead, her fiancée was topping the original Doctor. She could feel the soft kisses her fiancée was placing on the Doctor's back, could savor the sensation of the her fiancée moving his cock inside the original Doctor's rear, and sensed her skin raise into goosebumps as her fiancée gave her a deliciously evil grin. She kissed him, and felt it both ways.

The original Doctor entered Rose, and she/he/her fiancée felt it. She felt how warm and tight felt down there, and felt herself inside the original Doctor's rear, as well as felt how her fiancée was shagging him. The original Doctor bit his lip, the pain mixing in with pleasure. Was it his pain? Her pain? Her fiancée moaned loudly, and she felt the moan echo through her throat. She wanted herself/himself to fuck him/her faster, and wanted her fiancée/herself/the original Doctor to be sore at the end. It felt sinful, and she lost where she began and the other lovers began.

“Faster. Please, do it faster,” she asked. (She wasn't sure who she was asking) . She rode herself, and her fiancée, as her fiancée felt the original Doctor enter his rear, as Rose went in and out of him slowly.

This was even better than the DP. Her body and consciousness was mixed with the other two. And then one of them/all of them came. Her vision went blurry for several seconds, as her fiancée (or was it her?) said “Oh my god.”

Rose rested on the blanket. She could see herself from two separate perspectives, as the 2 other Doctors gazed in her direction.

“Are you okay?” asked her fiancée.

“I'm fine. I've never been better,” she said. Her vision changed back to a single thought process. She checked. Yep, still had the same parts.

“I love you,” he said to her.

“Love you too, Doctor,” said Rose. She realized she wasn't sure which Doctor she was talking to.

After

The original Doctor was getting dressed. Rose watched him, her arms entangled around her dozing fiancée.

“Thanks,” she said to the original Doctor. He looked over to her, and flashed his grin.

“Of course. It was fun, for me too,” he said. His eyes looked tired again, like he was so much older. What had he gone through, since last seeing her?

“Hey. Wanna talk?” she asked.

The Doctor shook his head. His smile became wistful.

“Not enough time,” he said. Then he walked out.

Rose was left awake by herself in the room. Her only company was the ceiling fan, and her sleeping fiancée.

The Parting of the Crisps

By Neo

A short adventure with a toy Ninth Doctor

Steven Stoffat fiddled with his toy figurine of Chris Eccleston. He placed it near his figurines of Tavid Tennant and Matt Smith, before turning it to face himself.

Steven was meeting with the man himself later in the day. Miraculously, he'd managed to finally get David and Matt to sign their contracts for the 50th. He'd shelved his Jenna-only script with great relief.

"No Doctor Who fan wants to see Jenna dance around in different outfits for ninety minutes", Steven muttered to himself, scowling at his previous foolishness. He was even more stressed than usual. He still hadn't figured out an ending, or a title, to the series 7 finale, and he had little thought on what to do in the 50th anniversary besides some sort of power move over Russell.

He peered deep into the Eccleston figurine's eyes, trying to imagine how the day's conversation would go. The meeting wasn't for another hour, but Steven always get terribly hungry with nervous, and so he brought out a packet of crisps - salt and vinegar, his favourite - to munch on in the meantime.

Out of the corner of his eye, Steven could have sworn he saw the Eccleston figurine move. He snapped his head around, but nothing seemed to have changed except...had the figurine's hands been extended like that beforehand?

Steven chomped down on a crisp, unsettled. Then he looked at his watch and realised he's misread the time, and should leave right away. Flustered, he stuffed the packet of crisps into his jacket pocket and dashed out the door.

Christopher Eccleston shuffled in his seat. He'd been waiting for Steven Stoffat to show up for ten minutes now. He wasn't due to show up for fifteen minutes, but a man should be early if he wants to show respect.

Steven had rang him three times now, politely enough, explaining how much he wanted him back on the show, how important the 50th anniversary was, how many working-class Northern children he could inspire to act in future with an appearance. And Christopher had enjoyed his episodes, particularly how none of them had taken

place in houghty-toighty London.

But to bathe in the same river twice? The thought disquieted him. Memories of the production of his series still plagued him. He leaned back in his chair, frowning, thinking it over...

Steven arrived on time, only to find Chris already seated, frowning up a storm. An oncoming storm.

"Chris, Chris, great to see you, I'm so enormously thankful to you for taking this meeting," Steven gushed.

"Yes, hello Steven," Chris replied, crisply.

An hour or so passed.

To break the ice, Steven brought up some of Chris' recent work, but received little in the way of response. He then brought up some other recent shows, but nothing brought on any reaction except for Sheridan Smith's Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps, to which Chris' eyes flared with an animalistic lust.

Slightly disturbed, Steven moved on to explaining his plans for the anniversary. Chris grunted in response.

Steven made some regular quips, most went over cold, but a choice few about Benedict Cumberbatch and Eddie Redmayne saw Chris grin, before muttering something about a "milky, anodyne culture".

Steven forgoed lunch to give himself more chance to talk and explain his vision, Chris methodically ate a steak. Steven tried to make a joke about how brazenly Russell had reversed the Doctor's vegetarianism by letting Chris eat a steak in "Boom Town", but Chris just stared back at him blankly.

A rare moment of bonding came when the two of them agreed that setting Amy Pond's story far out of London was a refreshing move for the show.

With increasing hope, as well as many witnesses, Steven began to realise he may well be near his reward - he might have truly convinced Chris. Feeling more relaxed, and suddenly conscious how hungry he was after skipping lunch, he pulled the packet of crisps out of his jacket pocket.

Chris glanced at him, then gave him a double take.

Christopher had begun to seriously mull over Steven's offer since Steven had made a joke at that posh git Benedict Cumberbatch's expense. Later, Steven had made a crack at David Tennant's expense, suggesting his use of an Estuary accent was traitorous to their shared Scottish origins. He really seemed to get it. This could work.

Suddenly, Steven brought out a packet of crisps. Christopher's mind went blank. Childhood memories began to flash through his mind. His eyes began to glint with predatory fixation. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to fight his urges, but they were too strong, and he felt his naturally very casual and jovial demeanour begin to slip away.

As Steven brought a crisp up to his mouth, Christopher could hold in his lust for bullying no more, and snatched it from his hand. Steven's mouth gaped open (partly out of hunger, partly out of shock). He looked down to the packet in his hand, but Christopher then snatched that too.

The next few moments were a blur of beating, bleating, and bullying, as the Oncoming Storm descended upon the Grand Moff Steven.

Some time later, Steven blearily opened his eyes, stunned, lying down on the ground outside. Next to him was a post-it note attached to a paper bag.

"Steven," it read. "I apologise for any hurt I've caused. I'm very, very ashamed of it. I remember feeling so much dislike for myself as I did it. But I did self-regulate. I did stop myself. What I did, I did in the name of crisps and vanity."

"But not in the name of the Doctor," Steven moaned, picking himself up.

Hurt, but mind racing with thoughts on how to end the series 7 finale and write the anniversary, he opened up the paper bag left with him.

Inside? An Eccles cake.

Lost Jellyfish

By TooManyTime

An adventure with the 8th Doctor Who and Jelly Companion

I am the 8th Doctor Who. I had been flying my TIME machine but flew into some speed currents. This made my TIME machine stop. I didn't know why that has happened, so I stepped outside to investigate further.

"Why does this happen??" I asked my traveling friend.

"I am not aware of why this happens," jellyfish said, "but I am a jellyfish."

"Okay," I asked. "Let's travel more." My jellyfish swam to a tree before it spoke.

"Doctor this looks important! Could this tree have caused the TIME machine to stop??" jellyfish said. Very suddenly the tree began to shake. One leaf that had been falling was grabbed by the jellyfish. "Look at this leaf, Doctor. It has a word for you!"

I walked over to the jellyfish to see the leaf that was on jellyfish. It amazes me! On the leaf on the head of the jellyfish were words addressed to me.

On the leaf was written:

Doctor. The jellyfish can not be saved. Under the altar is where you are saved.

I couldn't understand those words. "Jellyfish I am worried. This leaf on your head is threatening you," I said.

"Oh Doctor! The leaf on my head is only a leaf." the jellyfish laughed. I laughed too.

The jellyfish made a valid point." A message on a leaf on the head of a jellyfish is not to cause fear. Fear is a Dalek, Cyberman, or Adipose. Fear of words on a leaf is irrational! Ha! Ha!"

We continue our travel. There are many trees to be found. We occasionally stop to look at more trees, but none of the trees are important. "I am bored," the jellyfish said to me. "Can we please return to the TIME machine?"

"I am sorry," I replied, "but we can not travel against the speed currents. It is stopped currently and we are unable to make the progression without starting."

"Okay, but we should eat very soon. I am very hungry right now," the jellyfish mumbled. I made the agreement and we established a camp.

The next hours were comfortable. We sang music, ate plants, and played fun board games. When night came, it was no longer comfortable. Usually the night is very comfortable but this night was not the same. I wasn't aware of what was wrong until it was morning again.

"Good morning my jellyfish," I yawned. Except jellyfish wasn't around. "Jellyfish where did you travel to?" No answer. This is upsetting. I started to fear the words on the leaf might have been true. If my jellyfish is gone, did I want to live anymore?

"Why live?" I asked myself out loud. I had no choice. I had to find my jellyfish!

As I traveled through the forest, I came across a very old ancient building. Somehow, I knew this would be where I would find my jellyfish. I made my way to travel to the door of the building. It was already open. Maybe jellyfish opened it? That was my working theory, anyway. I hoped it was true...I need my jellyfish friend. I take a deep breath and travel forwards.

Of course, the door closed behind myself. This was not a good situation to have! I was now stuck in this old ancient building.

And of course, there was a spooky skeleton in the corner of the room!! This is all very spooky to me! I was trapped in this old ancient building where I might die and now I saw a skeleton in this room accompanying me! If I was to live, I had to be brave and examine the skeleton for clues. I slowly approached the skeleton and I looked at it. It was very scary but I made a discovery! Whoever owned this skeleton had two hearts originally. Are you aware of what this meant? This skeleton was a Time Lord (as I am)! If this is where he died, it must mean his TIME machine was close to him!

This was difficult to find. Most TIME machines changed shape to be hidden. Without a sort of clue, I wouldn't be able to locate his TIME machine. Or maybe I did have a clue...the leaf on the head of the jellyfish said I will be saved under the altar! Sure enough I found an altar and climbed under the find it was actually the spooky

skeleton's TIME machine!

His TIME machine is different from mine. The machine belonged to a battle; mine belongs to travel. The battle had damaged his TIME machine greatly. Unfortunately, it was too damaged to travel far. Perhaps for the best; loose Time machines cause trouble. I would leave the ancient building and I would try to save my jellyfish. I made adjustments to location as needed and pulled the lever to travel into the previous morning.

As I stopped, I noticed something strange. The speed current was originally blocking my travel wasn't there any more. That wasn't good. The TIME machine I am using cannot travel, and without a speed current blocking the way, my original TIME machine will never stop on this location in a beginning! I will be in a paradox and stuck on this planet without a jellyfish friend!

I left the TIME machine and approach the spooky skeleton. This was a battle TIME machine, so its owner should be have weapons. It doesn't take long to find what I am searching for. It is a speed current manipulator. Using this speed current manipulator, I could make it impossible to travel in TIME machines. Once activated while I'n traveling nearby, I wouldn't be time traveling. I left the ancient building and climbed trees to not be seen. The moment is arriving. I activate the speed current manipulator.

It worked! I heard the noise that is made from the TIME machine!! Out steps myself and my jellyfish friend, safe and sound. But for how long? Now that I am here, a jellyfish will go missing and I will be stuck in the old ancient building. There was no other choice-- I had to warn myself. I grab a leaf and wrote the same note I read on the head of the jellyfish earlier. My jellyfish approaches, but I must make them aware! I shook the tree. Jellyfish looked upward but was not able to see me. I had my leaf note fall on the jellyfish head and wait. It started to become clear. I realized the last day was a circle. There was no danger or threat of leaf. And my jellyfish was not harmed at all!

That night I watch myself and my jellyfish go to sleep. I snuck into the camp we established and woke jellyfish.

"Doctor?" she said, yawning. "Why am I awake?"

"I am very sorry jellyfish, but we must leave forever." I whispered. "Follow me back to the TIME machine and I will explain everything."

And so we traveled to my TIME machine and I turned off the speed currents to resume our travels. It was an important lesson that I learned. Sometimes we are not threatened by monsters or leaves. Sometimes we make trouble for ourselves and it can very quickly make a situation afterwards not rather worse Do not let your trouble

cause issues for you friends. Especially your jellyfish.

The end.

The Soul Bug Part 2

SECOND EPISODE: THE GROWTH

By: catharticspurious @ The Outsideists

XI. Thoughts of a Pet Space-Dragon-Chicken

happy.

happy fun.

floaty fun time. upwing! downwing! upwing! downwing!

whooooooooooooooooosssshhhhhh

whooooooooOOOOOOOOOOOssssshhhhhh

up

down

up

down

whEEEEEEEE.

life good. colours good. rainbow sunshine crystallisation.

many-towered four-dimensional palace. delicious.

spires pointy landing point. roofs pointy sitting point. possession of great berth and huge wideness and significant undercarriage requiring regular rest.

down we GOOOOOOoooooooo

oooooooo

oooooooooooooooooplunk

towers happy. friend. walls effervesce in razorlight multicolours of octarine strobe trance. bricks ooze fun. castle is composed of fun

leftwing and rightwing inflate in big wingspanny decorative spreadshow. sprinkly magics pop out and water the scringestones beneath. the existence of being a multifaceted all-purpose all-beauteous friendship instalment.

YES!

YES!

a pitter patter of diddly piddly pinklimbs

pock pock pock on the friend palace stairs

in the friend palace turrets and the friend palace funways, approachingways

pock pock pock comes princess

the excavated friendship aperture in the wall of the friend palace is a quasi-literal window of opportunity.

L

O

O

O

W E R I N G head to appropriate up-axis measurement

a piddly diddly pinkhead with frizzy wizzy goldhair pop pop pops up at the aperture and

S M I L E S A G R E A T B I G F R I E N D S M I L E

f r i e n d ! ! !

happyhappyHAPPYHAPPY YES

YES!

YES because quite simply YES it's time for YES fun YES friend time with friends YES

"Let's go flying!" she says YYYYYYEEEESSSSSSssSSSSssss

READYING UNDERCARRIAGE

WIDE BERTH

Hop hop HOP off the roof of friendpalace

and luxuriate in the light spectrum streaming from the gardens

hovery floaty UUUUUP DOOOOOOWN in conceptual space

waiting... . . . for slight neck plop of princess mount manoeuvre

any

moment

now

ARGHFRIENDFRIENDFRIENDFRIENDSOEXCITEMENTSOMUCHSOMUCH

UNCONTAINABLE UNRESTRAINABLE FUNHAPPY FUN FUN FUNNN

WaiT

wait

not right something bad

"What's that?"

friendprincess is seelooking at darkthing

spot

floating OHNOly over garden light emitter???

uhhh UHhhh uh um

s u s p i c i o n

air bleeding. time bleeding. space bleeding.

reality stabbed. woundy. not kid-friendly. not safe for princess

bleedseeping darkblah down onto grass NO.

NO.

STOP THAT

ENCLOSING

“Stop! It’s not safe!”

ENCLOSING

leftwing and rightwing spread and go roundy like a big eraserball of omittance

THE DISTURBANCE HAS BEEN ENCAPSULATED! now friendly fun time now now

except

...

????????????????

??? ??? ? ????

gone

where

no?

no

o

where palace

where gardens where lightspectrum where turrets where rainbow where crystals where fun where colours where

princess where friend???

WHERE SPACE WHERE TIME

leftwing and ri—

movement inhibition

BUMP OW

ow ow FLY OPEN bump OW OW

SPREAD OPEN PLEASE bump tHUD OW

...

have BEEN ENCAPSULATED

cocooned in pre-birth solid shell *wet yuck*

and and and and and and s s s som some somet somethi something e something else

darkspot
crawling

in here

over

under

around

oozing its anti-fun its anti-friend its anti-happy IT WON’T GO AWAY

wrapping round OH NO

GO GOG OG GO GET OUT

THUD ow THUD ow THUD ow THUD ow THU—

wait

WaiT

THUD c c c rack

um

GOOD

imposition of enclosesphere is negotiable with application of hitting

HIT MORE HIT MORE MUST FRIEND MUST FRIEND TIME WITH PRINCESS GET OUT

GET BACK GO GO GO

THUD ow THUD ow THUD CRACK THUD CRACK

darkspot agitated. darkspot more anti-happy. darkspot writhes. darkspot clenches like puckerhole. darkspot

WRAPS like DEATH SNAKE and must be EVADED

THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD

darkspot SCREAM! o w w w w w w w w w shutup. shut up. bad sound.

THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD ENDLESS THUDDING HAPPY THOUGHTS THUD

...

hang up and hold on

pitter pattering of piddly widdly pinkfeet, echo inways from outerflats of outershell. feeties. footsles. pinkpeople

skittering up and down

oh

oh no

no

oh

no no no

oh

thudding alert? thudding upset? thudding bother?? IN HERE LET ME OUT

THUNK

...sense something. sense bad. self can sense bad. can sense death. can sense deathboxes. can sense deathsticks.

can sense deathfires. am sensing a deathblast. a deathbox with a death blast made of deathfire. sitting pretty.

sitting WANNA-OPENED. sitting ready. no please.

please little pinkpeep. not yet. blow death after. later.

THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD

THUD MUST LEAVE MUST LEAVE MUST GO!!!! MUST THUD

THUD GET THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD GET THUD

*THUD OUT! THUD **BREAK OUT NOW** THUD OUT THUD*

*THUD QUICK THUD **BEFORE DOOM** THUD QUICK THUD*

*THUD COME THUD **AND OW PAINS** THUD COME THUD*

THUD ON THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD ON!! THUD
THUD MUST LEAVE MUST GO MUST LEAVE GO NOW!!! THUD
THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD THUD

tick tick tick tick tick

CRACK CRACK CRACK

so close now. so close. but perhaps not close enough.

Perhaps This Will Be The End

darkspot LAUGH darkspot PLEASED darkspot WRIGGLY darkspot SUCCEEDS

ONLY THING LEFT KEEP THUDDING KEEP CRACKING KEEP HOPING KEEP FUN KEEP HAPPY

KEEP FRIEND KEEP GOING

tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick ti

c

k

...tick?

NO TICK? no tick.

stopped. stopped. pinkblobs stopped tickboom.

yes. YES! **Y E S !**

THUDDY THUD MCTHUD AND THE THUD GOES THUDDING CRACKETY

C R A C K

i broach

i crack out of cocoon

cocococococococococo o

o c

c

o i eMERge i asCENd out *out*

c

o c

cocococococococococo o

oUT OUT OUT HAAH!!!

farewell DARKSTAIN goodbye EGGTHING? thankyou PINKLINGS & NOT-PINK

now FIND HOME? find...home? FIND HOME? where? where space where time?

OH

emerging returning

the wrongphase is being sucked away

i phase. i cross. i fade. i crossfade.

i look at egg. i see egg reverse. i see wrongsplat resolved. i see consequence unhappen.

i see reality de-splurge and things refixating themselves to rightplop

i hear darkspot NOT HAPPY. NOT HAPPY. good. take that.

and best of all bestest of allest i think yes? yes?

i see friendpalace returning

I SEE PRINCESS RETURNING

“Thank goodness you’re alright!”

i see self returning to home layer

the incursion has expired

all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well

YES!

Y E S !

YES!

happy.

XII. Blue Box Malfunction (5)

“Thought-chatting, as the snivelly one called it.” The Doctor tilts backwards in his chair. “Give me details.”

He and the scientists are back around the same table as earlier, but despite the lack of an imminent alarm to disturb them, the tensions are possibly even higher.

Gunther, by now looking more haggard veteran than bright-eyed firebrand, wearily complies. “The Blue Boxes allow a kind of near-lossless thought streaming. Two users establish a high priority link, and from that point they’re basically downloading each other’s mental voices in real-time.”

“Sounds like it could get muddled.”

“On the contrary, Dr. Smith,” interjects Serene, “it brings a greater clarity. When you intercept a thought from someone else, you receive it *as* they originally thought it. That’s not compressed into a narrow strip of language or images, but rather, drenched in all its original, instinctive associations and contexts. It’s a shortcut to

total empathy. People who have tested the various prototypes have compared it to an out-of-body experience.”

“So *extremely* muddled then, although I often think humans could do with the occasional muddling.

Question: is it a bit like opening up an email attachment?”

Gunther involuntarily snorts. “What era are you *from*, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“What I’m trying to say is, if you were brain-streaming with someone, could you catch something nasty off of them? A mentally-transmitted infection, so to speak?”

“Only ideas. And they’re no more or less contagious than they’ve ever been.”

“Well, that’s just it, isn’t it?” The Doctor tilts sharply forwards and sets both elbows on the table, his eyes peering out from beneath his brow. “We know what the order of these little incidents was. If one of you would like to recap?”

Shifting uneasily, Serene repeats what they learnt from questioning the shell-shocked test subjects. “Well, Rand was linking with Danis, and then his Box malfunctioned partway through...Danis went into the kitchen, where she met Alexandria—”

“And did they ‘*thought-chat*’ while in there?”

“It would be unusual if they didn’t. At this stage in the testing it’s become second nature for them.”

“And in the kitchen, that’s when Danis starts to have her little freakout, followed last of all by Alexandria. Do you know what I think? I would bet a pretty penny that Rand had a ‘stream’ session with our friend Nord earlier today, before all this kicked off. You say that ideas are contagious - I say this monster business fits the bill.”

The implications start to sink in. The scientists look between themselves, fidgeting. It’s Locke who finally opens his mouth. “You’re saying you think it’s some kind of virus?”

“I’m saying it started with Nord and then spread, one by one, to the others. Just a guess, of course, feel free to ignore me completely and have your own moronic notions.”

“Oh, no, Doctor.” A grim smirk seizes Locke’s features. “I find that all too easy to believe.”

“Locke,” Serene warns.

“How else would you attack a system designed for communication, Serene? Introduce a communicable sabotage.”

“And you think your Russian sweatshop workers set that up?”

“I was deliberately employing hyperbole when I said that. For effect.”

“Is anything you say *not* hyperbole?”

The volley is interrupted by Gunther suddenly sighing, very loudly and with a slight whimper of emotion. The others all look at him strangely, as he continues to stare into his lap and wring his hands.

The Doctor frowns. “You want to say something, beardy?”

“Look at what we’ve done,” mutters the bearded one. “We’ve made the human brain vulnerable to hacking.” Small, bitter chuckles start to rack his body. “We’ll be lucky if we don’t get completely shut down.”

Serene is visibly resisting the urge to get up and physically shake him. “Gunther, we haven’t even received the scan of Nord’s Blue Box yet. This is not the time for hysterics.”

Locke, however, senses an opportunity. “It’s not his fault he actually cares about this, Serene. This was

our project. This is our lives. How can you be so calm?”

“Calm?” She subconsciously adjusts the caffeine patches on her arm. “You seem to be confused. I’m not calm. I’m livid. I could rip someone’s face off right now. But you know what? Telling *stories* and *doomsaying* is not going to fix that.”

While Locke folds his arms and goes on the defensive, the Doctor gets the vague impression that they’ve had this sort of conversation before. “You think I’m making stuff up? I’m only extrapolating from the obvious, Serene. We dress it up all friendly, but what we’re doing is tantamount to *resistance*. I didn’t ‘make up’ the Americans trying to confiscate everything salvaged from the Corpsebots. Even by basing the Blue Boxes on that tech, we’re going against them. They were desperate to stop evolution. This technology will end industries, Serene. The level of connection, the empathy - it could even end *money*.”

“Still won’t explain the Umbrella Men, though,” snickers Gunther nervously.

Locke continues undeterred. “Forget the sweatshop. We don’t even know what the world powers have been working on since the Corpsebots, or what the UK has buried underneath London - this might not even be the worst they have to throw at us. We’re completely powerless.”

“That’s not true, Locke. If this fails, we keep trying, and we fix it. If it’s vulnerable, we keep going, and we make it invulnerable. If you ever believed in this project, that should be enough.”

Slowly sinking into his chair, Gunther rests his head in his hands. “And that could take years...and years...”

This finally prompts the Doctor to throw in his two cents. “That’s just how history works, kiddywinks. It’s not about climaxes, closed narratives, or happy endings. It just keeps going. The wave never breaks. Also—” He sits up. “Have any of you considered that the source of the infection could be on board the ship?”

Three pairs of eyes lock onto him at once.

“Well, think about it. Your security systems couldn’t find any evidence of a breach. Maybe that means there wasn’t one.”

Locke’s gaze starts to flick about nervously, as if a saboteur could be hiding in the room with them. “How the hell would that even work?”

The Doctor looks at Locke as if he is quite daft. “I don’t know. Do you know everything about everyone on this—Skybunker, or whatever you call it?”

The train of conversation is interrupted by a notification blinking on the flat screen that forms the table’s surface. Serene selects it almost instantaneously, and the results of Nord’s scans are expanded for them all to read. The scientists scan the scrolling lines of code with increasing chagrin. (Meanwhile, the Doctor spots a member of the care staff shuffling along the corridor outside with a cup of coffee.)

“Well?” he asks after a moment.

Serene controls her breathing. “We can clearly identify, both in Nord’s Blue Box and on his secondary layer, the point where the malicious code emerged. You were right about it being a virus.”

“Okay, and?”

“And there’s a gap. They don’t contain the complete picture. In both cases - at the moment the virus appears, they’re receiving data from another, unidentified source.”

Gunther slumps against the table. Locke sits back, looking both vindicated and depressed. “Is *anyone*

surprised?”

“Don’t celebrate just yet,” orders the Doctor, rising to his feet. “I’m not having you all roll over and give up, not now I’ve gotten all emotionally invested and whatnot. Maybe your efforts *will* ultimately just be consigned to history, but for the time being, the way I see it, you have one major advantage.”

Serene looks up, wondering what else the loudmouth visitor could possibly add. “What?”

The Doctor struts over to the door and out. “I’m a great conversationalist.”

He passes the lone staffer on the way towards the lounge.

The staffer, very surreptitiously, turns on her palm tablet and starts to compose a tweet.

XIII. The Day of the Umbrella Men (3)

It was the same day.

It was behind closed doors. A room containing seven of the most influential American politicians.

They were debating, with grim urgency, the matter of the Grave Army. Its abrupt departure into the skies and self-destruction had left small, individual pieces of armour and other detached components littered around the world. In odd cases where a newborn, low-functioning Grave Soldier had been set upon by confused and terrified locals, entire heads had been severed.

The umbrella man and the metal man appeared to slip into the conversation without anyone registering that anything had changed.

The technology was self-evidently beyond mankind’s capabilities. Re-engineering it would mean worldwide transformation. Some of the people in the room approved of that prospect. Some of them did not.

Some of them looked at the metal man’s implants suspiciously, unable to put their finger on why. The umbrella man allegedly made some philosophical contributions to the conversation.

In the end, however, it was a straightforward matter on which the humans all concurred.

Various recording devices, placed in both the room and surrounding corridors, were able to capture the following

fragment of the conversation that occurred between the umbrella man and the metal man afterwards.

“Was that it?”

“Sorry to disappoint.”

“But they have so much power.”

“Only at the intersection of other power dynamics. Everyone is beholden to someone else. To preserving certain relationships. To selling. You’ll see this again and again.”

“I was right about their scruples.”

“Were you? I recall you and the Neurolock both assigned them far grander motives.”

“Regardless, they didn’t do it for the people. I was just wrong about the cause.”

“You were wrong about the scale and nature of the cause. What you envisioned was mythic...the reality, in the old human fashion, was an anticlimax.”

“Is that your goal with all this? To show me that humanity’s boring?”

“To show you that it’s *real*, with all the messiness that implies. Never attribute to a great plan that which can be explained by financial desperation.”

“I’m growing numb.”

“Must be all the metal.”

XIV. Bugs (5)

It’s humid. The sun is out at its fullest shine, as if trying to help the Doctor forget his horrific encounter

with the moon-entity the other night. Not that nature has ever been that selfless. Besides, he's walking into something almost as unsettling right now.

He can see the cluster of Bugs from a long distance. He and Cole are approaching a park in the centre of town, where - gradually accumulating on a path between two patches of grass - the participants of the Save Free Speech demonstration have formed a loose huddle. From the Doctor's vantage point, the group's Bugs seem to form their own layer, simmering atop the throng of humans like scum risen to the surface of water.

Not far off, a handful of police officers lean beside a set of stone steps, keeping watch.

Cole gently ushers the Doctor towards the crowd. "We're waiting for Rodney Mansfield. He'll be giving a speech at 3."

"Rodney Mansfield?" The Doctor suddenly feels as though he recognises the name, but can't place how or from where. It feels like a faded memory from centuries and centuries ago, perhaps even before the Time War.

Cole grins. "He's one of our brightest - and gayest - thought leaders."

"Fantastic. Can't wait."

They reach the edge of the gathering, and the Doctor sees more or less what he expected to - their Bugs are like Cole's. Engorged, stretched and ravenous. Just to check, he swipes a glance at some of the random passers-by trying to enjoy a day in the sun, and sure enough their Bugs appear to be at the normal, roughly head-wide volume.

Cole pulls him directly in amongst the demonstrators, catching him off guard. They're surrounded by a chatter of mostly male voices, though he does think he detects some feminine tones in the mix. Faces start to turn towards the pair. There are, at least, enough beards present that the Doctor doesn't feel too out of place in his ungroomed state.

"Skeletal!" booms a hearty voice from somewhere three feet away. Cole instantly tenses up. The Doctor notices sweat droplets forming on the youth's forehead.

A wide man in a top hat, face framed with tangly side-hairs, a burgeoning moustache and stringy black beard, pushes through a few other crowd members towards them. His black T-shirt bears the slogan, *FACTS BEFORE FEELS*. His Bug appears to be wrapped around the hat. or perhaps phasing through it.

"SkeletalSkeptic. It is you!"

"J-just call me Cole," stammers Cole.

"Fine by me," says the jolly accoster. His attention veers to the Doctor. "You guys know each other or...?"

"He's with me," Cole answers. "This is, uh—"

"John. John Smith." The Doctor inwardly curses himself for not coming up with a new pseudonym.

"Well, John, good to meet you. I'm Bob, known on Twitter as Prime Incel." Bob holds out a hand, which the Doctor shakes probably too eagerly - though he's pleasantly surprised to find it's not that greasy. "Are you staying for the rally, John?"

"Me? Oh, yes, absolutely, yes...it's all very, ah, important."

Bob's focus switches back to Cole, who's shuffling back and forth increasingly nervously. "I just want you to know, Skeletal, you have my total support through any drama your newest video causes."

"Tha—thanks."

Despite himself, the Doctor's curious. "What drama would that be?"

"You know." Bob draws himself up to full height. "Every time one of us puts ourselves on the line to speak out against degeneracy and mental illness, we're at risk of being falsely flagged, doxxed, or worse."

The Doctor decides those sound like humiliation games practised on Belgox and chooses not to pursue the matter any further.

Bob isn't finished, however.

"By the way, John, how's going your own way working for you?"

"Beg your pardon?"

The man gestures to the Doctor's completely untamed facial hair and mane. "I can tell you're resisting those matriarchal beauty standards. We're of one mind, you and I."

"Oh. I'm actually just homel—" Halfway through his sentence, the Doctor stops short abruptly, his senses suddenly picking up something amid the noise - something which, he realises anxiously, has been there this whole time. There's a hum. A very strangely pitched, high-frequency hum, permeating the entire crowd. It's giving him a slight headache. He looks around, covering his ears.

Cole hurriedly intervenes. "Uh—sorry, Bob, John's been having a few, um, issues." Bob gets the message, regarding the Doctor with a curious sort of pity, and recedes back into the crowd to rejoin some more of his fellow tweeters. The Doctor, meanwhile, is beginning to wander through the throng, trying to see if he can isolate the sound.

Somewhere at the far edge of the group, a handful of people open cartons of milk and douse the contents over their own heads. They cheer. The Doctor squints, not at the idiocy of the ritual but at the way in which it seems, almost imperceptibly, to feed the Bugs perched atop the revellers' heads. *The Bugs drink milk now?* he thinks. *It's like they're actively trying to throw me off the trail.*

The hum grows ever so slightly more intense the further into the crowd he penetrates, and it's starting to make him feel nauseous. He winces, trying to clear his head of the interference and rid himself of the double-vision that's increasingly plaguing his eyeballs.

Passing through the sea of smirking faces, something takes him by surprise - a woman who's (probably) jaw-droppingly beautiful, with long blonde hair falling over bare shoulders in a white tank top. Shuffling in her direction, he catches her eye (albeit not without a certain immediate revulsion on her part, likely down to his dishevelled appearance). Her Bug is engorged just like the others, but the Doctor still can't help asking:

"Excuse me, madam, but are you by any chance undercover?"

"You mean like a paid shill?" she replies without a trace of irony.

"Um."

"Oh, I see," she adds, suddenly conspiratorial. "You're checking to make sure we haven't been infiltrated?"

"Yes! Yes, that's it. Bang on."

"You're British, right?"

"Extremely."

"Good luck with the siege."

The Doctor blinks. "The what?"

“You know. You’re under siege.”

“...Is there a base involved?”

“I mean your country,” the woman persists. “You have to stop it from turning into one big Sharia-only zone.”

Racking his brains, the Time Lord can think of some possible Zygon-only zones, including ones he’s indirectly responsible for, but not a lot else. He tries to play along, however. “Well, I’ve always known humans to be good at fighting off alien sieges.”

“Not when there’s an international conspiracy against them.” Her gaze hardens. The Bug on her head looms. “You have to be a warrior. Sink the boats. Indifference is suicide.”

The Doctor nods slowly, attempting to back away.

She stares after him. “*Indifference is suicide!*”

Muffled male calls of “Based Hottie!” from a few feet away catch her attention, and she meanders off to meet them, giving the Doctor opportunity to escape. He resolves to try and steer clear of bases for a while. Glancing back to where Cole is, he notes that the boy seems to be wilting under the pressure of conversation with several strangers (or as Cole might himself have put it, *spilling the spaghetti*).

Meanwhile, the layer of Bugs topping the crowd is still bobbing and writhing as before - but the Doctor is suddenly drawn to something that sticks out. It’s only a subtle difference, only visible if he focuses very hard, but one of the Bugs in the group is behaving differently. He can faintly spot it behind a few more groups of people. It seems to be...vibrating.

Unable to contain his curiosity, the Doctor slips through gaps between the demonstrators to reach the errant Bug’s owner (or host). He finds one of the older members of the crowd, a short and stocky man in sunglasses with a bushy mustache, holding up a sign made of cardboard. It reads, *The Lord Will Smite Thee*.

“That’s an interesting message,” observes the Doctor.

The man looks at him. “It’s the only message.”

“I was just wondering, it seems a bit different from the general message of the party.”

“That’s just an illusion,” the fellow scoffs. “Deep down, everyone here is protecting the sanctity of God’s chosen people.”

“Right. And how do you get on with the, uh, self-professed ‘skeptic’ faction?”

“They’ll all take the Red Pill of Christ eventually. You have to take whatever allies you can get when facing the hordes of Satan.”

“Satan?”

The stranger’s brow furrows. “Don’t tell me you aren’t familiar with the Satanic leftist pedophilia cult controlling this country?” The more he speaks, the more severely his Bug seems to shake. “There is a war against human-skinned demons in America, and we are soldiers of the Lord. Your appearance is very Jesus-like, by the way.” The vibration is becoming actively distracting.

It gives the Doctor an idea - just something to try. When he first had his forced landing here, and saw the Bugs, he made a futile effort to scan them with the sonic to analyse their makeup. But if they can vibrate like this, then maybe, if he tunes the sonic to vibrate at a similar frequency...In truth, he has no idea what will happen, but at this stage he’ll try anything.

He delicately slides the device out of his inside pocket, trying not to expose it too much to the others' view, and surreptitiously sets it off emitting its traditional oscillating whine.

None of the bugs react.

Irritated, watching them swirl around him, the Doctor increases the amplitude. In his fantasies he pictures the creatures exploding, popping like great boils.

No such luck. It's almost as though the creatures don't quite exist on the same plane as the waves his tool is generating.

Someone's tapping him on the shoulder. Grimly, he turns to see whose attention he's attracted - it's one of the lads who did the milk thing (if the Doctor couldn't tell by looking, he'd be able to from the smell). He's grinning. "What have you got there?"

The Time Lord thinks fast. "It's a totemic, ancient symbol of the European legacy."

"Based."

That seems to have worked, but it only impresses more upon the Doctor the extent to which he's failing. His technology is failing him, his mental faculties are failing him, and worst of all, his basic moral principles seem to be failing him as well. He's adrift in the middle of what's materially an aggression against other people, but he's stuck gawping at shadows and feebly trying to fit in. Where does this leave him?

"They're coming!" yells a high-pitched voice from somewhere at the other end.

Immediately the pack tightens just enough to be noticeable, and people start rapidly moving around and changing their positions, seemingly without a plan or a particular goal. Scanning back and forth over his shoulder, the Doctor tries to make his way back to Cole, hearing mutters of "cuck", "antifa" and other surreal incantations coming from every direction.

Upon spotting the Doctor, Cole looks deeply relieved. "Thank god. I'm not great with so many unfamiliar faces—"

"Who exactly is meant to be 'coming', again?" the Doctor cuts in over him. "Why is everyone suddenly bustling about?"

Cole doesn't seem to understand his confusion. "Is it not obvious? I did say there'd be counter-protesters. It's the radical leftists. Look."

The Doctor looks to where Cole is pointing - peering over the heads and the Bugs of the people around him to just down the other end of the park - and sees another group of people, complete with their own Bugs, slowly approaching. They aren't quite in focus yet. "Well, what's going to happen? Is there going to be some sort of dance-off?"

"Uh, no...probably just a lot of standing around and shouting."

The movements of the crowd around them are becoming a touch more agitated as the opponents get closer. Squinting, the Doctor can start to make out some of the people in the counter-demonstrator group - it seems to mainly comprise white people, like the group he's standing amid, but with a few exceptions. There also seem to be a few more women, including one or two with eccentric hairstyle choices, and one in a wheelchair.

Beside him, Cole sniffs. "Look at them."

"I'm certainly doing that."

“Who would’ve thought that fascism would come to America looking like *that*.”

The Doctor swallows. “Not me, that’s for sure.”

“Have you ever seen a bigger pack of nu-males?”

The Doctor makes a wild guess at what this might mean. “Not this side of the galaxy—ow!” The humming has sharply intensified, more piercing now than ever. He looks from side to side wildly, desperate to identify what could be making the sound, when he realises something else.

The Bugs - every last one in the crowd, including Cole’s - are growing.

The police finally make their move, filing along into the rapidly closing divide between the two groups to create a miniature human barricade. Looking through the gaps between them, the Doctor starts to identify the text on some of the counter-demonstrators’ placards - *Nazis Are For Punching*, *No Safe Space For Fascist Snowflakes*, and *Goodnight Alt-Right* among others. He senses the cops raising their guard, which to him seems a bit belated.

Reacting instinctively, members of the first group start to raise their own signposts - the Doctor isn’t dying to read those, since he really gets the hint at this point, but he glimpses one saying *We Will Not Be Replaced* and has to think, *really? We all get replaced at some point. I’ve been replaced at least eleven times. Although, he considers, when have humans ever grasped death?*

There’s now only about eight feet between the two sides, and someone in the Save Free Speech gathering (the Doctor realises he’d forgotten it was even called that) attempts to take the initiative by starting off a chant. “Free speech is here to stay, Cultural Marxists go away!” He starts saying it over and over, at the top of his voice, and there’s an excruciating moment of awkwardness wherein the rest of the group isn’t entirely sure if they want to join in or not.

One of the counter-demonstrators, specifically a short woman with neon pink hair, seizes the opportunity to start an opposing chant, and the others are all forced to go along with it by the demands of the situation: “Love and kindness never die, Neo-Nazis always lie!”

In response, SFS are forced to throw their weight behind the ‘Marxists’ chant, and it’s not long before the two battle cries are fighting for dominance at a very high volume. The Doctor quickly assesses the group sizes, counting a handful or so more people on the counter-demonstrators’ side - but what’s really troubling him now is what’s happening to that group’s Bugs.

On their approach to the park, their Bugs were very clearly around normal size, perhaps even a bit smaller though that could have been the Doctor’s imagination. But now?

“Free speech is here to stay!”

“Love and kindness never die!”

As the noise of the two demonstrations ebbs back and forth, mingling with the even more piercing hum, the Doctor witnesses a kind of knock-on effect on the volume of the Bugs. Specifically, every time either group starts their chant over, all of their Bugs undergo a moment of inflation. The more waves of chanting that occur, the more the already-huge Bugs of SFS engorge themselves, and the more the burgeoning Bugs of the counter-protesters start to follow suit, albeit with much farther to go.

This really starts to throw the Doctor off. *If it’s not specifically white nationalism*, he thinks, *and it’s not*

specifically insulting your mother, and it's not specifically pouring dairy products over your own face, then what on Omega's knobbly bumcheek could it even be?!

The two groups are inching closer, even with the line of police officers still resolutely separating them. Breaking off from the main chanting, individuals are leaning out of the packs to yell inaudible things at the opposing side - and that, too, seems to feed their Bugs.

Suddenly, something white and light flies up into the sky from near the back of the counter-protesters, arcs gracefully like a bird, then plummets to the ground near the front of the SFS, narrowly missing a policeman.

It's an entirely clean toilet roll. The SFS group recoils slightly, fearing further missiles, and the Doctor takes the opportunity to burrow towards the back of the group in case too many people notice he's not joining in with the yelling. Near the back he also sees Cole, quietly murmuring along, gazing forward with a rather bleak look in his eyes - and additionally, the blonde woman from earlier. Their Bugs have vicious activity surging just beneath the skin.

"Their desire to subject themselves to their foreign masters is almost sexual," the woman rasps to herself. "Bred directly into them by the Jews. Their ultimate act of corrupting white culture." The Doctor tries very, very hard not to imagine Davros saying the word 'sexual' and only narrowly succeeds.

He struggles to even think straight. The hum is almost deafening. "Getting a bit hairy over there, isn't it?" he says to nobody in particular.

"This is the war for reality," the blonde woman continues, almost in her own personal trance, her voice layering over the action like that of a demonic narrator. "This is the struggle that will determine the fate of the human species. The people versus the monsters."

But all the Doctor can see is the sea of Bugs. Those on the SFS side are now easily on average three feet in diameter. Their fierce attachment to their host heads is the only thing keeping them from toppling to the ground. The policemen's, too, are on the rise.

Something from within the SFS crowd ascends into the sky, green fabric - it's a flag, with a design the Doctor doesn't recognise. It begins to billow in the air near the front, waving back and forth, the Bugs reacting to its presence by growing even larger.

His grasp on what's solid and real faintly slipping away, the Doctor runs through possibilities in his mind. *Support. Group identity. Self-identification. Domination. Fear. It has to be something on the level of the individual psyche.*

Yet all he can latch onto is that something happening here is wrong, all wrong, deeply wrong - not even merely on one side, or even both sides, but everyone - *everywhere* - is being eaten by some dread force only he can perceive, and the longer this confrontation goes on, the more that process seems to be exacerbated. This is supposed to be the moment where he intervenes. This is supposed to be the point where he dives in and awakens them all to their true enemy. But what is it? *What?*

There's a commotion at the front.

Something - someone - moving, very rapidly.

One of the counter-demonstrators, one of the few black men, is moving to the side—

He yanks the green flag down unceremoniously.

The SFS side is holding onto it.

The cops surge towards the zone of activity.

The hum balloons to mind-penetrating levels.

The Bugs almost burst, except they can't, all they can do is keep growing and growing—

“No,” breathes the Doctor, delirious.

There's the sound of a struggle, a tug of war—

The chants devolve into a wall of furious screaming—

The Doctor stumbles, clutching his head, through the packed crowd—

The hum rises in pitch until it's no longer a hum. It rises in sync with the growth of the Bugs, as their skin stretches, as they glisten, growing new layers, shaking, writhing, sweating, sucking and sucking at their host minds, and the Doctor finally grasps that it was never a hum but a shriek, the synchronised shriek of the feeding Bugs, a single shriek refracted through every last one of them—

The time on the clock hits 3pm—

The Doctor pushes through the howling mass of humans and mind parasites, towards the battle over the green flag—

There's the shrill sound of a microphone and speakers being set up somewhere behind them; people shield their ears—

His vision is slurring, he can hardly tell one Bug from the next; they each seem to be gaining their own gravity that his mind can't escape the pull of, and he thinks he sees them growing thick veins and tendrils but can't even distinguish imagination from reality any more—

There's a colossal tearing sound as the flag rips raggedly straight down the middle; a cheer balloons up on the counter-demonstrator side just as equally the emotionless shriek of the Bugs rises to blot it out—

“Hello hello hello, fellow free speech warriors!” comes a voice, presumably Rodney Mansfield's, blasted out over the top of their heads—

The cops are forced to push back now, first SFS then the opposition, physically holding them back even as they surge forth and the gap between them is narrowed to scarcely two inches, a hair's breadth away from a clash, a breath away from an explosion; the Bugs now blotting out all life; someone near the Doctor reveals what looks like a small bottle of mace—

“No,” the Doctor gurgles, pulling them out of the way—

“It's a beautiful day, isn't it?”

“NOOOOOOOOOOO,” the Doctor screams as he bursts out of the front of the SFS group and collapses in the gap.

Suddenly, the eyes are on him, this vagabond, this homeless wreck, shambling between them. The struggling dies down. The cops look at him suspiciously, trying to judge if they should quickly hustle him out of the way.

Seized by a feverish impulse, he scrambles to his feet, spreading his arms wide, trying to part the two groups as if they're the Red Sea. “Wait,” he gasps. The Earth sinks, dips, heaves before him. The Bugs shriek.

“Before we start, I just want to say big thanks to our biggest donor Mark Hamper for helping us set all

this up—“

They watch the Doctor. He struggles to stay on his feet, investing all the mental fortitude he has left. He raises a finger.

“Have you seen...” he begins, slurring his words, “what’s on your head right now?” With the finger, the precious finger, he tries to point at the first Bug he sees - atop another one of the milk-lovers from before - taking wobbly steps closer to it. “I n...need you to believe that i’ss a thing that’ssss...really *there*...”

“—and I want you to all feel that you’re safe and supported here, no matter what our regressive friends over at the back there have to say—“

“Look,” the Doctor pleads. “*Loook*.”

He’s met with utterly uncomprehending expressions. “Does that guy need a doctor,” someone asks.

“Need a doctor? *Need a doctor?* I am a bloody Doctor, and, and I diagnose—“ He blinks. He blinks again. His mouth opens and closes, then opens again. “The human soul.” He whirls around, one of those catlike manoeuvres to disguise nearly falling over. “I’m so, so sorry...but it’s yourself—“ He waves his arms around, trying to point at everyone. “Your SELF.”

“—maybe today it would be fitting if I shared some thoughts I’ve had on the inherent violence of the left —“

The Doctor realises he’s used one of those phrases from his sandshoes period, those godawful apologies, and tries to physically spit it out, then nearly collapses onto someone at the front of the counter-protest who looks a bit gender-non-conforming. With a gigantic effort he heaves himself upright again, and prepares to utter a statement of utter profundity, but his mind can only cough up, “When is a door not a door?”

They stare at him, slack-jawed. Several of them are filming him on their phones. Everyone seems eager to attribute him to the opposing team.

“When it’s—when it’s a j—when it’s fic—when it’s f—“

“*Is that guy over there alright? Can someone get him some help?*”

At that, the Doctor finally spins round to look at the face of Rodney Mansfield, a clean-cut man in a grey suit, who’s standing on some boxes. The moment the Doctor sees, he realises. He makes a connection, and a look of pure horror seizes his features.

“I remember.”

The Doctor points over the heads of the crowd, over the Bugs, straight at Mansfield.

“You.”

Nobody moves.

“You have to stop,” the Doctor garbles. “You have to stop. You *have* to stop,” he beseeches Rodney, becoming louder and louder. “You have to stop, you have to stop, *you have to stop, it’s not safe, he will kill you, HE WILL KILL YOU, I SAW IT HAPPEN!*”

Mansfield squints down at the Doctor from his vantage point. Away from his mic, he mutters to a member of his entourage, “Anyone know who he’s with?”

“*It’s not too late—you don’t have to follow that path—oh god,*” the Doctor burbles, clutching his head

once more. The shriek of the Bugs is a level drill-whine in his consciousness. The ground is swimming.

Someone's approaching him.

They place a hand on his shoulder.

The Doctor looks up.

It's the sunglasses-wearing guy, the one with the *Lord Will Smite* sign.

His expression is kind.

"This man," he says to the crowd, "is clearly in need of Jesus."

All the Doctor can see is the man's Bug. Not only is it vibrating harder than before, but it seems now to almost be glowing white with energy. Incapable of resisting, the Doctor raises his finger once more, seeking it out, wanting to touch the essence of this being.

His finger grazes the edge of where the Bug is. He's never touched one before. The skin of his fingertip partially penetrates a substance that feels almost like compressed mist.

"That's weird," observes the Doctor, then passes out.

NEXT TIME: BITTER PILL

That's A Drashig

By J.G.I.C

Jo Grant's eyes couldn't believe the sight they were subjected to. Maybe her heart could, in all of its figurative understanding of the situation, manage such a thing, but not her sorry, sorry eyes.

It was a monumental thing of... more than monumental size. Take a double-decker bus for example, and throw that example out and replace it with a good two-story building. That's a much better one, isn't it? So, that thing as it was so rightly titled in her mind came equipped with flesh-mulching chompers that lined its freakish maw with just the more irritating shade of piss-brown this side of the public bathrooms in the fair. The smell was just about matching, too!

No oddity like that could stand alone, however, for all those teeth were complimented with a fair assortment of eyes going into the "About 6, give or take." range. Maybe an extra one for the person who forgets often. 6 thick, juicy eyestalks with bulbous spots of protruding ebony coming off each one. Multi-directional hunting is what it must get up to that piggish snout it swings in whatever direction it wants.

A direction... that could be her own! Shoulders bobbing upwards, her waist gave way to a twist as the flooring beneath her sunk inward with a messy squelch that was sure to stain her trousers something fierce. Trousers could be replaced though, like the Doctor's astonishingly odd set of ritually worn bowties and ribbons. Speaking of the man himself. "Doctor, what are we going to d-" Wait a minute, there was no Doctor holding onto her arm anymore. No one was! It was all mottled skin and a distinctly well-pressed suit!

It was a DRASHIG!

WITH THE DOCTOR'S CLOTHING!

HE WORE IT WELL!

Jaw giving way to an open mouth that turns on the dial of the Scream-o-meter to max, Jo's entire world goes to black the instant that dirty thing's jaw flaps open! Good thing she woke right up to a similar shade of darkness with a layer of sweat, heat, and comforting cotton above all of that. A deep breath is taken and the bedside light is promptly turned on. She's home, wherever it is for the moment, next to a sleeping Clifford, and frankly very, very perturbed. "Right."

Maybe she should ask those natives if they know anything close to a Drashig.

Framing Story Part III: The Shields Fail

Ace finished the story that Jo Grant had once told her, making Drashig sounds with her mouth, and waving her paws around. Everyone was laughing at her impression. The formerly nervous Beryl was cracking up, and her face was smiling loudly. Desmond was smiling subtly, in the corner. I had forgotten about the shields.

Then, darkness swept over the facility. A loud whining sound sounded from the outside, like a thousand cannons firing from a thousand heights.

“The shields have been turned off!” said Desmond. He ran down the corridor, where a loud buzzing noise was resounding.

“What happens when the shields turn off?” said Beryl, her face worried.

“It's simple. We die, painfully,” said Rast. “I told you that I should have been allowed to work on the defenses.”

“Quiet, Rast,” I told the baby. “Everyone, stay here. April, guard everyone here. Ace, come with me!”

April nodded, summoning her shadow weaponry. Ace unleashed her cheetah claws, and growled “Why did the shields turn off?”

“I'll find out,” I said, chasing after Desmond. I found him in the shield generator room. Metal spidery creatures were crawling from a tear in the wall, and he was blasting them away. One of the creatures jumped at me. Ace roared angrily, and tore into the monster, which quickly scampered away. Desmond blasted the remaining monsters, and sighed.

“That wasn't so bad,” said Ace. There were small cuts and bruises on her furry body, however.

“Fool! That's just a scouting party!” barked Desmond.

The tear got bigger. Outside, a blood-red sphere shone a light within. The sphere floated inside, and me, Desmond, and Ace tensed up unsure of what was happening.

“Analysis achieved. Dalek--”

Desmond blasted the sphere. It spilled out a black liquid, which spilt onto Ace. The cheetah screamed an ungodly howl, and her fur began to fall off in tufts.

“What's happening here?” asked Clive, who ran inside.

“Clive, get the hell back now!” I said.

At that moment, the tear blasted even wider. Now, I could see a whole fleet of those spheres,

all trying to rush down here.

“That's...not good,” said Clive.

Desmond was ignoring all of us. His hands were busy manipulating the shield generators, desperately attempting to return some form of glow to the machines. Discordant sounds came from the machine, and dark shadows and glowing spheres came down. Within seconds, they would be here.

Just as it looked it was about to hit us, a small glow began to show. The shields just barely came on, as the spheres hit them with a clang that hurt my ears and vibrated my bones.

“This will not hold long. I need to find out who did this. So I can fix it. And strangle whoever did this,” said Desmond. Suddenly, he fell to the floor.

As I stared in shock, someone spun me around. It was Ellie.

“What's going on?”

“Shh. I'm the one who shut down the shields. I--”

“How could you!” I said, grabbing her sharply.

“Wait! Wait. I would never place anyone under any danger. You have to understand—this world is not what it seems. Haven't you noticed how odd it is that the Time Lords haven't contacted us in a while?” she said.

“Because they're too busy!” I said.

“You really believe that?” she asked bitterly. Her eyes peered into mine darkly, and her mouth was pressed into a sad expression. As if she was pitying me. “Come on. You used to fight the Great Houses. You know that they're never what they seem. This place isn't just a place for refugees. It's shielded with technology far more secure than the Time Lords give to some war facilities. And there's no easy way out.”

“What are you saying?” I asked.

“I'm saying that there's something you're not telling me. Or maybe even you don't know. Either way, the Time Lords haven't sent any communication to this place since a whole decade. I've been checking.”

“That can't be true,” I said. “Desmond told me that the Time Lords talk to him all the time.”

“Maybe we've all been rused. The only way we'll find out is if we go past those shields,” said Ellie.

Before I could respond, Ellie shushed me. Desmond was stirring, and she whispered at “Everyone's waking up now. Be careful. Something's not right here.”

A few seconds later, Desmond walked to me, carrying Ace in his arms. "She's very hurt. Her body is regenerating to a younger state. She'll live, but she needs time to recuperate. Were you just talking to someone?"

"No," I lied. I didn't know who to trust.

He eyed me for an uncomfortably long time. Then he smiled, and said nothing.

No one spoke in the main room. Everyone's face was serious. They all knew something had gone terribly wrong.

"The shields are failing. I do not know why this happened, or who might have caused it. What I do know, is that if I cannot fix the issue, that we will be torn apart. The Time Lords are very unlikely to assist us. I will attempt to contact that saviour we all know, the Doctor. If I cannot..."

"Then what, we just give up? Lie back, and think of Gallifrey?" spat Susie.

"Do whatever you choose. I simply tell you the choices," said Desmond.

I was left with several glum, angry people. I noticed Clive was nowhere to be found.

Beryl suddenly said "So, let's continue sharing stories?"

"Stories? At this time?" said Sam.

"I have a sexy story to share," said Beryl.

"Yeah. Let's do stories," I said. I wasn't feeling it, though. I was worried about the storm coming.

Flesh And Bone

By Sexy Fic Anon

“Oh, you are sweet. Doctor. But I really wasn't suggesting anything quite so long term.”

Amy thrust the Doctor against the TARDIS, kissing him passionately. His attempts to break free were feeble compared to Amy's force. He finally manages to break free of her grasp and looks her up and down.

“But you're human! You're getting married in the morning!” as she attempts to kiss him again it dawns on him. “In the morning...”

“Doctor?” Amy questions him, a look of excitement noticeable on her face.

“It's you. It's all about you. Everything. It's about you.”

She leans closer to him and mutters “Hold that thought” before sauntering over and lying on her bed.

“Amy Pond. Mad, impossible, Amy Pond. I don't know why, I have no idea, but quite possibly the single most important thing in the history of the universe is that I get you sorted out right now.”

“That's what I've been trying to tell you.” Amy replies seductively, spreading her legs wide to give the Doctor a good view.

“I...” he mutters, studying her body - her slender legs, her small breasts emphasised by the red hoodie she had on, her face.

Her face. The Doctor couldn't resist it. Amy took this moment of thought as a signal to continue and removed her boots, flinging them into some corner of her rather untidy room. She took off her tights next, then her hoodie. Lying there in just her bright-blue underwear, she looked at the Doctor expectantly.

“Well?” she questioned “Your turn.”

The Doctor got onto the bed and knelt between her outstretched legs, snapping off his braces and pulling down his trousers.

“What are you doing?” spoke Amy, mockingly “When was the last time you had sex?”

“Well, erm...” the Doctor considered “I suppose...”

“Not for a long time then,” Amy looked amused “then I guess I'll have to teach you.”

Thrusting him onto her bed, Amy discarded the Doctor's bow-tie and unbuttoned his shirt, throwing

them aside. She ventured down to his trousers and pulled them down further, along with his underpants, revealing his cock.

“Jesus!” Amy shouted, taking it all in “Not even in my imagination did I imagine you’d be this big. Is it a Time Lord trait?”

The Doctor could barely utter an explanation before Amy began to lick the shaft from end to end, and he felt himself get hard. Amy was even more astounded as his cock seemed to double in size.

“I’m having doubts about Rory now,” Amy uttered, tickling the Doctor’s balls “He’s not nearly as big as you”

Once again, before the Doctor could reply, Amy took his entire cock in her mouth, leaving faint smudges of lipstick at the base. He felt almost paralysed as she began to work up and down, teasing him by going slow.

“FUCK” shouted the Doctor, feeling his body squirm. He’d never had an encounter quite like this before. Amy sensed that he could cum at any moment and stopped, not quite allowing him to achieve release. He looked disappointed.

“Is that it?” the Doctor enquired. “I thought it would last longer...”

“That’s not it, you silly little thing” Amy teased, undoing her bra and tossing it aside “That’s called foreplay – if you go in raw you’d probably break your knob in half”

“Really?!” the Doctor replied, scared. “I never knew there was such danger involved.”

“You are gullible, Doctor” Amy laughed “Though if you want to enjoy yourself you have to be wet”

As she said this, Amy slid down her knickers and tossed them onto the Doctor’s face. He sniffed them and replied disgruntledly “They smell a bit fishy, what have you been storing in them?”

“You have to be putting it on at this point. No person is so naïve”

“I’ve told you, I’m a time lord, and our bodies change. I seem to not be as knowledgeable in this new body...”

Ignoring him, Amy sat on the Doctor’s chest, his cock arching almost in line with her arse. She looked at him lustfully and began to shimmy her rear. The Doctor cracked an awkward smile and flicked Amy’s nipple, making a “boop” sound. This earned a disapproving look from Amy.

“What?”

“You’re like a kid, seriously” she said, stifling a laugh. “It’s sorta cute.”

Amy reared up her arse and aimed her pussy over the Doctor’s throbbing masses (Versus anyone?) and slowly parked it inside of her. She felt the Doctor quiver as he entered the warmth and felt an even warmer sensation inside of her.

“Did you cum already?!” she asked, shocked. Surely he couldn’t be this premature?

“No, I pissed inside of you. That’s how sex works isn’t it?”

“You seriously have to be pulling my leg. You can’t be this dumb about sex...”

“Of course I am! I’m a grandfather for god’s sake – I know at least a bit about it” he said with a wink

“Well get on with it then!”

In less than a second the Doctor was off, pounding harder than Amy had ever felt during her time as a kissogram. He still wasn’t perfect – he seemed uncoordinated, as if he couldn’t tell one foot from the other – but he wasn’t useless.

“It has been a long time since I’ve had sex though...” he said worryingly. “I’m afraid I might shoot like a rocket” he motioned a rocket taking off and whistled as he brought his finger squarely onto one of Amy’s breasts.

“Best pull out then – I’m not sure our two species are compatible.”

The Doctor shot off just as his pulled out, leaving a tidy trail of cum on the border of her vagina. The brunt of it shot all over her body though, and as Amy had leaned forward in the hopes to perhaps finish him off more intimately, there was a considerable amount on her face.

“Ah, so that’s over then!” the Doctor exclaimed, shooting up, already putting his trousers on. “We must do that again. I’m sure the TARDIS has a room better suited for that.”

“More suited than a bed? What does the room do?”

“I don’t know – I just thought there would be one.”

Amy rolled her eyes and leaned at the end of the bed, looking up at the Doctor, her face covered in his semen. She scooped some from her cheek and licked it off her finger seductively, to which the Doctor just laughed.

“Clean yourself up Pond – I don’t know how we’re going to explain this to your fiancé...”

The Face of Nard

By catharticspurious

There drifts a lonely vessel through the night,
Amid the heavens and the cosmos starred,
A behemoth too large for human sight,
And deep within it lies the Face of Nard.
Some say the ship's a wreck from top to foot,
That every sector's frozen, drowned or charred,
That only carbonised remains and soot
Could still accompany the Face of Nard.
The legends whisper of an endless war,
An onslaught of a Cybermen vanguard,
Against a meagre band of Men, no more.
From this did come to be the Face of Nard.
Abandoned by the Gods of Gallifrey,
(Two dead, one fled,) the mortals' fate was hard.
The metal men grew nearer still each day,
So goes the story of the Face of Nard.
Yet one account holds that they missed their goal,
And let the mortals flee their grasp unscarred;
All owing to a servant named Nardole,
The one whose name adorns the Face of Nard.
For in his body lay not flesh and bone,
But oil, computer, metal plate and shard;
Thus when the Cybertroops did breach his zone,
A clash occurred that spawned the Face of Nard.
Perhaps he split his torso with a knife
And set the insides free, no longer barred
By laws of human form or self or life.
The moment that conceived the Face of Nard.
An evolution over senseless time,
His human charges held him in regard
Not unbecoming one of the divine;
A legacy that gilds the Face of Nard.

Confronted by Nardole's evolved shape,
Perhaps the Cybermen did but discard
Their progress, and embark upon escape?
O blessed mercy from the Face of Nard!
Could it have been that they did face a sea
Of tendrils, stretching for a thousand-yard,
Assimilating indiscrim'nately?
O callous fury of the Face of Nard!
"Oh, bugger this," spake his colossal face.
His body gone, yet spirit never marred,
He sealed the men in sleep for flight through space,
And steers them home e'en now, does saintly Nard.
For who, under protection of Nardole,
Could not be safe and sound? Let him be tarred
And feathered, who suggests that those sweet souls
Sleep not at peace within the Face of Nard.

The Stolen Regeneration

By Neo

[Note: this takes place during my other shit trip “The War of the Doctor”, but should read fine standalone]

“Here we go - good luck Doctor!” said Captain Jack Harkness, pulling Rose away from the Doctor, to safety.

“Will someone please tell me what is going on?” squawked Donna.

The three of them stood inside the TARDIS while the Doctor writhed on the floor. Just as he’d seen Rose for the first time again in so long, a Dalek had shot him. His body had started to react accordingly.

“When he’s dying, his body, it repairs itself. It changes,” said Rose. “But you can’t!”

“I’m sorry, it’s too late,” said the Tenth Doctor. “I’m regenerating.”

He burst into golden light for a time, then the streams of golden light came to an end, and the Tenth Doctor became the Eleventh.

“Legs! I’ve still got legs, good. Arms, hands, ooh fingers, lots of fingers. Ears, yes, eyes, two. Nose, I’ve had worse. Chin...blimey. Hair - I’m a girl! No, no, I’m not a girl. And still not ginger! And something else, something important, I’m, I’m...”

Rose, Jack, and Donna gaped at the new Doctor.

“You’re loony you are!” exclaimed Donna.

“He’s fine, look at him,” countered Jack.

“You...you changed,” said Rose, glumly.

Outside, Daleks surrounded the TARDIS.

“Report! TARDIS has been located!”

“Temporal prison initiated!”

Inside the TARDIS, the lights shut off and the power drained out.

“Doctor, what’s happening?” asked Jack.

“We’ve had some cowboys in here! Right, well, yes, some kind of chronon loop then! Come along Rose, try holding down that lever, see.”

The TARDIS jerked upwards, pulled abruptly and wildly through the sky by Dalek technology.

“Geronimo!” exclaimed the Doctor.

Once the TARDIS has stabilised, and the companions had all exchanged looks, Jack and Donna both started to talk at once.

“Will someone please tell me what is going on?” wailed Donna, again.

“Doctor, there’s a massive Dalek ship at the centre of the planets,” said Jack. “They’re calling it the Crucible. Guess that’s our destination.”

“He was dying, and he repaired himself,” said Rose, looking at the new Doctor apprehensively. “He changed his face. He’s...new.”

“Look at him,” Donna scoffed. “I thought he looked young before! What happened to his sideburns? And look at that chin!”

“I’ve got a chin now,” said the Doctor, grinning. “Chins are cool.”

“There’s no time for any of this,” said Rose. “The darkness is coming. The stars, going out. Back home, basically we’ve been building this travel machine, this Dimension Cannon, so I could...so I could come back.” Rose was looking at the Doctor pointedly, but he was too busy prancing around the TARDIS controls to notice here.

“He moves like a giraffe,” said Donna incredulously.

“Anyway,” continued Rose. “Suddenly it started to work, and the dimensions started to collapse. Not just in our world, not just in yours, but the whole of reality. Even the Void was dead. Something is destroying everything.”

“In that parallel world, you said something about me,” said Donna.

“The Dimension Cannon could measure timelines, and it’s weird Donna,” replied Rose. “They all seemed to converge on you.”

“But why me? I mean, what have I ever done?” asked Donna. “I’m a temp from Chiswick!”

The TARDIS started to beep insistently.

“Yowzah!” exclaimed the Doctor. “The Dalek Crucible! All aboard! Daleks, on a spaceship!”

The TARDIS was pulled into the Crucible. Outside, the Supreme Dalek waited.

“Doctor,” it boomed, “you will step forth or die.”

Jack began to say something about extrapolator shielding, but the Doctor leapt out the TARDIS doors before he had a chance. The three companions exchanged alarmed glances, then made to follow him out.

“Didn’t anyone ever tell you?” began the Doctor. “There’s one thing you never put in a trap. If you’re smart, if you value your continued existence, if you have any plans about seeing tomorrow, there’s one thing you never, ever-”

“Behold the might of the Daleks,” intoned the Supreme Dalek. “Your TARDIS is a weapon, and will be destroyed.”

A hatch opened in the Crucible, and the TARDIS was sucked down into the ship’s molten core and, indeed, destroyed.

“You are connected to the TARDIS, Doctor. And it has been destroyed. What do you feel? Anger? Sorrow? Despair?”

“Me?” asked the Doctor. “I’m okay. I’m always okay. I’m the king of okay. No, that’s a rubbish title. Forget that title.

“He’s manic,” moaned Jack. “He’s still cooking, he’s not thinking straight, he’s not taking anything seriously.”

“But he’s the Doctor,” murmured Rose.

“What of your companions,” continued the Supreme Dalek, “what do they feel?”

“Feel this!” yelled Jack, pulling out a small revolver and shooting at the Supreme Dalek.

“Exterminate!” The Supreme Dalek responded in kind, and Jack died.

“Jack,” cried Rose, “oh my god, oh no.”

“He’s fine,” said the Doctor flippantly.

“Disregarding your companions Doctor?” boomed the Supreme Dalek. “Admitting the inferiority of your Time Lord box? Perhaps you aren’t mad as thought.”

“Supreme Dalek,” the Doctor replied, “there’s something you better understand about me, ‘cause it’s important. And one day your life may depend on it. I am definitely a mad man with a box.”

“Terminate your prattle!” roared the Supreme Dalek.

“Wibbly wobbly-”

“Desist!”

“Timey-wimey-”

“Cease the mockery!”

“Humany-wumany-”

“Exterminate!”

The Supreme Dalek was so annoyed by the Eleventh Doctor that he exterminated him then and there. As the Dalek stratagem proceeded and the Reality Bomb was detonated, all the Supreme Dalek could think of was the glory of living in a universe without catchphrases.

Paternity of the Cosmic Hobos

by BLT M'quis

An adventure with the Second Doctor. Set between Fury from the Deep and The Wheel in Space

It had been a traumatic series of events since the Doctor and Jamie McCrimmon left Victoria on Earth. The TARDIS had been cheeky and sent them on many unfortunate trips. A bout with Bara Daleks. A trade of blows between the Fapping Angels. And worst of all, Jamie finding himself on the rag. But the Doctor introduced the TARDIS to the concept of domestic abuse, and so it decided to relax on these escapades. Lately, the Doctor had been worried about Jamie. Ever since Victoria departed, Jamie had grown shaky. Almost as if he were getting the chills, the aches, all the symptoms of a man deprived of a heterosexual screw. The Doctor was surprised by this, but then he remembered the time when the Great Intelligence annihilated any trace of Jamie's latent homosexuality. Well, time to give this Scottish boy a lick...

They stepped out of the TARDIS, not hand in hand because the Doctor knew Jamie hadn't washed yet.

"Ah," the Doctor said. "We're here."

"Here?" Jamie asked.

"Of course, Jamie. Welcome to the Womb!"

He had been literal, for this was indeed a womb. Full of transparent veins and a red afterglow. Dark and full of terrors. But surprisingly, not filled with fluids. Otherwise, the Doctor and Jamie would have drowned in vagoo juice.

Intrigued, Jamie touched the walls of this strange, organic realm with his right hand. He could feel all the sensations of whoever woman they were inside. The heart beats, the breathing, the voices. He couldn't make out what this woman was saying, but she sounded familiar. A pleasant experience, Jamie thought, until he saw his hand covered in the wall's goo. He freaked, wiping his hand with his trusty kilt.

"Augh," he said. "It's even thicker than Polly's!"

"Even thicker than yours!" replied the Doctor.

"Hey!"

"Oh, I'm just teasing, Jamie. Yours is much too watery."

"Well, at least it doesn't have a stench like this. What's this woman been eating?"

"Now, Jamie. Don't judge this womb's owner for their dietary habits. Women always indulge without knowing about the little men in their sexual organs."

"But do they always have to queef so often?"

"We should take a trip to Raxacoricofallapatorius and meet with the Tumbleen if you want to see what constant vaginal belching is truly like!"

But as they bantered, they heard a noise into the abyss of the womb. Creatures crawled from the darkness, with

pink, pulpy hands reaching out.

“Goo... goo...” they echoed.

Faster than expected, they showed their full forms to the travelers. Not yet matured, and not ready for the outside, but definitely recognizable. Fetuses. Gigantic fetuses.

Jamie tried to run, but the Doctor pulled him back into place.

“Now don’t worry,” he assured Jamie. “I believe these are a peaceful kind.”

“Peaceful?!”

“They’re babies.”

“Beastly babies!”

“Now why would you call them beastly, Jamie? You’ll make them cry.”

Before Jamie could respond, one of them crawled up to him and chewed on his arm. While they had no teeth to bite, they still had those disgusting gums wet with saliva and ready to make any nearby object covered in drool. Jamie pulled back his arm, but then another baby came from behind and licked his kilt. Everywhere he looked, there were babies salivating at the idea of eating Jamie, or at the very least turning him into their chewtoy. At least a couple took turns licking the Doctor’s hair until it was bushier than the raggedy pubes of an air hostess he’ll meet in his future.

The Doctor’s nerves were tested. Creatures may do whatever they will with his Jamie, but they be damned if they dare touch his head. That was for other men’s wives only!

He pulled out his trusty sonic screwdriver and turned it on full blast. Because he knew one simple thing: These babies hadn’t been born yet. They were used to pure unfiltered sound. One harsh noise, and they all freak. Their curious chewing quickly shifted into the screaming of babes. The Doctor had won again, but whether it was his fault or not, the walls started to shake.

“Oh, no! Doctor, this womb is going to collapse!”

“That’s silly, Jamie. Vaginas don’t collapse. They contract. Only an uneducated--”

“Doctor, we are leaving now!”

“But what about we explore this domain further? We haven’t even gotten to the clitoris yet?”

“Now!”

Jamie dragged the Doctor backed into the TARDIS, letting a slimy trail of juices into the console floor.

“Oh, Jamie! How could you? The TARDIS doesn’t like female bodily juices!”

“At least we’re alive, Doctor! By the way, didn’t those babies look familiar to you?”

“I wouldn’t think too much about it, Jamie.”

...

Jodie had been anxious ever since the announcement. Her recently bleached hair was falling out, and she was having second thoughts on doing the show as it would take time away from her children. She considered just letting Christian do all the parental work, but would it be fair?

Before she could reconsider this decision, Jodie felt an oozing sensation coming out of her private parts. A wheezing, groaning noise bellowed from her vagina. Jodie looked down, and she noticed that she had given birth to a litter of children. The people of Skelmanthorpe, West Yorkshire hadn't been introduced to the concept of lying down while giving birth. Those outdated cave dwellers preferred to excrete their bushels while standing tall.

Jodie looked down and smiled. Eight healthy babies. All of whom had black moptop hair, similar to Moe Howard. At least, Jodie wanted to believe it was Moe Howard. The alternative, of course, was too bizarre to believe. But Jodie did recall hearing her acting acquaintances, even the male ones like Alan Carr, give birth to children with that familiar bushy hair, those sunken eyes, and that pout. Please, she thought. If any man were to irreparably alter the DNA of her children, let it not have been flutist predecessor. She couldn't bear to raise a litter of Troughtonkind. Besides, their newborn yet somehow graying hair probably had lice. She needed to wash her vagina hair or else they'll itch for months.

New Body, New Day

by Gallifrey_Immigrant

The Doctor stared at the soldiers outside the tent. Romans weren't usually so ornery, but they were at war. Random strangers were frowned upon. It had taken a lot of talking to avoid getting sliced to pieces. Eventually, they had settled on making the Doctor and Rose prisoners of war. It was honestly not the worst prison the Doctor and Rose had been in.

Rose was curled up in a corner, reading a book. Her long yellow hair still looked beautiful, even though she hadn't had a bath in days. She noticed the Doctor looking, and gave a silly smile.

“What's wrong?” she asked.

“I never said anything was wrong.”

“Didn't have to. Even in a new body, you've got a few tells left,” said Rose. It had taken Rose a while to get used to his new body; seeing common traits was probably her way to stay calm. Deep down, he felt nothing like his last body, (except for his love for his companion, of course), though saying that would scare her. Or maybe not. Rose was full of surprises.

“Sorry for the whole 'kidnapped by Romans' bit,” said the Doctor.

Rose laughed. “It's not all bad. The food's rather delicious. So are the men, I think.”

That made the Doctor gape. “You think?”

“Yeah, haven't had time to actually taste. Yet,” said Rose. She was still grinning. “You should see your face.”

The Doctor shook his head. “You humans are so odd.”

“How about you? What sort of women do you go for?”

“What exactly are you asking me?”

“I just mean. I think one of those maids are into you,” said Rose. The Doctor scanned her face, but couldn't read her intention. Somehow, that worried him.

“Didn't notice.”

“Well, at least that stayed the same.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” said the Doctor. He knew he was famous for missing 'signals', but he didn't like to be reminded of it. Especially not by Rose.

“Nothing. Just saying, you tend to ignore...dance partners.”

The mention of 'dancing' brought Jack to his mind. He grimaced at the memory of that friend.

“What?”

“Jack.”

“He was a fun guy. I miss him...you know, that's the first time you've mentioned him in your new body. I thought you'd--”

“Forgotten him? You think I'd just forget him?” said the Doctor. It came out angrier than he intended.

“I didn't mean it like that. It's just...this whole new body you have. It's very weird for me. Sorry if that's like, racist against your species.”

Rose. Her face looked so unsure. The Doctor could see how carefully she chose her words, how polite she was trying to be. He wondered why he had never explained renewal in his last body, to her. Then again, who likes to think about death.

“Well,” said the Doctor, “it's weird for me too. Having you around actually is a big help. You're a constant, throughout the change. My constant Rose Tyler.”

A blush rushed to Rose's cheeks, and a wide smile spread over her face. She moved over to the Doctor, and for a split second she looked like she was going to kiss him. But instead, she wrapped her arms around him, tight.

“I’ll always be here, Doctor,” said Rose.

“I know,” said the Doctor, trying to forget that he knew better.

Big Screen Action!

By Nacho

The Doctor walked out of the movie theater with his big, toothy grin from ear to ear. His companion Leela in the midst behind him with an exhausted and somewhat puzzled look on her face. Around them, crowds were flocking out in droves like a mob with the incessant roar of white noise that was born of the combination of walking feet, conversing people and the low hum of tens of thousands of lights.

Approaching the street, one could hardly picture what the night looked like from eye level: so many lights, camera flashes and signs lit up the area at the twilight hour that for a moment Leela wondered if The Doctor had brought her to an area of the Earth where night did not happen within 24 hours.

Around them were eager fans, the press, industry types looking to hop into a limousine and spirit off to an after party and a few dedicated enthusiasts in well made costumes acting out an appearance by the characters they had just seen. The commotion was so intense that no one paid any mind to The Doctor and Leela walking into The Tardis; no one even heard it taking off. A second after it had completely disappeared the space was even occupied by a tall woman in a black costume taking pictures with the children of the actual movie's actors. Neither of which knew the other's identity.

"Incredible! The human mind's imagination; it's sheer brilliance to be able to tell a story of that caliber! Why, I don't think I may ever find myself experiencing such a spectacle such as that again!" the Doctor was gushing now as he flicked the controls, adjusted a lever and let the Tardis freely roam the sodding time vortex without a destination.

For Leela, using the Tardis to go and watch 3 cinema premieres in a row of Star Wars was exhausting. The Doctor had been so excited at seeing the saga unfold that she had not even had time for a bathroom break; never mind time to even stretch her legs. At first there was something legitimately exciting to watching the drama and she had to admit she had seen nothing like a "movie" before; but as time went on inertia was creeping into her bones. Stir crazy was a particularly dangerous setting for her, to say the least.

As she re-entered the Tardis console room from her own area and closed the door behind her, The Doctor was already at the console with a sullen expression. "No more?" he said with an all too serious

and melodramatic tone. Leela was taken aback by how strange the words sounded coming from his mouth, as if his melodrama was almost silly from an outsider's perspective.

"There are no more Star Wars movies made after Return of the Jedi!" the Doctor exclaimed aloud. He sounded positively negative in his dumbfounded surprise now.

"Perhaps that is for the best, Doctor. After all it was a very well told story that felt complete in its conclusion." Leela said approaching the console and drawing her knife to sharpen it.

The Doctor could not accept that explanation. With a flick across a switch and a turn of a knob, the Tardis groaned to life with a wheeze, moving through time and space to coordinates the Doctor was still entering.

As they landed the Doctor was already rushing towards the door. With cat-like reflexes Leela caught him by the collar of his jacket before he could make it.

"Doctor, are you really about to ask this man Lucas to make more moving pictures?" she said with a disheartened sigh at the idea of sitting through more movies and getting more of the...what was the word The Doctor used? The Fidgets.

"Of course not, Leela! I wouldn't dream of making you and your sharp knife sit down through another picture today" he said looking at her with that big, toothy grin again. Relaxed at his words, Leela eased her grip and The Doctor headed towards the door at a walk instead.

"I'm going to ask him for the coordinates of where and when Star Wars is set so that we can experience them ourselves." he said, delicately tapping the side of his nose with great joy in his eyes.

The thought that these movies were pure fiction hadn't even crossed The Doctor's mind it seems. It boggled Leela's mind, as it was a fact so plain because of the storytelling techniques used and yet the Doctor had somehow missed the forest while being enraptured by the movie, as the metaphor went. It would almost be endearing if it wasn't such a recurring trait.

There was a thump on the Tardis door from the outside as the Doctor approached it from the inside. Carefully opening it inwards and peeking his head out, The Doctor carefully activated the sonic

screwdriver from within his jacket pocket to flick a light switch somewhere in the room on. On the ground now looking up at a strange phone booth covered in blue was the infamous George Lucas, dumbstruck to find a strange man with his head and one hand poking out of it and wiggling his fingers in salutations.

“Just who in the hell are you?” George said, a look of mild confusion and rising frustration on his face.

The Doctor knew he needed to act fast. He had about 47 seconds before George yelled for security. Luckily he knew just how to distract someone with an imagination like George Lucas with the time he had available.

Quickly, The Doctor flung both doors open to The Tardis and have him a peek into his extra dimensional craft and the enormity inside. “Hello, I am The Doctor. I am a wanderer in the Fourth Dimension and a huge fan of your Star Wars.” he said leaning against the doorway with his elbow, his head resting on his fist.

Up walked Leela in her tight leather attire. Looking down at the little man on the ground with a little excitement, Leela saw George’s expression soften immediately. Earth men were similar no matter the time period it seemed.

“This is my travelling companion, Leela” he said smiling and gesturing towards her.

The Doctor walked himself beyond the threshold of the tardis door and into George’s house. Spotting a comfortable wrap around sofa, the Doctor instinctively jumped over the back and made himself at home in a resting position, feet over the arm of the chair so as not to put his boots on the furniture. Manners must be kept up, even in America.

Leela offered the renowned director an arm up and smiled as they joined The Doctor on the couch. George felt a little at ease with these two people now making themselves at home; as if a sign of their comfort was honesty.

“Doctor, is it really necessary to crash land onto everyone’s furniture as if you own it?” Leela said with a scathing tone.

“Yes, well, as you know, naturalism isn’t my strong point! I’m not good at coming through doors

convincingly. But never mind – even if you can’t come through a door convincingly, perhaps you can come through a door interestingly or, dare one say, amusingly.” The Doctor said as he tipped his hat down over his eyes.

“So what can I do you for, Doctor... er, Doctor wh-” George began before being cut off.

“Well, ‘we’ being travellers in time and space and massive fans decided we would like to watch the events of Star Wars play out first hand!” The Doctor said cutting off George’s question. He always found that letting people ask that question spoiled a long standing joke.

George Lucas wasn’t quite sure how to explain to interdimensional time travellers that Star Wars was a fantasy. Letting down The Doctor with all his enthusiasm and energy seemed wrong, but then how naive could someone who’s seen other parts of the universe be to not realize that it was a piece of fantasy?

“Doctor, it’s not a real story” George said with a soothing tone like comforting a child.

“WHAT?!? But the incredible galaxy it takes place in; surely it couldn’t just...” The Doctor exclaimed in disbelief.

“...all fiction, Doctor. And it’s over now, no more Star Wars because there’s no more sights to see.” he said shrugging.

The Doctor looked at his feet thoroughly disappointed. No more Star Wars. No more adventure. The story was over, the epic told, the ideas all kaput. It didn’t seem fair that in a universe of stories that he had experienced first hand that a universe this incredible had no more stories to be seen.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Leela suddenly, standing up. “We should take George Lucas on an adventure to give him ideas for more Star Wars!”

The Doctor was speechless for a second. Such a simple idea hadn’t even crossed his mind, but the hope welling up behind his teeth now and blossoming into a smile had him giddy with joy.

“I’ve got a bad feeling about this...” George started to protest, but found himself being pushed into the Tardis in the untucked suit he was wearing for the Return of the Jedi premiere.

“We’ll be back before anyone knows it, George! And we’ve got a whole universe to show you that you can show the universe!” The Doctor said as he closed the door behind him. Seconds later, the wheezing began, and George Lucas was in for the ride of his life.

George Lucas flung open the doors to the Tardis within seconds of the end of the groaning, falling to his knees just outside and breathing heavily as he looked on the ground.

“Halalka!” said the Doctor as Leela and him both walked out through the doors and turned and locked them.

“Gesundheit!” said Leela as she went to George and put his arm around him to check his state.

“What? ...No. The planet’s name is Halalka. We’re at the intergalactic market of time and space. An area all races come to for trade in this time period for prosperity and harmony.” he said reaching into his coat and fidgeting around.

Finding the brown bag in his pocket, he pulled it out and offered it to George as he recovered. “Would you like a Jelly Baby?”

George took one and chewed one, his stomach at ease as he swallowed. He wondered for a second if the Doctor didn’t carry around some kind of medicinal variant, but they didn’t taste any different from any other Jelly Baby he had in his life.

As George looked up from the ground he saw the most incredible market; full of strange alien beings and interesting wares. Upside down waterfalls with people jumping into them caused them to almost fly with towards an incredible lake in the sky where they pierced the body of water like a skin and swam with dolphin like creatures.

Behind him, the loud rumble of a luxury cruiser’s engines caused him to duck and protect his head as it flew by. Through his squinting eyes he saw a loose walking alien try to snatch a chicken with a long tongue that shot from his mouth, only for The Doctor to grab it as it whizzed by with great reflexes. Taking the tongue with his hand and giving a look of disapproval he let go, letting the retracting tongue slap the alien in the face.

“How rude.” the alien exclaimed as it stomped away.

Down the road, a parade of cylindrical headed security droids walked down the road in a cream color in an impressive display. Their heads were pointed forwards, almost giving off the impression of horses without ears.

“Aw, well a single one of them couldn’t hit the sun from inside its direct orbit with how bad the droid’s aim is; but put them in an army and you have a wall of inescapable projectile. It’s impressive, really, as it prevents one hacked droid from being too effective.” The Doctor explained in George’s ear as George stood there fascinated.

A few moments after the parade had passed, the trio were looking at different stalls with George in the lead, The Doctor and Leela hanging back and beaming like proud parents. The first stall they had been led to was a simple junk dealer’s wares, but George seemed to have more interest in the creature itself, who bore wings and a short elephant-like trunk. At first George’s human curiosity and inspections tended to create unease; but after a bit of light prodding by The Doctor he seemed to make quick friends with many people. It was like this at many of the stalls they went to throughout the day.

Eventually, the market would be closing for the day. Turning his head to view the rough position and estimate the time, The Doctor was about to suggest they return to The Tardis when there was a loud bang and everyone turned towards a rising plume of smoke.

“Leela, George get back to the Tardis” The Doctor said as Leela ran past him towards the commotion. George and The Doctor looked at each other and shrugged before running towards after her.

At the scene was a battle between two alien species, both carrying a type of glowing stun baton, one single sided and the other’s double sided. Leela was enchanted by the sheer athleticism of the two combatants; as were The Doctor and George as they caught up. One of the combatants had skin like an old highway, cracked and horns poking out like weeds. His movements were full of jumps and spins as he looked for any sort of opening in his opponent’s defense. The other was a man with skin red like a rose but otherwise human looking. His fighting style was a fluid range of deflections with the double sided stun baton; his movements so quick that it seemed like he had many arms to the unfocused eye.

In the tight space, the more acrobatic combatant seemed to be at a disadvantage in looking for a striking position.

From behind the security droids had gathered into ranks and assumed a strategic position before

exclaiming a warning to the combatants to desist.

“But what caused all this?” George asked the Doctor.

“A trade dispute, it seems. Some of those can get very heated and cause very large disruptions to a system.” The Doctor answered nonchalantly without breaking his concentration.

Sensing it was time to step in, The Doctor boldly stepped between the two warring aliens.

“Gentlemen, I am The Doctor; a Deputized Diplomat of the Department of Disputes and Disturbances on behalf of the Diet who is within legal distinction to clear this up. Please explain both sides to me” he said before both began talking at once.

“One at a time.” he said putting up a finger to both before letting the rose red man speak his side.

The conflict was as simple and predictable as time itself. A customer came to both of their stalls and used her feminine wiles to get a bidding war started to lower the prices of competing wares. When the time came and it suddenly seemed as if the tariffs would cause their wares to be sold at a loss, both blamed the other side for being too stubborn to step down.

Satisfied, The Doctor explained that the customer was already long gone and that their quarrel would be over as soon as they calmed down and saw sense. Sighing, the two of them saw reason, and Leela put away her dagger with a disappointed sigh.

Behind them, one party was still ready for violence. The security droids were now duty bound to bring in both merchants for their disturbance. Guns aimed, they issued a warning for surrender: Come quietly.

“No no no, that’s no good. There’s too many civilians here for collateral” The Doctor said trying to reason with the droids. But their programming was absolute.

“Very well. Hand me your stun batons as an officer of the law, boys.” he said turning his head towards them and winking with his face turned away.

Working quickly with the double sided stun baton in his hand, he quickly unscrewed the discharge bulb, a sort of blue pulsating orb, and sonic'd it with his screwdriver. Instructing them both to put their hands up so as to lower the security droid defenses through cooperation, The Doctor tossed the orb to the head security droid.

Upon catching it, the bulb discharged and shot a current through the rest of the security force. The bulb exploded on the initial bot, creating a sort of blue, ionic slime to splash on it, disabling it beyond repair.

Without a cue Leela sprung up and dove into the security force. From the center of the force she kicked the head off any droid left standing after shock. For a second, The Doctor couldn't help but appreciate her single minded work: see enemy, see advantage, strike. It certainly left any loose ends tied up; a hassle his previous self always seemed to overlook and led to some distress often enough.

With the initial wave of the security force taken care of, The Doctor screamed for everyone to clear the area before grabbing George and Leela by the arm and making a B line for the Tardis.

Down the main street still crowded, The Doctor knew there wouldn't be enough room for another security force to take position. As he turned toward the back alley where the Tardis was parked however, he spotted two droids ready and positioned to fire.

The Doctor smiled his big, toothy grin again.

"Yes well, I think we've had quite enough excitement for the day. Let's bring George back home." The Doctor said tapping his nose again.

Leela opened her mouth to protest, but George grabbed her arm and the three of them moved together as a solid unit as shots went past their head, sometimes by inches. The closer they got to The Tardis the heavier the fire was, but the further away the shots went. As they passed in between the two droids, they even fired a shot straight at the group and missed entirely instead hitting each other.

"Like I said, 'couldn't hit the sun'" he said with a cheeky grin as he opened the Tardis door.

Dropping off George Lucas back home mere moments after they had left and saying their goodbyes; as soon as the Tardis door closed The Doctor took off into the time vortex and hurriedly ran to the console.

Surely enough, in the computer banks of this new timeline were three brand new Star Wars movies.

Three hours later, in 1996 The Doctor and Leela walked out of the theater. Leela was grinning from ear to ear with The Doctor in her midst behind her with an exhausted and somewhat puzzled look on his face.

“Incredible! I had no idea that humanity could move like that and produce warriors of such incredible ability! And for the purposes for entertainment, no less! I was quite taken by their Qui-Gon Jinn. This was undoubtedly the best of the Star Wars yet.” Leela said as they reached the Tardis doors.

The Doctor opened his mouth to argue, but instead decided not to rain on his friend’s enthusiastic parade. One day either he might regenerate into someone simple enough to enjoy that film. The academy was always telling him to concentrate during regenerations on a single idea if he really wanted to have any control over a future regeneration. The type of man that could enjoy a Star Wars prequel. Perhaps in 6 or 7 tries he could figure that one out.

“And look how much we influenced that story.” She said excited to have seen first hand how they could shape history.

The Doctor laughed. Perhaps he could find a little joy in the movie after all.

“Like all good comedians, you thrash around anywhere for material, and steal, and adapt, trying to perform the alchemy, transmuting one thing into another. If people recognise the influence, it adds a certain pleasure – it’s another little level” he said as he looked upwards, lost in thought and admiring the subtlety of what he had just said.

Leela had already seized his arm, pulling him towards the Tardis console to bring him to the next movie premiere. “We must see the next of this Movie, Doctor!” she said. But the Doctor looked at her and gave a tired stretch to signal it was time to rest for the night.

“No, I think it can wait, Leela. I’m going to rest.” he said giving a double blink, throwing his scarf onto a rack, then plopping onto a gothic looking chair and putting his feet up on a table.

“We’re going to need to finish them eventually, Doctor. We’ve taken our first steps into a larger world.” Leela said.

Leela almost skipped as she headed off to bed, The Doctor holding a cheeky grin after her as if he was staring hard into a camera under his hat.

“I’ve got a bad feeling about this” said The Doctor.

Item #: SCP-6062

Written under Code Name: catharticspurious

Object Class: Keter (formerly Euclid)

Revised Special Containment Procedures: Following Incident 6062-X on █-█-████, SCP-6062-A and SCP-6062-B are currently considered to be uncontained. Monitoring of Item D-W63's interior is to be continued periodically in case of any re-emergence of SCP-6062-A or -B. An ongoing alert has been issued for standard issue Foundation surveillance of all areas of interest, with any sighting of -A or -B to be reported immediately to Task Force 6062-Alpha ("Timekeepers").

Previous Special Containment Procedures: *SCP-6062 is to be housed in a standard humanoid containment cell. The door is to remain sealed 24 hours a day unless permission for an interview has been granted by Dr. C██████. Audio and visual recording of the interior of the cell is to be automatically engaged whenever movement or sound from SCP-6062 is detected. Additional food, water and clothing supplies are not required. Interview scheduling is subject to the Cat Tongue Protocol; one effort is to be made at least every three days to encourage SCP-6062 to divulge more information about its secondary property, including a temporary relieving of Foundation interview conduct regulations as is necessary.*

Description: SCP-6062-A (formerly SCP-6062) appears to be a female human in her twenties, of height 180cm, Caucasian ethnicity, and red hair of average length 61cm. SCP-6062-A self-identifies as Amelia Jessica Pond, an English citizen whom records indicate disappeared without explanation some time between 2015 and 2025.

SCP-6062-A's primary anomalous property is an apparent cell-level resistance to the effect of time's passing. Medical analysis has indicated that 6062-A has no need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe, and that its heart does not beat. At no point during its containment did 6062-A request a second set of clothes, suggesting its body also operates without a need to perspire.

The secondary property of 6062-A, which may be anomalous, is its apparent ability to recall events and people (specifically staff at Site-██) which/who do not appear to have ever occurred/existed. It has not yet been conclusively demonstrated that this is an effect of an anomaly or an idiosyncratic affectation of 6062-A's mind.

SCP-6062-A was retrieved from the interior of Item D-W63 on █-█-████, after █ years of inactivity following the item's original manifestation in Radiation Zone 14. 6062-A appeared entirely nude in the entry

chamber of D-W63 and was contained by Site-████ staff shortly after exiting via its front door. The subject made a request to be provided with a set of clothes, which was granted after initial physical examinations. The subject was then entered into standard containment pending an initial interview, permitted 2 hours later. The initial interview ascertained the above details about the subject's identity, but the subject appeared to have no memory of how it appeared inside D-W63, citing it could remember nothing "since Manhattan".

Directives to conduct subsequent interviews with 6062-A were given by Site-████ command a further 3 times over the ensuing 7 days. However, possibly due to an administrative error or service disruption in the site's intranet, while all 3 of the directives were filed as completed, no interview appeared to have taken place in each case.

The only subsequent interview with 6062-A on record is documented in Interview Log 6062-1. This was performed directly by Dr. C██████████ after the subject was recorded shouting several messages from inside its containment cell. The declarations by the subject are recorded below.

"Something's happening to all of you."

"Why do you keep asking me the same questions?"

"You can't even remember them!"

"Someone, please, just listen to me!"

The interview commenced 5 minutes later. Following Interview 6062-1, the Cat Tongue Protocol was initiated.

Interview Log 6062-1

Date: ██████ █, ██████

Interviewee: SCP-6062

Interviewer: Dr. C██████████

[00:58.481 - Recording begins]

Dr. C██████████: Hello, Mrs. Pond. Is there something you'd like to tell us?

SCP-6062: Yeah. You have to stop these interviews.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: The problem with that is, despite my best efforts, we haven't interviewed you since shortly after you arrived. If you want something done, you have to do it yourself, I believe the saying goes.

SCP-6062: Ugh, I knew you'd say that. Look. Please, hear me out for just one minute, because something's happening and it's really scaring me.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: Alright.

SCP-6062: You lot have been interviewing me all week. First was when you wrote down my name. Then, the day after, it was Dr. Thompson. And the day after *that*, it was Dr. Roberts—

Dr. C [REDACTED]: There's no-one in this facility by any of those names, Mrs. Pond, and there never has been.

SCP-6062: And on the third day, Dr. Whithouse. Do you know what they said? What they *all* said?

Dr. C [REDACTED]: *[audible sigh]* No. What was it?

SCP-6062: Exactly what you just did. When I told them someone had already come to see me, when I told them a name, all I got back was 'Who's that?' or 'No-one by that name'. They couldn't remember. And now neither can you.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: Assuming for a moment that all this really happened. Where are you suggesting these members of staff went after talking to you? I certainly haven't heard of any of them, and I'm in charge of this site.

SCP-6062: Don't give me that look. All I remember is, it got to a certain point in the interview each time, and then...my memories just go blank. I don't remember how they finished. But I saw real people, I *really* spoke to them, and now it's like none of it ever happened.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: Well, Mrs. Pond, I'm eager to make up for 'lost time', so to speak. Can you tell us anything at all about the machine we found you inside?

SCP-6062: You mean the t— *[SCP-6062 stops short.]*

Dr. C [REDACTED]: Mrs. Pond?

SCP-6062: Oh god. Oh, bloody hell. It's not you. It's me, isn't it?

Dr. C [REDACTED]: What do you mean?

SCP-6062: It's me doing it. Somehow.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: Are you okay to answer my question now?

SCP-6062: Sorry. I can't. I can't risk it. I don't want it to happen again. You need to get away from me.

Dr. C [REDACTED]: I don't understand. Mrs. Pond? Doing what? Why do I need to go?

[SCP-6062 does not respond to any further questioning.]

The Cat Tongue Protocol was approved by [REDACTED] for assistance in identifying potential threats to Foundation members' safety.

=MESSAGE FROM O5 COMMAND=

SITE LEADER PERMISSIONS OR HIGHER REQUIRED!

***ANY ATTEMPT TO VIEW THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE ENTRY WITHOUT THE PROPER
CLEARANCE WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC VISUAL ANTIMEME DISPLAY.***

Expanding... -

The following communication was sent the day after Interview 6062-1.

From: O5-████

To: Site-████ Heads of Staff

None of you are stupid. You know what's happening here.

If we get this under our control, it could be the most revolutionary disposal method ever known.

The scale of suffering we could prevent is unimaginable. The vastness of the threats we could eliminate is immeasurable.

I don't need to suggest to you specific numbers that would be up for removal. You all probably have your own wishlists already.

Find out what makes it happen.

Get her to talk. We don't care how you do it. Consider CTP active.

Collapsing... +

SCP-6062-B is another female humanoid, who appeared briefly in 6062-A's containment cell during Incident 6062-X. The video footage indicates her to be roughly 167cm in height, and of Caucasian ethnicity with short blonde hair. She appears in the video wearing a black cap and a grey overcoat that reaches her shins.

The events of Incident 6062-X appear to indicate that 6062-B has a connection to both 6062-A and Item D-W63, hence the numerical grouping. 6062-B appears to possess the ability to manipulate the Foundation's site control mechanisms, making her a potentially Keter-class threat were she to disrupt other Sites. 6062-B also appears to be able to travel instantly into and out of a Site from an unknown distance, appearing and disappearing without forewarning.

Incident 6062-X

In the early hours of the morning on █-█-█, Site-█ experienced a temporary blackout lasting 2 minutes and 5 seconds. During this period, SCP-6062-B appeared in SCP-6062-A's containment cell, and held a brief conversation with it which was recorded on the cell's in-built security cameras. Following the conversation, both subjects immediately vanished without trace.

Video Log 6062-X

[Section of video begins at 03:02:10 AM]

[SCP-6062-A is alone in cell, lying silently on the floor.]

[03:03:01 - SCP-6062-B appears instantaneously in the cell, stood upright.]

-B: Amy?

-A: Who...who're you?

-B: I'm the— I'm a friend of the doctor.

-A: You mean he knows I'm here? He's finally coming to get me?

-B: In a manner of speaking. What have they done to you?

[SCP-6062-A is silent]

-B: I promise you, they will regret it.

-A: You have to tell the doctor. Something's happening. It's the same thing as back then.

-B: I already know.

-A: It's whenever they ask me about the ta— *[Pause]*

-B: Say it, Amy. It'll be fine.

-A: The tardis[*]— tardis tardis tardis tardis tardis tardis tardis tardis tardis

-B: I could tell it wasn't really you.

-A: Tell the doctor tell the doctor tell the doctor tell the doctor the chain is severed. The collapse is imminent. The center cannot hold.

-B: The old girl just took your image. She's desperate. She knows I'd make the connection.

-A: The energy is escaping. The contradiction is nearly complete. A hole in time is leaking. The swan bears forth aaurhh— *[Groaning and retching]*

-B: What?

-A: Ens nexit ton be emweco[*]. *[Black fluid begins to pour from 6062-A's mouth.]*

-B: Oh, no you don't, not today. Is this what you did when they tried to interview her?

-A: Ens nexit ton ens nexit ton *[6062-A's mouth appears to emit white light.]*

-B: You can't keep this up forever. She'll get the better of you.

[6062-B produces a short, pen-like metal tube from a pocket and presses a button on its side.]

[The blackout beyond the room ends. 6062-A and 6062-B are no longer present.]

[03:04:22 AM - Section of video ends]

* Approximated spelling

A subsequent full search of Site-█ failed to reveal the whereabouts of SCP-6062-A or -B.

Addendum: It was found several hours later that Item D-W63's front doors had closed by themselves, proving impossible to re-open, although the drones installed in D-W63's interior continue to send back visual data. Monitoring of the item for any developments is still in progress.

Thirteen Avenues To See

Written by Arwyn

An adventure with the Thirteenth Doctor

Vestige Dawn had been on lockdown for five years since the outbreak. An Alpha class space station in orbit around The Architect, a Crespallion colony planet inside the Scarlet Junction since 5.5/Apple/19 -- completely abandoned. By the native population anyway. Something had taken up residence. Starved and hungry. One person could stop it -- and they were trapped in with it.

The only visible light inside the metal corridor came from the chasing blue emitters of her sonic screwdriver. Shadows long swallowed the passage the Doctor had made her way through, but it also concealed the Nimons chasing and barging through the darkness to kill her. And the only way to get through the door and back to the TARDIS was through using her sonic then she regretted making one that lit-up.

A loud crash came from behind, making her jump. She angled the sonic against the door and suddenly it opened vertically, only to reveal a woman on the other side, small face full of worry now mixed with blue.

“Hang on-” The Doctor started talking loudly, altering the aliens before she was pulled into the doorway. Watching as the other woman close it with a panel opened on the wall to her confusion. “How?”

“Porthole, there’s a porthole.” The woman said, pulling the lever on protruding from the wall tightly down, “I saw your torch through it-”

A Nimon rammed it’s horn against the metal, piercing their ears and interrupting both their actions, leaving them in darkness.

“It’s a screwdriver!” She yelled, fiddling with the device in her hands.

“Screwdriver?”

The Doctor activated the torch on her screwdriver before holding it sideways. defensively, the slightly smaller woman now protectively behind her. It lit up the area, and the enemy at the gates. They were in some form of living quarters for the maintenance crew.

“So it *has* a torch?” The passenger almost laughed to her saviour’s frustration as she looked around at the strewn across chairs and furniture. White playing cards caked the floor like fresh snow, mixed in with long dried blood stains.

“I’m so sorry my multi-purpose tool is inconveniencing you.” The Time Lord groaned a bit, “Sorry, that was sarcasm, I’m trying to get away from sarcasm, long story -- what’s your name?”

“Clare. I’m Clare, loving the accent by the way.” She replied, moving away to explore the room.

“Likewise.” The Doctor replied quickly, walking away from the door briskly. “...Clare.” She mused under her breath, “That’s a familiar name.”

“It’s a common name, I suppose.” She called across the room. “Love the shirt, as well.” Clare said with a half-hearted smile, looking at the stranger’s purple t-shirt adorned with yellow patterns. “Bit bright”

“Not my first choice. Come to think of it; it’s not even mine....And I’ve lost my black cap.” She pulled a face before catching up with Clare. “Been here awhile?”

“As long as I can remember at this point. Staying in the dark, away from the minotaurs. It’s kinda my thing now. Sorry about the mess. I try to avoid this area. Bit too close to the- well, you know.”

The Doctor’s eyes followed her frame as they trekked ahead. Her hazel eyes transfixed on each familiar curve of her body. It was strange, she was missing something, she knew it. Right in front of her in the torchlight. From the bounce of her short, brown hair to the roundness of

her waist.

Clare looked back, wincing her eyes a bit, “Are you looking at my-”

“...Yes.”

“Well. At least you’re honest.”

“I’m very forward. At least, I think -- this is all pretty new to me.”

“The gawking or the being saved part?”

“Both, I think.”

“So what’s your name, then?”

“I’m the Doctor.”

“Doctor who?”

“I’m just figuring that out myself.”

“You’re a bit strange.”

“Said the human aboard a Crespallion space station.”

They made their way into the escape pod room, coated in dust with only one pod remaining.

Shaking her head in bemusement, the Doctor chortled at Clare. “Escape pod? Why not just use it to begin with?”

“I dunno... Just always felt I was needed.”

The Doctor looked to her left at another door, a familiar big, blue box visible through it's porthole. "Ever strike you as odd that there's only one left?"

"Now that you mention it." Clare moved to the wall, pulling a lever that activated the lights. As soon as the light shone full across Clare's body, the woman was awestruck. Her jaw hung open slightly, memories trying to break the dam in her mind that just wouldn't budge. Clare looked a little uncomfortable at the strange woman watching her.

"I see you. I always see you. And you always look so beautiful."

"Okay?.." The shorter woman hummed. "Weird response but I'll take the compliment."

"I'm sorry, it's just." The Doctor smiled warmly -- knowing nothing she could say would really do anything. "Thank you. For saving me."

"You're very welcome, Doctor." Clare said, smiling a bit.

Her hand latched onto the lever, opening the door to her TARDIS, watching as Clare got into the escape pod.

"So. Is this goodbye?"

"No. I imagine I'll see you on the news shortly. Right before this station explodes and disperses in the atmosphere. It's fine, I do this a lot. If bunkering down in a space station and waiting for something is your thing then leaving people with more questions than answers is most certainly mine."

The Doctor pressed herself against the TARDIS doors, bathed in the glow emitted from the white of it's windows.. Almost as bright as the eyes that watched her curiously.

"Well then." Clare laughed, the pod door closing, the viewing window still showing her the blonde woman with sadness in her face. Giving her one last grin. "I'll see you later."

“Or... You could come with me.” The Doctor quickly interrupted.

The hatch reopened, “In that box?” She asked, “Bit snug isn’t it?”

“Even if it was I don’t think either of us have a problem with that.” The Doctor almost purred.

“Keep this flirting up and I doubt you’ll give me much of a choice.” Clare purred back, already stepping out of the pod and waltzing towards the woman.

“What usually happens after the flirting?” The Time Lord asked sheepishly.

“People usually kiss, I imagine.”

“Would it be weird if I kissed you?”

“Oh, yeah,” Clare said with a nod. “Wouldn’t stop me though.”

The Doctor cleared her throat, and Clare winked.

With a snap of her fingers, the TARDIS doors opened, a glow from the console illuminating the couple further.

“I think it’s about to get a whole lot weirder.”

A Cruel Fate

by Bored Hermit

An adventure with the Third Doctor and an alternate 8th Doctor

In a small park green in the suburbs of London, there sits a man by a huge stone sculpture. While the sculpture is large and obtrusive, it is nothing more than a featureless block of stone. The same cannot be said about the man. His suit, an ugly patchwork of jean, leather, and neon material, was ragged and dirty and stinking of booze. His hair wiry and messy, his face, wearing a mean scowl while he mumbles angrily to himself and to anyone that passes by.

Meanwhile the Doctor, fiddles with the control panel of his TARDIS. "Those Cephloids sure do know how throw a party. But it's high time for me to be getting out of here, don't you think? Where to then, old girl? Think I need some peace and quiet for once. Somewhere unassuming, where i'm not to be disturbed, maybe a moon around a gas giant, what do you say?" the Doctor pulls a crank and the TARDIS begins to whirr as it disappears and re-appears. "Ah, here we are. oh wait! No we're not, this is Earth!! More specifically, London!! I'm never going to get some peace and quiet here, ah never mind, the quiet life isn't really for me anyway. Well let's see what's going on shall we?"

Exiting the TARDIS the Doctor instantly notices the huge monolith. "Well this certainly isn't normal, better check it out." Running over to the monolith the doctor see the man sitting by the monolith. "You there, better get away from it, it could be dangerous!" "Dangerous!? This is my home!" the man scowls angrily.

"What!? Really?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Oh, you're not from here are you? Did think those clothes seemed a bit strange. A crime against fashion if ever I did see one. " The doctor ineffectively mumbles to himself.

"Oh great, more insults!"

"Oh, sorry, being a traveller myself, I often get a few odd looks from people."

"I'm sure you do" the man bitterly replies.

"Well beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Anyway, you better get this thing out of here before it upsets anyone."

"I can't"

"It's broken? Well i'm just the man to help you fix it!"

"It's not broken, it just won't move. At least not since i got here"

"Then how do you know it's not broken?"

"Trust me, it's not broken!"

"Oh, I see.....I think. "

" Well we'd best try and get it out of here."
"Go ahead, you'll never do it."
"What did you say your name was?"
"I didn't.....it doesn't matter, i'm nobody."
"Nobody!?" "I used to be a doctor.....but.....well..... not anymore."
"Oh.....well I am actually THE Doctor. Funny isn't it"
"Hilarious." the man sarcastically replies"
"Well, anyway, let's go inside and get this thing working"
"I told you It's NOT broken"
"Ok ok, not broken. "
The doctor steps inside the block. Oh! It's a bit cramped in here.
"Yeah..... smaller on the inside.....THEY thought it was funny."
"Smaller on the inside!? Your people..?
"Timelords, stuffy bunch, got sick of my antics and exiled me here."
"Hmmm interesting. Hold on a minute. "

The Doctor runs back to his TARDIS and checks his monitor.

"Yes, just as a suspected, a parallel world, and i've just met the parallel me, a down on your luck doctor, poor fellow, well let's see if I can help him out."

The doctor returns to the other doctor.

"Oh, you're back" the other doctor unenthusiastically remarks.

"Yes and back to it." He squeezes back into this joke of a tardis.

The inside was about the size of a small broom cupboard with a very low ceiling forcing the doctor to maintain a slight ducking position to avoid banging his head. It was dimly lit by a small bulb, was damp, and had a tangle of pipes taking up what little room was available.

There doesn't seem to be any kind of interface" the doctor notes while looking around

"Ow, my elbow, better watch those pipes" The doctor uses the glow of his sonic screwdriver to cast more light, and feels around for something and anything. Eventually he comes across a miniscule red button hidden behind a web of tangled pipes in the bottom corner of this tardis.

"Hmm, well this must be it. Here goes."

The doctor presses it and wait excitedly but nothing happens.

"I know, I'll try reversing the polarity? OH! Nothing!? I was actually expecting that would work, it usually does."

"What are you babbling on about in there!?"

"Oh silly silly silly doctor, the rules of this world are opposite to my own so if i just unreverse the polarity."

The red button begins to flash.

"YES, that did it!"

What's going on in here?

The other doctor looks in only to be pushed in as the door closes forcing the two doctors right up against one another.

The ship begins to groan.

"OH NO! NOT THAT NOISE AGAIN! WHAT HAVE YOU GONE AND DONE!?"

The ship sounds like someone throwing up and constantly dry heaving.

That's the sounds this tardis make?

"horrible isn't it"

"Wait a minute! What do you mean, oh no!?"

"You've actually gone and done it! I didn't think you'd actually do it."

"I thought you'd be glad, you can finally go back to travelling time and space."

"You don't understand!"

"Oh pish posh. Adventure, here we come!!"

The tardis groans loader and loader and begins spinning and churning in the most unpleasant way.

"How long has it been?" the doctor shouts while holding back the contents of his stomach.

"An hour I think"

"We must be almost there?"

The groaning and spinning slowly comes to a stop.

"Ah, we're here, wherever and whenever that is. Not the most pleasant form of travel i grant you but a means to end. Come doctor, a new world awaits. "

TheDoctor pushes open the door and steps outside.

"OH! WHAT!? We've barely moved!"

"Well just a few inches."

This can't be right

The other Doctor steps out, and throws up a little and replies "I'm afraid it is"

You mean we spent an hour being spun around like a pair of socks in a washing machine just for a few inches!

"I'm just glad we got out when we did"

And you were sent from Gallifrey in this!?

"Yes, it was a billion eternities."

"I'm so sorry."

"Yes well that doesn't matter now. My luck has finally changed"

"What do you mean?"

The other doctor runs towards the Doctor's TARDIS

"Time for me to get off this wretched rock"

"NO! WAIT!! WE COULD GO TOGETHER!!"

"You and I, it would never work. Goodbye Doctor."

The TARDIS dematerialises leaving the doctor stranded on Earth.

NEXT TIME IN THIS SHITTY FANFIC

-Daleks and Cyberman are good goys who did nuthin wrong and other cringe inducing plot developments.

-Will the Doctor ever reclaim his TARDIS from the other doctor!? Find out never in A Cruel Fate, Part Never Ever.

/Who/niverse: Never Trust Randomness

by a Brave Anon

An adventure featuring about twenty-five separate Doctors fighting against the Vashta Nerada for the fate of London, and more importantly against each other for page space

Paul McGann, who inexplicably was now alive during the London Blitz, was walking around being Scouse and a great actor. The sun was setting on London, the sky burning orange. He walked along the high street and down a back alley, a shortcut to his humble abode. Paul McGann was shocked to see the TARDIS, windows glowing white, standing before him. The door opened and out stepped the guy from Death in Paradise. He had a perpetually baffled, gormless look on his face.

"Ah, thank goodness for that, a previous incarnation," he smiled dumbly, "I'll need all the help I can get."

Paul was confused. He recalled seeing the guy from Death in Paradise at a party in 2007; he sat in the corner of the room sobbing for something like six hours but nobody even went near him to ask what was wrong. Paul furrowed his brow. "Excuse me?"

"Good to meet myself," came his reply, as the Doctor extended his hand.

"Nah, mate, I'm Paul. You're Kris."

The Kris Doctor dropped his hand back to his side, numbed by yet another painful rejection to add to the pile. "I see. Well, anyways, there's some weird time weirdness going on around here, citizen. Return to your home and lock your doors."

"I was going home but your TARDIS is sort of blocking me way."

"Is it?" The Kris Doctor's face was contorted in childlike confusion.

"Yeah, I need to get through here."

"My apologies," the Kris Doctor said, internally kicking himself for being so socially inept. "I'll sort that out for you," he said, climbing back inside the TARDIS. "Are you going to ask what's going on?"

"Nah, I'm alright."

"Sure? Not even a little, 'what can I do to help the cause, Doctor'?"

"I'd just like to go home, actually."

The Kris Doctor let slip a segment of many centuries worth of disappointment. "Yeah, well, fuck off then. Go home and fucking have a fucking wank. Walk on, you fucking dipstick."

Paul decided to be the bigger person, walking away silently.

Paul, forced to take the long way round, returned to the busy high street. Then, he saw three figures bolt out of a side alley and stop on the pavement in front of him. One of them, a man who appeared to have been pulled out of a shitty non-canon early-2000s animation, pointed straight at Paul.

"I've found him!" The man cried, his mouth animating shittily.

One of the others, who looked like Grand Moff Tarkin, barged past the animated man, shouting out "I saw him first!" The third figure, a big-chinned man with a quiff, bow tie, and white powder completely enveloping his lower face, stood still. His pupils were dilated to a degree that morticians would later describe as 'medically impossible'. Paul couldn't look long, as the two old men approached.

"What's going on?" Paul demanded.

"I'm the Shalka Doctor. I am definitely canon," he stated.

"I am the Peter Cushing Doctor. I am even more canon."

Paul sighed loudly, frustrated. "That doesn't help me. You're both talking shite."

"It's the Vashta Nerada. They've arrived in London on propaganda leaflets dropped by German bombers," the Shalka Doctor explained, his animation jerking like a possessed marionette.

"Come the air raid tonight, they will infest the streets. Hundreds, no, thousands will die," said the Cushing Doctor, "we've gathered every incarnation we could find to help. Including yourself, thankfully."

"Look," Paul said, "another one of your bunch stopped me a few streets back. I don't want to buy anything

you're fucking selling. Now please leave me alone." He left the old guy and the shit drawing man, only remembering about the spaced-out third man when he was forced to walk right past him. Emerging from his cocaine-induced trance, the man gripped Paul by the shoulders.

"It's those fucking Zygons," he spluttered, cocaine falling like January snow from his malformed chin cleft, "the Zygons are taking over my life."

"Get off me," Paul shouted.

"But I love you," the Cocaine Doctor mumbled. Then, from the side alley, what looked like Christina Hendricks appeared, dressed in a prim frock coat. She sidled up to the Cocaine Doctor, frowning with concern.

"I'm so sorry, mister," she said to Paul, "he's going through a rough time right now. His wife left him for Greg Davies."

"Am I going mad?" Paul muttered.

"Could be a side effect of the time differentials. So many incarnations in the same place at once," the Hendricks Doctor explained.

"Just... stop. I've had a fucking gutfull of this shit. I'm going home. Please just leave me out of it."

"But, Doctor, we need all the help we can get against the Vashta Nerada. They're shadows that eat people alive. How can you fight against a shadow?"

"Alright, you want help against the fucking spooky shadows? Here." He reached into his jacket and got his key ring. He unhooked the pocket flashlight and handed it to her. Meanwhile, the Cocaine Doctor jittered uncontrollably. "There you go. Good luck." Paul charged away, mindful of any other costumed autists nearby.

He turned a corner and saw a huddle of figures on the next shadowy road. There was a worried, frantic tone to the chattering as Paul approached. Hearing his footsteps, a Doctor who looked distinctly like Bill Cosby turned around. He was dressed in a prison jumpsuit.

"How's it hanging?" The man said to Paul.

"What's happening here?"

"Jus' a few folks had a lil' accident. Don't you go worrying about it, a zipple dipple here come the pills."

Paul grimaced. "Which one are you then?"

"I'm the Rape Doctor. The physical embodiment of the concept of rape, given sentience by a stray gamma ray burst."

"I see," Paul said.

"Can everyone just stay fucking back?" A voice called out from within the crowd. "Stay fucking back or I'll rip out your fucking diaphragm and ram it up your own arse."

"That'll be the Malcolm Tucker Doctor," explained the Trevor Martin Doctor, sensing Paul's surprise, "he's a bloody wrongun. And I should know, because I'm friends with this maniac." He pointed to the Rape Doctor, who bellowed out "Hey, hey, hey" for no discernible reason. Paul slipped past them, deeper into the crowd. He elbowed through the assembled Morbius Doctors, who stood about looking perplexed. Paul reached the epicentre, and was promptly shouted at by the Malcolm Doctor.

"Oi, fucking emo Oscar Wilde Doctor," he said, "stay right there."

"You're holding up the street."

"I don't give a dead elephant's final tortured shit," the Malcolm Doctor yelled.

"What's so important that you have to clog up the whole bloody road?"

"It's these fucking Vashta Nerada, they've got the proper Doctors." He glanced over into the shadow. Paul strained, and eventually could make out five separate shapes in the darkness. Five corpses, stripped of their flesh. One wore Victorian garb, complete with cravat. Another had a bow tie pinned haphazardly to his collar, but was sadly not the drug-addled loony from a few minutes ago. Another wore a flowing cape and mesmerising red velvet. Another lay dead under a crumpled scarf. Finally, near the back, was a more feminine shape, the skeleton disappearing within an oversized grey coat and a hood. "Nasty way to go. That just leaves us shitty contrived Doctors," the Malcolm Doctor went on, "we're more fucked than anybody who has ever been closer than thirty feet to the Rape Doctor."

"Oh shit," said the Bird Doctor, who had been standing there cocking his head about wildly, "I'm fucking out of here. I want to live." And with that, he took off on his eagle wings and into the increasingly black night.

"Calm down, everybody," the Malcolm Doctor pleaded, "don't fucking shit yourselves. There's still at least ten of us."

"But we are all fucking garbage," shouted out the Douglas Camfield Doctor from the back of the crowd.

"Yeah," agreed the Cabinet of Light Doctor, "nobody except the anon who suggested me to the author has even heard of me. Think how shit I must be."

Paul felt a bump on the arm, and looked over as the Kris Doctor pushed to the front, with a Asian-looking lady at his side. "Don't worry, gents. I'm here."

A chorus of groans rang out. "See? Only the shit Doctors are left," the Cabinet of Light Doctor piped up.

"Not this arsehole again," Paul said.

The Kris Doctor glared at him. "I'm afraid we haven't met, sir."

"Yes, we did you wazzock."

"I'll ask you not to use such coarse language in the presence of my waifu," the Kris Doctor pursed his mouth in disapproval, whilst his Japanese companion eagerly took a photograph of the scene on her disposable camera. No sooner had the flash gone off did the other Kris Doctor arrive at the gathering.

The unaccompanied Kris Doctor fought through the crowd and halted at the sight of the other Kris Doctor.

"Imposter!" They yelped in unison.

"Here we fucking go," whispered the Malcolm Doctor, grinning broadly, "the stoppable force meets the fucking movable object."

"Usually I despise violence," the lone Kris Doctor rolled up his sleeves, "but I'm willing to make an exception in your case."

"I will defend my waifu's honour," the other Kris Doctor did so too. The crowd of second and third rate Doctors stepped back to give ample room for their brawl. The Japanese companion did not even blink as the Kris Doctor left her side and began retardedly jostling with his virginal counterpart. They grunted and squealed with exertion, pulling at each other's poorly designed costumes.

Paul heard the voice of the Shalka Doctor in the distance call out, "My money's on the one with the Jap bird."

Though out of sight, Paul could clearly see the fucking shoddy animation of him saying those words.

The lone Kris Doctor pulled back from the tussle, wiping his mouth. Then, turning gracefully, he used his retard strength to reach into the crowd and throw Charlie from Class at his opponent. The small twink, who had viciously parted his hair in an attempt to resemble the Cocaine Doctor, merely bounced off the Kris Doctor. The Ruth Negga Doctor attempted to assist Charlie from Class, but was pounded to the floor by a swinging blow from the Waifu Kris Doctor. She cradled her broken arm and scurried away from the scene of the climactic battle. "You dumb cunts broke my fucking arm," she snarled, as the Christina Hendricks Doctor and her considerable cleavage helped her to flee.

"Kill each other!" The Cushing Doctor screamed, as the Kris Doctors brutally slugged it out. Neither seemed to have the upper hand; they took turns delivering crushing blows. The Douglas Camfield Doctor, ever squeamish, shielded his eyes with his ugly cravat, certain that Charlie from Class would be trampled to death at any moment. His suspicions proved correct as the lone Kris Doctor fell backwards on top of Charlie from Class, crushing the boy's sternum and mortally wounding his lungs. Waifu Kris Doctor seized his opportunity, taking the lone Kris Doctor by the lapels and throwing him into the pit of shadow that had claimed the real Doctors. Gasps of horror ensued. The Prostitute Doctor, played by Marion Cotillard, consoled Nardole with a head rub, and then, remembering that she was Marion Cotillard, took off her shirt and bra for her scheduled nude scene. But peculiarly, the lone Kris Doctor was unharmed.

"What the fuck?" The Waifu Kris Doctor said.

"I'm not dead!" The other Kris Doctor exclaimed.

The Malcolm Doctor looked as though his subway sandwich had just shat into his own mouth. "Why didn't the fucking Vashta Nerada waste that fucker?"

"I think I know why," said the Thirteenth Doctor, played by Jodie Whittaker if her 2012 labiaplasty went horrifically wrong and her vagina was transmogrified into a functional penis. "Look around, look at the faces around you. Look at how fucking awful they are. Look at how contrived, badly thought up, unappealing, and generally shite we are. The Vashta Nerada saw that, clearer than even we could. And they took pity."

"Aw, I don't know about any of you," the Malcolm Doctor said, "but I could fucking cry. How inspiring."

"I'm so happy," said the Trevor Martin Doctor as he cradled the mangled corpse of Charlie from Class.

"We went and we diddly doddly did it. Bazoop a zorp gotta eat the pills or the Doctor gets angry," the Rape Doctor declared. The now-topless Prostitute Doctor jumped for joy, and the Rape Doctor was gifted with the galaxy's most engorged erection.

Paul looked around, without emotion. "I'm going home now."

"Isn't it a fucking shame that a quality idea such as the Vashta Nerada during the London blackout was wasted on the ultimate shit trips submission?" The Malcolm Doctor pondered.

"Yeah, you're right," Paul responded, longing to curl up inside his basement and never leave again.

Through a Mirror, Oddly

by Auton Stratagem Anon

A story featuring the Eleventh Doctor, Amy, Rory, and the ~~best~~ worst YouTube has to offer.

Set sometime after Series 5, but before Series 6

In a nondescript space station somewhere, sometime in deep space, three people stood in a spacious, stark white room. It had only one door, leading to a maze of hallways which said three people had just come out of. At the opposite end of said hallways was the strange blue box the three had arrived in. At present, they were all gathered at a nondescript wall on the side of the room opposite to the door.

“So, what’re we actually looking at?” Amy Pond was well aware that the Doctor had explained to her husband Rory what the wall was using a vast array of technobabble that only he understood, but she was hoping he’d do his usual trick of coming up with some sort of plain English metaphor that he said was inaccurate but was far easier for everyone else to understand.

“Amy, how many times do I have to explain? It’s not that complicated. This wall is actually a multidimensional planar opening allowing for the transference of photons through an otherwise solid barrier between parallel but non-convergent universes.”

“Right. So, um. What does that mean?” Thank goodness Rory was just as confused. “You do remember we don’t speak quantum physics.”

The Doctor let out a childish sigh, then swept an arm around Amy and Rory’s shoulders, and gesticulated towards the wall. “Well, think of it as a sort of... Dimensional Mirror. Or, Window. Window-slash-mirror. That’s not right at all, but it’ll have to do. Basically, it’s a window to a universe that’s a sort of mirror of our own.”

“I guess that makes sense” Rory lied, mildly uncomfortable with the Doctor’s arm around his shoulder. The Doctor scoffed under his breath. “So why is it blank? It just looks like a regular wall.”

“Ah,” The Doctor perked up, “that’s because it hasn’t been turned on.” With that, the Doctor swung his arms from around the Ponds and reached into the inside pocket of his jacket. In a single large and flamboyant movement he brought out his sonic screwdriver and aimed it at the wall. After a moment of high-pitched noise, the wall seemed to ripple, and with a shimmer it went from an opaque off-white to a transparent eggshell.

As the wall cleared, three figures became increasingly visible on the other side, standing in roughly the same positions as the three of them. They were peripherally similar, the central figure a man, wearing a bowtie and brandishing some sort of sonic screwdriver, flanked by a long haired woman and a mousey looking man in a fleece jacket. However, that was where the similarities ended. The man in the center was wearing a blue jacket with a flowery pattern, a collared vest, and had a mop of curly hair, with a pair of pseudo-professorial wayfarer glasses placed high on his nose. The woman was taller, shapelier brunette in a leather jacket a scarf stylishly draped around her neck. The mousey man was slightly taller than the one in the middle, strawberry blond, and wearing a striped polo shirt and jeans.

“Are they... us?” Amy asked, stepping closer to the wall, lightly holding her hand to the glass as she did so.

“Not quite,” the doctor responded, a wry smile audible in his voice. “They’re... us on a good day. Or a bad day. Us if every coin flip landed on the other side, us if every quirk of fate took a step to the left. They’re the core of what makes us us, but interpreted differently by the tides of the universe. Manifestations of who we are, or who we could become.”

As the Doctor spouted his poetic interpretation of quantum metastasis, the Doctor on the other side could be seen to do the same. Their arms flapping in unison, the two Doctors were oblivious to their companion’s continuous lack of comprehension. They’d have continued in their philosophizing, but they were intercepted by a sudden shake in the ground.

“Doctor? What’s happening?” Amy asked, but she received no answer. Instead the Doctor stepped even closer to the wall, mirrored by his alternate self, and once again brought his screwdriver to bear against it. The wall proceeded to ripple as it had before, only more intense, the waves radiating out further and further. The colors of the wall changed with every ripple, cycling through all colors of the spectrum.

There was a sudden pop, and the last wave expanded, leaving in its wake nothing separating the two universes.

“No! Oh, no, that’s not supposed to happen, that’s not supposed to happen at all,” the Doctor babbled, lowering his screwdriver. As he did, an unexpected voice greeted him.

“Well, this can’t possibly be good. That shouldn’t have happe—Oh. You’ve just said all that.”

There was an uncomfortable silence as the two sides took each other in, Doctor eye to eye with Doctor, companion to companion. For a moment, no one moved, an uncomfortable tension floating between the inhabitants of the opposing universes.

“Well, I suppose I should introduce myself,” The other Doctor offered. “I’m the Doctor, as I’m sure you’ve all guessed, and, well, these are my companions.”

“Right. Yes. Good! I’m *also* the Doctor,” the proper Doctor announced with a clap of his hands, “this is Amy and Rory.”

The three from the other universe looked at the Doctor, confused. “Sorry, do they have... names?” the woman said, in an awful and plainly faked accent.

“Uh, yeah. Names. Do you not... know what names are?” Rory asked, fully aware it was a stupid question but also fully aware that it’d essentially become his responsibility to ask the stupid questions. The three of them turned to talk to each other, a murmur of conversation audible.

“Doctor, what’s going on? Why did the Mirror... window... thing collapse?” Amy asked, attempting to move the plot forward. “You said this wasn’t supposed to happen.” The Doctor opened his mouth to respond, but he was cut off by the other Doctor.

“Excuse me, Doctor, but we’ve come to a rather startling conclusion over here, and we’d like to ask you a few questions to make sure that we’re hypothesizing correctly.”

“Well, alright.” The doctor responded, a bit put out. “I was about to explain what had happened, in detail, and I was going to make it sound quite clever, but that’s fine, you go, go on ahead.” This was accompanied by an inappropriate level of arm flapping.

“You said your companions have names?” the other Doctor asked.

“First and last?” His male companion asked, in something approximating an idiot’s version of a Scottish accent.

“Yes! Amy responded, exasperated. “Do you not?”

“Nope.” The woman responded, inexplicably in an American accent.

“Sorry, your companions don’t have names?” The Doctor asked. “What do you call them?”

“They don’t. Well, not officially anyways.” The other Doctor paused for a moment, thinking. “Well, they did in some unreleased promotional material. I just call them companions. It works well enough.”

“You just call them—“

Amy was cut off by Rory’s blurting of “Promotional material?” He was met with nods and a shrug from the nameless companions and their Doctor.

Any further conversation was mercifully cut off by an ominous rumbling and a shaking of the ground.

“Oh dear,” said the Doctors simultaneously. “Quick, to the Tardis!” Both groups stood still, unsure which Tardis they should head towards. There were several awkward hand signals between the two Doctors, each gesturing towards their own Tardis, then towards the other’s. This continued for almost five minutes before the two female companions made eye contact and decided for themselves.

“Doctor,” said Amy, interrupting a flailing display that seemed more like an amateur shadow puppeteer’s depiction of a half-digested dragon than anything else, “we’re going to their Tardis.” She then grabbed the Doctor and her husband and pulled them forward as her counterpart did the same.

The journey from the mirror room to where the other Doctor’s Tardis was parked was essentially the same as the one to the proper Doctor’s, but greeted them at the end came as a shock to the three plucky heroes. At the end of the hallway that perfectly mirrored the one they’d come through, they expected to find a familiar blue box, but instead they found—

“Is that a tent?” Rory asked in his usual half-confused/half-deadpan manner.

“What happened to the police box? You changed it? Why?” The Doctor was incredulous, and sounded a bit insulted.

The Tardis was, in fact, a tent. A small yellow/purple child’s play-tent, roughly capable of holding maybe one full-sized adult on their knees, with front flaps closed with Velcro.

“Well, not all of us have the budget of the BBC,” the other Doctor said, mystifying the main trio. “Suffice to say the chameleon circuit functioned for just long enough for it to change into this. I’ve grown fond of it, though I do miss the Police Box. Shall we?” With a wave of his hand and with a skip in his step, the other Doctor bent at the waist until his torso was almost horizontal, and waddled awkwardly into the tent, his companions following suit. The proper Doctor, Amy, and Rory followed suit, expecting to find themselves in something resembling the spacious console room they were used to. Instead, to their surprise they found themselves in something much smaller and much less impressive.

“Okay, the tent I could deal with, but this is just ridiculous.” Amy spoke for the rest of the group. None of them

were quite sure what they expected after seeing the tent the Tardis had become, but they were sure that on the inside it must still have the basics—a hexagonal console, round/hexagonal indentations in the wall, etc. This was not that at all.

“Why is the inside of your Tardis a caravan?” Rory had gotten straight to the point. The console room was literally the inside of a caravan, with a table and wall mounted benches to the left of the entrance, and a kitchenette on the far wall. The other Doctor was standing over what should’ve been a countertop, but was covered in various electronics, including two yard lamps, a Nintendo Gamecube, and a game of electronic Simon Says. His companions were sitting at the table, looking out a window.

“Well, we tried to make an actual console in a garage, but it was cramped and we didn’t actually have anything to make one with, so a caravan was our, uh, stopgap solution.” The Doctor tossed this information over his shoulder, as though he hadn’t just confirmed he had meta-knowledge about his own existence.

“Yeah, our garage is too small. Plus, it’s like, full of junk.” This was from the other Doctor’s male companion.

“It is. We did hang a homemade green screen in it though!” This was from the other companion.

“Right! We made it from paper table cloths!”

“What’s going on, Doctor? None of this makes sense.” Amy whispered, hoping the Doctor’s explanation would at least be short.

“I’m not entirely sure, Amy. Though I think I’m starting to understand.” He turned to the other Doctor, who was still fiddling with the pile of electronics. “I love what you’ve done with the place! It’s very... homey.”

The familiar whining and groaning of the Tardis dematerializing filled the room, and the other Doctor gestured towards the table. It took a few moments of redirecting human traffic in the small space, but eventually they were all squished onto the opposite benches, three on each side, universe looking at universe.

“You said you had questions for us?” the proper Doctor asked, leaning in, elbows on the table, hands folded. For the moment, he was perfectly serious, neither flailing or over-excited, the dire straits of the situation seeming to temper him for the moment.

“Ah, yes, right. Well, we do have a few.” The other Doctor seemed trepidatious. “How many adventures have

you been on?”

“Uh, lots.” Rory said, confused as usual.

“Yeah, plenty. I don’t know if we could count them” Amy added. The Doctor stayed silent.

“How many have we had?” The other Doctor gestured to the male companion on his left without breaking eye contact with the proper Doctor. “How many can you remember?”

“One.” The male companion paused. “Well, one and half. But we never finished filming the second.”

“Exactly.” The other Doctor said, as though he had clearly stated a conclusion that made any sort of sense.

“Ah, of course!” The Doctor said, squirming in his seat. “Yes! Wait, no, sorry, not following. Not at all.”

The other Doctor leaned in. “You’re one of the canon Doctors. The real ones.”

“Right! Yes! No. Sorry, still not following.”

Rory leaned behind the Doctor and whispered to Amy, “Sorry, did he call the Doctor a cannon?”

The other Doctor let out a sigh. “Christ, you’re one of the thick ones. Look, try and put two and two together. We’re you all, but without background, without... budget. We’ve got meta-knowledge which—“ he turned to his companions “We shouldn’t have, by the way—” he turned back to the Doctor. “We’re not just other versions of you three, we’re rip-offs. Derivative copies.”

The proper Doctor mulled this over for a moment. “You mentioned budget and the BBC.”

“Yes. They’re the two powers in the universe that could actually mean your downfall.”

Rory chuckled. “I think you’re forgetting about Michael Grade.” For a moment, nobody moved, until all eyes turned to Rory. “Michael Grade? Y’know? Cancelled the show in 1989... Because of failing ratings... How do I know that?”

“It’s due to the walls between the universes breaking down,” the other Doctor said. “It affected us nearly

instantly, since we're pretty pale rip-offs with not much of a back-catalogue of stories. It's probably only affecting you so quickly because you've come into direct contact with... well, us."

"Wait, I still don't understand," Amy started to question the other Doctor, but before she could, Rory butt in.

"We're a TV show, Amy. You, me, the Doctor, Leadworth, all of it."

"I got that bit, thanks. But if we're a television show," she gestured to the three on the opposite side of the table, "what're you?"

There was a pause. Then simultaneously, the three answered. "We're a fan-film."

The six adventurers were gathered around the universal border, the other Doctor having landed his Tardis back in the main room. Each Doctor was on their respective side, sonic screwdriver whizzing away as they attempted to figure out what had caused the universal barriers to weaken, and eventually collapse.

"This doesn't make any sense," the proper Doctor said, crawling along on his knees. "There's no reason, at all, that we could've made the walls between the universes collapse. The Sonics aren't powerful enough."

"They're not," the other Doctor agreed, "I thought perhaps that if we were modulating our screwdrivers at opposing frequencies perhaps it could've had some sort of cascading effect—"

"But the only way that could've happened is if somebody had already weakened the universal barriers, yes, I had the same thought." The eleventh Doctor finished the other Doctor's sentence.

"Which leads to the obvious conclusion—" The other Doctor continued down the rabbit hole.

"That someone—Someones, there'd have to be two of them—" The eleventh Doctor followed him down.

"One on each side of the barrier, like us—" The other Doctor again.

"Has to have already weakened the barrier enough that simple harmonic resonance could cause it to collapse." The eleventh, finishing his thought.

“And, the barrier being that week suggests that it’s already been broken—“ The other Doctor.

“But since it was still in place when we both arrived---“ The eleventh.

“It must’ve happened in the future—“ So on, and so forth.

“Rippling backwards, retroactively destabilizing.”

“Which means, of course...” the other Doctor paused for a moment.

“The longer the universes stay open, the quicker it’ll collapse in on itself, until it rips itself open across every moment in time.” The two Doctors finished, simultaneously. As they did, there was another rumble, worse than the one they’d felt half an hour ago.

“Uh, Doctors?” Amy tried to get their attention. “Something’s happening to the, uh, barrier... thing.” Sure enough, the spot where the universal barrier had been was rippling again, but through the ripples, another Tardis and another Doctor could be seen. This Doctor was short, dirty blond, and evidently fairly young as there was a fair amount of acne on his chin. He was wielding a sonic screwdriver as well, though his looked like a plastic toy that had been artlessly butchered and reassembled. Behind him, there was an even shorter, blonder young woman whose face was unfortunately quite flat.

“Oh no, not that one. Anything but that one,” The other Doctor said.

“You know him?” The eleventh Doctor asked.

“I’m aware of him,” The other doctor sighed, exasperated. “He’s ridiculous. An egotist, a hypocrite, and an ass. He’s got four series and they’ve all ripped off actual plotlines, taken the worst parts of them, mashed them together and patted themselves on the back as though what they’d created something that was somehow greater than the original, not derivative, and, well, bad. Hell, he ripped off Big Finish, he had the Master disguise himself as another incarnation of one of us. Even with a surprising budget his effects are worse than the actual show’s have ever been. Lord knows where he gets the money.”

“Ah. Well, all that aside, if he is another Doctor, we could use his help.” The eleventh Doctor didn’t even sound like he could convince himself.

“Or, we could get into my Tardis, track down the temporal coordinates of the original breach, and get this all over with?” The eleventh Doctor simply snapped his fingers, pointed at the other Doctor, and followed him and the companions into the children’s playtent.

Inside the other Doctor’s Tardis, the companions squished themselves into the seats, as the two Doctors busied themselves with the Tardis’s controls. After a great deal of mad scrambling, some pushing of buttons, and the twisting on and off of a faucet, the eleventh Doctor turned to the other Doctor, who was rhythmically tapping at the electronic Simon Says game.

“If I’m honest, I’m not entirely sure how to fly your Tardis.” The eleventh Doctor was a bit sheepish.

The other Doctor laughed. “That’s alright. Here, just…” he pointed to the far end of the counter, “Plug your sonic into the far left controller socket of the Gamecube. It’ll read the data from the sonic, and we can track it backwards. I’ll need you to read the data off the scanner as we fly, though.”

“Right! Okay. Um, where is the scanner?”

“The microwave.”

“Of course. Sorry, what?” The eleventh Doctor looked incredulous.

“It’s in the microwave,” the other Doctor sighed. “Just pop it open, the screen is in the back.”

Over the next couple of minutes, the two Doctors progressed just as the other Doctor suggested they would. As the two fell into a pattern, the companions sat, the awkward tension mounting as they found themselves with nothing to do but sit and look at each other.

“So… you two don’t have names, huh?” Amy broke the silence.

“Nope,” said the woman across the table, cheerfully enough and now with no sign of her previous false accent.

“That must make things confusing?” Amy’s second question was a bit less timid than her previous, curiosity taking over.”

“Not really.” Rory’s counterpart answered this time. “We never really had enough time for it to become a problem. If we’re running around, he just calls us ‘companions’ and it works well enough.”

“And we’re really the only people he talks to, so it’s not like there’s anyone else for us to be confused with.” The

woman continued his thought.

“Well, just us, and the Master. But it’s not like he’s gonna get us mixed up!” The male companion added, laughing.

“The Master?” Rory asked.

“Yeah. Have you guys not bumped into him?” Not-Rory sounded surprised.

“No, we haven’t. Rory responded. “What sort of name is the Master?”

The woman shrugged. “What sort of name is the Doctor? I guess timelords just like being magnanimous.”

“Wait, the Master is a timelord? I thought the Doctor said all the timelords were dead.” Amy was very confused, and Rory’s face mirrored her question.

“Well, when you’re basically just an evil version of the Doctor, I guess the plot sorta protects you from death, not matter how final it seems.”

“Huh,” Rory muttered. “I wonder why we’ve never bumped into him.” Any further conversation was ended by the whooshing sound of the Tardis flying through the vortex turning to the pained whine and groan of it forcing its way back to a single location in space in time. The companions got up from their seats, readying themselves for the sort of triumphant speech the Doctor usually gave when they were about to fling themselves into the unknown. The Doctors turned to the companions with the typical “I have plan” swagger, flipping their screwdrivers, and pocketing them. The companions leaned in, subconsciously, ready for the pep talk.

“Shall we?” was instead all they got, as the other Doctor unceremoniously gestured to the door before making his way out of the Tardis. With neither pomp nor circumstance, the eleventh Doctor and the companions followed.

As they awkwardly crawled out of the child’s playtent, they found themselves in a completely alien environment. To the untrained eye, it was another planet, the terrain rough and rocky, dotted with sparse splotches of grass, with large hills of loam on two sides and the third blocked off by a very low cliff; the sky was an unnatural green. To the trained eye it was a gravel quarry just south of god-knows-where, with a poorly chroma-keyed photo of some nebula crudely rotoscoped in from the horizon up into the clouds. Breathtakingly

remarkable or breathtakingly not, all parties present found themselves glad that it wasn't another set of identical hallways repeating ad infinitum, as the Mirror Facility had been.

The two Doctors led the pack of companions across the uneven terrain, warbling screwdrivers leading the way, until they reached another quarry-like pit. In the bottom, there sat the exact same tent that they had left.

"Well, that's not possible! There's no way that there's an actual one of those tents on this planet. And I highly there's another Tardis that looks like just like yours, either. We can't have looped back around, can we?" The eleventh Doctor scratched his head, wild hair looking now even wilder.

"No, I don't think we have. And I don't think that's another Tardis, I think that's *my* Tardis."

The other Doctor's brow furrowed. He had put together two and two and knew why his Tardis was down there.

"You mean you've landed here before?" The eleventh Doctor fidgeted, his head cocked towards the other Doctor.

"No, but during our one adventure, the Master had complete unrestricted access to my Tardis, and when I finally got it back, it was parked somewhere else, and he'd left a message for me. At the time, I thought he'd just moved it closer to his lair, but now..."

"We need a plan. He's down there, in your Tardis, ripping a hole in the fabric of your universe, and collapsing an unfathomable amount of others. Still, your Tardis, your universe, it's your go."

"I think I've got a plan, but it needs precision. Are you up for it?" the other Doctor was solemn as solemn could be."

"You betcha!" Eleven was grinning from ear to ear.

"Alrighty, then, let's do it. Contact." The other Doctor was grinning almost as widely.

"Contact."

The companions watched from afar as the two doctors held eye contact, communicating silently. After a terse

nod, the eleventh Doctor turned and walked towards the companions, as the other Doctor hopped over the lip of the ravine and made his way downwards. Delivering quick and over-complicated instructions to the companions, he lead them off towards the Tardis they had come from.

Careening down the quarry, the other Doctor barely kept himself upright and nearly tripped over himself by the time he got to the bottom. What he found there was his Tardis, as he expected, as well as thick electric cables leading from it to a large device projecting a beam of light into a rippling hole in space.

“Now that doesn’t look like anything from my universe.” The other Doctor whispered to himself. He was quite correct, the device, which was supposed to look like some sort of impressive metallic construction, but was instead some bastardized monstrosity made from paint, wood, cardboard, and tape. With a quick flick of the sonic, the Doctor analyzed the machine.

“A dimension drill, made to literally pierce the fabric of the universe. Banned across the multiverse due to consistently causing the cascading collapse of the multiversal web. Just as I expected.” The Doctor focused his screwdriver on drill’s emitter, and for a moment the rippling hole widened to twice its current size. The Doctor quickly took cover as his Tardis groaned, careening through the air and into the hole in the universe. Once it was through, the Doctor brought his Sonic to bear on the dimension drill again. The beam from the drill flickered, then resumed. The rippling hole briefly became still, then started rippling inwards, instead of outwards. As the Doctor scrambled towards his pilfered Tardis, the dimensional drill began to emit a low whine, which slowly rose higher and higher in pitch.

The Doctor opened the inside door to his Tardis with a slam, and surprised the Master just as he finished leaving the Doctor a message on the microwave.

“It’s you! But—How did you find me?” The Master asked, hamming it up as much as possible.

“Did you really think I wouldn’t be able to find my own Tardis?” The Doctor said, smug as a bug in a rug.

“I don’t understand how you escaped! I tied you up! I left behind an Auton duplicate of myself! I had it all planned out! You shouldn’t even have woken up yet!” The Master had thrown his hands up in the air, the upside-down mustache glued to his chin in loving parody now threatening to come off with every movement.

“Oh, you know how this goes. No matter how convoluted the plot, I’ll always stop you. And you know what has to happen next.”

“Yes, I do, Doctor, I do indeed...”

The eleventh Doctor landed the other Doctor’s Tardis with a solid thud, narrowly avoiding a crash landing. The various companions were strewn about the Tardis, having been thrown about during the chaotic flight. As Rory helped Amy un-wedge herself from the refrigerator, the eleventh Doctor ecstatically clapped his hands in the air.

“Hah! Landed it like a pro! Not bad for not knowing which piece of junk does what, eh?” His face fell when the other four were unimpressed with his limited piloting abilities. “You lot. Always so hard to please. Now come along all of you.” He grinned again. I’ve never had four companions at once before. This is going to be exciting!”

They exited the other Doctor’s Tardis with great difficulty, and discovered that the other side of the hole looked an awful lot like someone’s back yard.

“Well, that’s anticlimactic,” Rory said.

“Yeah, I was gonna say that,” His counterpart replied.

“Great the Doctor gets a planet, and we get a yard.” While it had been the other Doctor’s female companion that had said that, she and Amy were standing with the same posture and the same disappointed looks on their faces.

“Come along, you four! We’ve got work to do!” The Doctor had already made his way to the other dimensional drill and was giving it a once-over.

“What’s that? Rory asked

“It’s a dimensional drill, Rory, try to keep up. It’s what we’re here for.” The Doctor paused. “There’s one thing I still don’t understand. Why would the Master want to collapse the multiverse? His plans have always been about domination. He wants to rule the universe, not destroy it.”

“That’s right. I want to rule the universe. Unfortunately, this isn’t THE universe. I want the real one. Or, rather, we do.” The five stalwart heroes turned around to greet the voice behind them. What they got was completely unexpected: a young blond man in a grey trench coat had stepped out of a replica of the eleventh Doctor’s Tardis, which had been visibly photoshopped into the scene.

“Ah, you’ve got a new face. I don’t like this one. Too young. Though, that’s probably coming from me.” The eleventh Doctor babbled away, attempting to distract the Master from the fact that he was handing Rory and not Rory his sonic screwdriver and waving them towards the dimensional drill. “Now, unless you’ve stolen my Tardis, which you can’t have, cause I’ve got isomorphic locks on now,” he lied, “or you’ve gotten another one and you’re trying to pass it off as mine like you did back when you were bald, it strikes me, that if that’s not my Tardis, and it’s not a Tardis that’s disguised as my Tardis, then that has to be another me’s Tardis, and since I’ve seen the other me’s Tardis, and it doesn’t look like that—“ he gestured to the police box “—it must mean that you’re from yet another fan film. Am I right?” There was not a single moment during that sentence in which the eleventh Doctor had paused to catch his breath.

“As usual Doctor, you are far too clever for your own good,” The blonde Master said, with none of the gravitas he had hoped for. “I’ve stolen the Tardis of your shorter, more acne covered counterpart, and now the two of us are going to pull the multiverse apart just afar enough that we can get to the proper universe. Your Universe! We’re tired of being trapped in pitiful fan film, limited by budget and low ambition. We want universe with the marginally more impressive budget of the BBC! We deserve to rule a universe where we’re not consistently

foiled by a pimple-faced punk or an American teenager and his family. We're going to fight actors who were passed over for a BAFTA!" His speech came off as cartoonishly megalomaniacal, though unlike the other Master, it was not intended to. As the Doctor and the Master continued to monologue at each other, Amy and her counterpart slowly circled around them on either side, until they were each flanking the Master.

"Well, your plan's gone a bit wrong." The eleventh Doctor was doing his best, but even he couldn't ham it up as much as the Master was. "You're collapsing every single universe. Neither of you will have even a single atom to argue over if you don't turn those drills off. The effect is cascading backwards in time! We might already be too late!" The Doctor was very earnestly trying to convince the Master to turn his dimension drill off, but more out of curiosity than anything else. He wasn't sure this Master had any setting other than "fake-edgy evil."

The Master opened his mouth to speak again, but he was cut off by Amy's shout of "Now!" Amy and the other Doctor's companion tackled the Master to the ground, Amy going for his arms and her counterpart going for his legs.

"Haha! Well Done!" The Doctor hopped triumphantly. "Oh! Rory and not-Rory!" The Doctor ran over to the two, who were standing next to the dimension drill nonchalantly, watching what was happening on the other side of the dimensional hole.

"Oh, Doctor!" Rory said, handing the sonic screwdriver back to him. "We did what you said. We *think* we've reverse the polarity of the drill's neutron flow, but I don't actually know what that means, so neither of us is really... sure."

"Yeah!" Not-Rory added. "But it's making a really high-pitched whining sound now, so... I guess it worked?"

"It worked perfectly! Well done, the both of you." The Doctor looked around. "Now we've just got to wait for the other Doctor to incapacitate the other Master and do the same."

"Oh, he already has." Rory pointed towards the hole.

"Yeah. We've just been watching the two of them for the past few minutes." The Doctor turned towards where Rory was pointing. Through the hole, he saw the other Doctor and the other Master trading punches back and forth, none of which really seem to connect but all of which were accompanied by the satisfying crunch that come with blows connecting in a Hollywood movie.

"They're... punching each other?" The Doctor was flabbergasted.

"Yup," Rory shrugged.

The Doctor tilted his head. "Can I hear... *Eye of the Tiger!*?"

"Yup." Not-Rory nodded.

"Where's it coming from?" The eleventh Doctor was completely confounded.

“As far as we can tell, the air.” Rory seemed altogether unconcerned, as though at this point he really couldn’t be phased by a parallel version of the Doctor just straight-up punching to the core of his problems.

“Huh. That is... wholly unexpected.”

“It happens,” Not-Rory said. “But the other drill is whining just like ours is, so I think they’re ready.”

“About that,” Rory said, now fully re-engaging with what was happening “What’s actually going to happen?”

“Oh, that’s simple,” the Doctor lied. “The two drills have been operating on reverse at full power for a little while now. In a few minutes they’ll both go critical, and they’ll suck each other through, implode, and close the tear. The implosion will ripple backwards through time, and the drills will be erased from history, so the tears won’t even have happened in the first place. We’ll go back to our separate universes, forget this ever happened, and all meta-knowledge will disappear from our minds, since we’re no longer aware of or in contact with the other universes. Think of it as retrograde dimensional amnesia.”

“Right.” Rory said, not comprehending.

“Yeah, of course.” Not-Rory said, also not comprehending. “Should we get his attention, or...”

“Right! Yes,” The eleventh Doctor spun on his heels and yelled through the rippling orifice. “Oy! Doctor! We’ve got everything in hand on our side, let’s get this show on the road!”

The other Doctor gave the eleventh Doctor a thumbs-up and whacked the Master with a haymaker that literally sent him into the Tardis, then turned and ran towards the hole.

As he hopped through, the Master popped his head out of the Tardis and yelled “You may have thwarted us this time Doctor, but I’ll see you again! After I get a replacement for the beard you knocked off of me!” and then disappeared into the Tardis, which quickly groaned its way into the time vortex.

“Right,” The other Doctor didn’t waste a breath. “Let’s get back into my Tardis so we can you back to your universe before the universes separate permanently.”

“Sounds like a plan to me!” The eleventh Doctor called to the two female companions. “Come along, you two! Before we’re all stuck here!” They quickly climbed off of the thoroughly bruised blonde Master and followed the other three into the Tardis. Not-Amy was the last one in, and as soon as she closed the door behind her, the

Other Doctor yelled towards not-Rory.

“Hit the fast return lever! Quickly!” He quickly tapped at the game of electronic Simon Says, dematerializing the Tardis. “The dimensional instability is rippling through reality! We’ve got to get back to the dimensional mirror before the forces invert!” Not-Rory nodded and ran into the back of the camper.

“Where’s the fast return lever?” The eleventh Doctor asked as he sat himself down on one of the benches.

“The, uh, the toilet.” The other Doctor answered, sheepishly. There was a flush, and the Tardis lurched, before rematerializing. “What took you so long?”

Not-Rory shrugged as he reentered the room. “I had to go.”

The six of them were all outside of the Tardis, back in the mirror facility. They were all standing along the area where the mirror used to be, which was now a swirling vortex, universe after universe flashing by.

“What’s going on, Doctor?” The female companions asked, simultaneously.

“It’s the universal reversal,” The other Doctor answered. “The two dimensional drills are imploding as we speak, and it’s causing incredible instability across the multiversal web. As a result—“

“—The one stable point between the two universes has become unstable, making it virtually impossible to cross,” the eleventh Doctor finished.

“So we’re stuck here?” Amy asked slightly panicking. Rory squinted. He could’ve sworn for a second that through the tear he saw a version of the Doctor wearing an odd hat and screaming something in Russian.

“Not quite,” said the eleventh Doctor, looking at the other Doctor. “Have you got your screwdriver?”

“Of course.”

“Good. Your screwdriver vibrates at the same molecular frequency as the rest of your universe. If you use it on the opening at its most powerful setting, it should be able to keep the rift open on this side.” The eleventh Doctor was excited, tossing his screwdriver from hand to hand.

“Right! And yours can keep the opening on your side open long enough for the three of you to cross through it!”

The other Doctor was equally as excited, and had taken his screwdriver out to fiddle with it.

“There’s only one problem, of course. How do we single out the right universe?” The eleventh Doctor was suddenly morose as he looks at the millions of universes swirling by.

“I wonder...” The other Doctor stepped closer to the rift, watching them as well. “The Master you fought, he was from another fan film?”

“Yes.” The eleventh Doctor eye the other Doctor.

“Interesting. The only universes I’m seeing are also fanfilms... So if the multiversal web consists of fan films, but also contains bits and pieces of the proper canon universe... Of Course!” The other Doctor shouted, causing the eleventh Doctor to jump in surprise.

“What?” Eleven asked. “What is it?”

“I know how we can single out your universe! The YouTube sorting algorithm!” The other Doctor turned to the eleventh. “Your sonic has a telepathic readout, right?”

“It does, yeah.’ The eleventh Doctor stepped closer to the other Doctor, hope starting to creep back into his voice.”

“Could you invert it, send telepathic signals outward?” The other Doctor looked intently at eleven, grinning from ear to ear.

“Sure, yeah.” The eleventh Doctor flicked his screwdriver to its fully extended position. “Done. Why?” The other Doctor grabbed it. “I’ll show you!” He aimed the sonic screwdriver at the rift and concentrated, scrunching his face in concentration.

“What’re you doing?” The eleventh Doctor asked.

“I’m searching YouTube.” The other Doctor grinned, his eyes still closed, and murmured search terms under his breath. The rift rippled and fluctuated, but slowly started rippling less. The eleventh Doctor watched as fewer and few universes rippled by, until the rift settled.

“That’s it! You found it! Amy, Rory, through the opening, quickly!” The other Doctor tossed the screwdriver back to the eleventh, and used his own to maintain the opening. The eleventh Doctor brought his to bear as he ushered his companions through. Carefully, he placed one foot through, onto the cold floor on the other side. It was becoming hard to keep the rift open. The two Doctors stood next to each other, both aware the universes were about to close.

“Doctor, it’s been a pleasure,” the other Doctor said, smiling less like an ancient alien and more like a teenager, giddy at the chance to act next to one of his heroes.

“Indeed it has, Doctor,” smiled the eleventh, with the air of a man happy to play his favorite role one last time.

“Maybe I’ll see you round the Multiverse.”

“Maybe.”

With that, the eleventh Doctor stepped through the rift, and the two lowered their screwdrivers. The rift rippled one last time, before sucking into itself and sealing with an audible pop.

“So is it actually supposed to do anything?” Rory asked, sounding wholly unimpressed.

“It’s supposed to show us another universe...” The eleventh Doctor muttered, a bit put out it wasn’t working. “But it doesn’t seem to be functional. The sonic can’t activate it. It’s almost as if the rift is gone.”

“Well, if it’s not working, shall we go?” Amy sounded bored. “You promised us you’d show us sentient Ice cream, and that was three planets ago.”

“Well, alright,” the Doctor said. “Back to the Tardis.” The three of them turned to go, but the Doctor lagged behind as he examined his sonic screwdriver for faults. He couldn’t find anything wrong, but he did find a telepathic signal he didn’t remember sending to it. It was a search term of some sort. Waiting until Amy and Rory had walked far enough ahead that they were out of earshot, he played it out loud. Much to his surprise, out of the emitter came an older, Scottish voice that felt vaguely familiar, saying:

“Don’t forget to subscribe to the official Doctor YouTube Channel.”

**THE OTHER DOCTOR AND HIS COMPANIONS WILL RETURN, IN:
DOCTOR WHO: THE EYES OF EVIL**

COMING ~~SOON~~ Probably never, to be honest.

Wiles And the Doctor

by El Gato De Doce Colas

A story featuring the Eleventh Doctor and John Wiles

John sat at his desk, mired in letters and paperwork. Producing for TV was a truly grueling job, one without much thanks or reward. What little money he received hardly paid for his stress and frustration at Bill (the lead actor) and the stubborn higher-ups. Both were insistent that they knew more about good TV than he did, despite his long career as a writer. To be fair, John was more familiar with theatre productions and radio plays, so perhaps they were more experienced - not that now was the time for self-doubt. There were scripts to approve, arguments to be had and God knows what else would pop up tomorrow. Today had been long enough...

John awoke to a gust of air and a familiar wheezing sound. Quick as a rabbit, he sat up and pretended to be engrossed in his papers. Surely that had been a nosy executive breathing down his neck? He'd fallen asleep on set earlier in the day; a second time was inexcusable. Maybe they'd finally give him the sack. That'd be a mighty relief. But no, the executive remained silent. "Hello?" Still silent. Perhaps it was Bill taking the piss. John peered over his papers, scanning the office - empty. Turning his chair, he checked for someone behind him, only to find nothing there either. How peculiar.

Satisfied that his office was empty, John returned to his paperwork. Perhaps it'd been his imagination after all, the punishing winds of the Time Destructor – the latest plot device on his show - blowing into his subconscious as he slept over the blueprints for its design. But no, as if to prove him wrong, yet another sound came to disturb him. This time it sounded very much like a door opening, only his office door clearly remained shut-

Suddenly, a slim man in a tweed jacket appeared before him, seeming to step out of thin air. "Sorry about that Mr. Wiles, the visual stabilisers on the fritz again," he said, gesticulating whimsically with every word. "I'm the Doctor. We've met before, haven't we?"

"I know a few doctors, but not you, sorry," said John, still in shock. Where had this man come from? Obviously he had snuck in carefully, avoiding the gaze of John's tired eyes, but could he really be so careless as to have missed him?

"Hmm." Clearly this Doctor fellow expected John to know who he was. A thought seemed to cross the Doctor's mind. Procuring what looked like an over-machined penlight from his front pocket, the man activated it, turned around and aimed it at the empty space in front of him. Astonishingly, a blue police box appeared, shimmering in and out of existence. Once the penlight was deactivated the box faded back into nothingness, as if it had never been there in the first place.

"Ohhh!" said Wiles, as the man nodded his head happily. "Sorry, but the whole "recasting Bill" thing has been put aside for the moment. And we would never choose a young intern such as yourself. Please put the TARDIS

back where you found it.” The man’s expression changed to that of indignance and he was clearly about to make a fuss. Feeling a bit sorry for him, Wiles offered a few words of support: “Hey, nice magic tricks though!”. The man sighed and rolled his eyes. “I’ll show you magic!” Once again, he brought out his penlight and summoned the TARDIS, only this time he didn’t let it disappear. Stepping forward like a showman, he pushed the TARDIS doors inwards and span around to face John. “Come along, John.”

John couldn’t believe his eyes. Inside the TARDIS he saw a giant chamber of glass and bronze. Awed, he stuck his head in and confirmed that it was more than a photo blowup, before feeling each side of the box to confirm that, yes, it was real. Silently, the man beckoned for him to come in, which John was more than eager to do. “Am I... am I dreaming?” asked John incredulously.

“If you like.” replied the Doctor, “Much easier than explaining it all to you anyway.”

John fainted.

John drifted in and out of consciousness before settling into a sea of blue. What was this place? Turning his head, he noticed green and black shapes flying towards him from the horizon. Or was it the ceiling? As they approached, John saw the shapes morph into letters, forming discernible sentences as they reached his eyes.

>tfw you will never meet john wiles

John Wiles?

imagine not knowing who BASED JOHN WILES is. i will fucking school u, cletus. john wiles is the best man to have ever wried. the

best man to have ever spoken. the best man to have ever lived.

Wow, thanks for telling me. I Love John Wiles now. He’s so cool and awesome.

“This is the internet, in the far-off year of 2017.” said the Doctor, a muffled voice that seemed to be coming from far away, “And this is called /whom/, or something like that anyway...” John wasn’t paying attention. More messages of praise flew by, countless voices sharing their admiration for him and his writing. From his left he noticed the Doctor appear, or at least a murky blur that looked somewhat like him. Briskly, the Doctor walked in the path of some incoming words, stopping them midair. Facing the words, he seemed to pose the letters themselves a question - “Cats, between you and me, in a hundred words, where do you think John Wiles rates in the history of Doctor Who?” Then he stepped out of the way and the letters flew off in another direction.

Now another group of letters arrived, swerving abruptly to reach the Doctor, who now stood next to John. They read: “well big question but to me wiles is the basedest showrunner of them all. certainly the most popular great showrunner of all time. the most beloved. his command of vna level darkness the most magnificent. he transformed the pain of his tormented life into mature kino. pain is easy to portray, but to use your passion and pain to portray the sadness and adultness and gloominess of our world. no one had ever done it before. perhaps no one ever will again. to my mind, that based, wild man who roamed the fields of the bbc television centre was not only the world's greatest showrunner, but also one of the greatest men who ever lived.”

Tears came to John's eyes. To this person, Doctor Who was more than a throwaway show from the 60s. Over 50 years later, they still cared about his work. It wasn't for nothing after all...

GENESIS OF DOCTOR WHO

By Newanon

An adventure with the First Doctor

It was another usual day for me. Woke up, brushed my teeth, polished the new shoes in the store, ate, went to school, got bullied and yadda yadda. But it was in the way home that everything changed. I was walking, thinking about the new Weir Tales magazine that was waiting for me in home, when it suddenly appeared, the big blue box with the most weird but glorious sound ever, the sound that transmitted hope and justice, the sound of the TARDIS. I stared at it until this old and weird little fellow came out of it, holding his lapels and looking around like he didn't give a shit. I didn't realise how long I had been staring at him until he looked at me, smiling.

'What are you looking at boy, hmm? Never saw a police box?' he said, still smiling. I was so shocked I couldn't speak, only make weird sounds.

'Well? Get it out, child!' he exclaimed.

'How did you...'

'Made the police box materialise? Very simple, my dear boy, but not for you or your species, so I will just say it was magic' The Doctor said, arrogantly.

'What do you mean my species? Aren't you human sir?'

'Don't be stupid, child. Would I say your species if I were?' He shouted, which reminded me of my teacher Elena, who screamed and embarrassed me everyday at school because I have this little tendency of not paying attention to class, but only because I am too busy writing my tale for the Weir Tales magazine. The memories made me cry.

'Is that really necessary? Okay time to stop now, shush' He put his finger in his mouth and suddenly, I stopped. I don't know why, but this man is clearly was the reason why.

'Okay now, this doesn't seem like where I dropped Steven and Vicki, this is too primitive, where and when am I child?'

'Canada, 1928 sir' and as soon as I said that, he turned to the police box and pushed the door, he was about to enter when I asked:

'Why you disguise your ship as a police box sir?'

'I beg your pardon?' He said, confused.

'Well, it did land here out of nowhere, you are from another planet so you must have a advanced transportation; you said you dropped your friends in another place that clearly isn't here because you said is too primitive; it's disguised because you can't just show around a giant spaceship around; it is a time machine as well but that's obvious, because you asked when are you and... that's it I think. I am definitely going to write for TV.'

The Doctor stood there, seeming surprised. And then he smiled, the most most warm and benevolent smile that made me remember the pictures of my grandfather in the kitchen. I never met him, he died during the war.

'Quite brilliant child. Yes, you are right. This is a spaceship. It's named TARDIS, Time and Relative Dimensions in Space, it was my grand-daughter who named it. Oh good times they were. Ian and Barbara, Susan and me. I am the Doctor by the way. What's your name, boy? Hmm?

'Sydney sir, Sydney Newman'

'I see a very bright future for you Sydney. You will make a lot of people happy, my dear boy, I can see that. And you will create something with a great legacy towards mankind. And I wish you the very best luck.' He stepped onto the TARDIS and vanished. but not for forever.

But that's another story.

The Two Cribbinses

by /who/tube

An adventure with 2 Wilfs and the Cushing Doctor

The Doctor stood alone in the rainy street, following the events of DOCTOR WHO AT JOURNEY'S END (No. 198 in the Target Library). From the window, Wilfred Mott watched him turn out of sight, thinking sadly of the traumatic fate that had befallen his granddaughter. A few minutes passed. Suddenly, there came a sharp rapping sound from behind him. Wilf turned, startled, only to see the Doctor staring in the rickety kitchen window at him.

"Oi, Wilf" said the Doctor, "Did you put a big rock in my console room?"

"A what? No 'Course I didn't. How'd you get over - "

"There's no time! We've got to get to the TARDIS!"

He bounded back over the sill and through the garden. Wilf shook his head.

"You might at least use the front door! And take an umbrella!" he shouted at the rapidly retreating Time Lord. No response came. He shrugged, unfurled his own black parasol, and shuffled after him.

*

The pair stood in the entrance to the TARDIS, Wilf shutting the doors behind him with a baffled expression.

"Doctor, I was just going to bed, can't this wait until..."

"Nah, sleep's boring, this is something new. Look!" the Doctor ejaculated.

Wilf looked.

To the side of the central console, just where the Doctor would normally stand to work the levers, was a big rock - more of a boulder, really, or even a slab. It glowed slightly, and gave off wisps of acrid smoke.

Carved into the side in rough, scraggly letters were the words "HELP - WILF 6-1-3-20-9-15-14 16-1-18-1-4-15-24".

"Barmiest thing I've seen all week, and that's saying some. Empty console room, then all of a sudden ZAP! and here it is" said the Doctor. "I was just sitting down to a nice mope, too."

Wilf jumped slightly at the loud 'zap'. His friend seemed quite recovered - excited, even - and he was having a hard time adjusting.

"Well, it's my handwriting, all right, know it anywhere, but I didn't - "

"Thought so. Counter-tempo-stabilizing."

"Eh?"

The Doctor grinned. "Those numbers are five-D coordinates. Three spacial dimensions, one temporal, that's easy enough, but the fifth is quantum-probabilistic - alternate universes in Calabi-Yau space."

Wilf blinked. He was still trying to work out 'counter-tempo-stabilizing', and half suspected the Doctor was just making things up.

"So..." he began slowly, "what's that mean for us, then?"

The Doctor shook his head. "You haven't written it yet, but you will. In about a day, from the coordinates listed - one universe down the hall from this one."

"Um. Right. But I'm not in another universe, am I? I'm in my front street."

"Yup. Something's got to happen in between." The Doctor paused, looking for the best way to phrase this. "I'm going to have to open a portal and send you over, so you'll be there to send it, so I can read it in the first place and send you to send it. Understand?"

"No."

"Me neither. But if we muck up the sequence of events..."

"Not good, I'm guessing."

"Welllll, don't know really. It might implode the whole quantum manifold. Then again, it might just go 'fzzt' and smell funny."

Wilf nodded. "Best pop over and get it sorted, then. Wouldn't do to have the quantum whatsit go to pieces on us."

"Good man." The Doctor nodded, and went to the other side of the console. A brief flurry of button-pressing and one whack with a rubber mallet later, the portal was open. It hovered in front of Wilf, shimmering different colours like an oil slick.

"One last thing, Wilf," he remarked as he ran the Sonic Screwdriver around the edge of the portal for some no doubt highly technical reason. "If you see anything that looks familiar over there, don't touch it, alright? Two versions of something come into contact, it'll cause all sorts of instabilities, might break the loop and throw you right back here."

"In other words, *fzzt*."

"Yeah."

Wild made a mental note of that. "Righto. See you in a bit. Put the kettle on when I get back, would you?"

He took a single step forward, and vanished into the void.

Nothing like a foot-thick fog when you're looking for something, thought Tom Campbell as he strode down a cobbled side-street. He held a strange gadget, like a TV remote festooned with wires and flashing lights. *Good job this is just an errand for Doctor Who, and not a proper patrol.*

The mustachioed, eccentric old Doctor had turned up on his doorstep early that morning, looking tense and furtive.

"I've been derelict in my duties, old boy" he had said, "and I fear there may be trouble brewing. Everywhere I've gone in the TARDIS, I have been accosted by Daleks - first on Skaro, then in the year 2150. And now that my family and I have returned home to this era - "

"You think there may be Daleks after you here, too" Tom completed the thought, frowning.

"Not just me, Tom - the planet! The whole solar system!"

So, doing his best to humour the old man, Tom had taken a stroll through London, sweeping the scanning device in all directions. Nothing had registered - until now.

"BRAP!" said the scanner, whirring and blinking its lights. Tom turned in the direction it indicated, beginning to worry. If there really *were* Daleks here...

Just then a short, bearded old man in a red woolly hat stumbled out of the alleyway. He leaned against the faded brick wall for a moment, then glanced about him in all directions as if trying to work out where he was.

"What's all this then?" barked Tom, who knew a drunk when he saw one.

The drunk looked up at him, blanching as if he'd seen a ghost. "N-nothing, Constable, nothing. I'll be right off." He practically scurried away.

Tom shook his head, then kept going. *Mustn't get distracted*, he thought.

After a minute's walk, the scanner emitted another loud "BRAP!", and Tom paused to see what was the matter. A tiny dish on the device swiveled to point straight down. There was a faint rumble. Tom looked along the street itself, only to see a manhole cover rattle aside, and a smooth metallic dome emerge from the sewer. The Dalek, gunmetal grey with blue balls, rose and hovered in front of him with a menacing hum of power. It smelled faintly of poo.

"ANOMALY DETECTED!" it shrieked. "SEEK. LOCATE. IDENTIFY."

Something thumped into Tom's side as the Dalek fired a searing blast from its gun - *no gas this time*, some part of his brain registered - knocking him out of the way. The ray passed harmlessly overhead, knocking a chunk of brickwork from a nearby sandwich shop.

"Run!" shouted Wilf. They ran.

The Dalek pursued, latching onto Wilf as its target. "YOU ARE THE ANOMALY. YOU WILL BE DETAINED FOR TESTING" it raged.

"Bung your nightstick at it!" urged Wilf, pulling Tom behind a bin as the Dalek unleashed another blast.

"Eh?"

"Right at the eyestalk - it might blind it! Only chance!"

Tom looked quizzically at him for a second, then rose from his hiding place. He threw the stick in a long, low arc, scoring a direct hit on the Dalek's glaring blue eye. Its stalk crumpled, pointing uselessly inward at its own armor.

"I AM UNDER ATTACK! VISION IMPAIRED!" said the Dalek, swiveling wildly.

"It's distracted!" yelled Tom.

"Not for long - run for it!"

The pair half ran, half stumbled out of the alley, putting as much distance between them and the Dalek as possible. After three blocks, it became clear it wasn't following. Wilf collapsed on a bench, puffing with exhaustion. Tom gave him a look. "Who are you, old-timer? How do you know about Daleks?" he demanded.

"Can't tell you" Wilf gasped. "Shouldn't even be talking to you."

"Don't like policemen, eh?" Tom narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

"Ha. Yeah, lifelong hooligan, me. These are my crime-commiting slippers." *My other self is a bit slow on the*

uptake, he thought silently.

"Well, maybe not. Still, the Dalek knew you - said you were an 'anomaly'. He pondered for a moment, then straightened up decisively. "We'd better find Doctor Who - he'll make sense of all this."

Oh, dear, thought Wilf as they turned to go.

Tom and Wilf climbed up a fire escape to the roof of a nearby building, where Doctor Who had been camping out to watch the surrounding streets. Tom noticed that the older man avoided touching him, refusing a hand up the last rusty ladder. *Weird*, he thought, *but he seems like a good sort. Wish I could figure out where I've seen him before...*

Upon reaching the roof, they came into view of a battered blue police box. Wilf stopped in his tracks, gesturing feebly toward it. "This Doctor Who..." he almost whispered, "he wouldn't be a young, skinny fellow with pointy hair, would he?"

"No. Older gent. Why?"

"Oh, no reason." They continued over to the phone box, and Tom rapped on the door thrice. "Doc? It's me. You were right" he called.

The doors swung open, and a man emerged. He had a thatch of white hair, a neatly trimmed mustache, and a brown velour coat. "I feared as much" he muttered. "I've already sent Susan and Louise to safety, they - hello, who's this?" he inquired, noticing Wilf.

"Ah - this is - what was your name, actually?" said Tom, looking embarrassed.

"Wilf" said Wilf.

"This is Wilf. He saved me from the Dalek."

Doctor Who looked from one man to the other, then back again, his blue eyes twinkling. "I see... yes, yes, fascinating." He withdrew a scrap of paper from his pocket, and scribbled a note which he passed to Wilf.

Would I be correct in thinking you are in fact the future self of my friend Tom? it read.

Wilf smiled weakly. "Something like that" he replied.

"Say no more, my dear boy, I quite understand." He winked. "Where did you encounter this Dalek, exactly?"

"It was in the sewer around - "

"BEHIND YOU!" shouted Tom. A burst of blue light streaked from the neighbouring rooftop, hitting Doctor Who between the shoulderblades. He crumpled to the ground.

"REMAIN STILL!" cried a harsh, metallic voice, as the Dalek from the alley hovered into view. Its eyestalk was intact again, its gun trained squarely on the Doctor.

"What have you done to him, you - " began Tom angrily.

"He's alive!" Wilf called, hurrying to check his pulse. "Barely."

"YOU WILL BE INTERROGATED" said the Dalek.

"A hostage, is that it?" yelled Tom.

"AFFIRMATIVE."

"Ask your questions, then" he spat.

"I WILL SPEAK TO THE ANOMALY" it squawked.

"That'll be me" said Wilf, rising to his feet. "Hello."

"YOU ARE NOT OF THIS DIMENSION."

"No."

"DOCTOR WHO IS INCAPACITATED. HE CANNOT HELP YOU."

"Yes, I saw." Wilf clenched his fist. "And it's a right cowardly move, shooting a man while his back's turned."

"YOU WILL OPEN THE DIMENSIONAL RIFT."

"No, sir, that I won't." *Couldn't if I wanted to.*

"DO NOT DEFY THE DALEKS!" it screamed, whirling to point its gun at Wilf.

"Careful!" said Tom.

"It's alright, Tom, they don't scare me. Met their type before" Wilf said grimly, staring down the gun barrel. "A long time ago. Exterminate this, capture that, obey or you'll be killed - well, I won't have it. No, sir!" he bellowed at the Dalek. "You'll just have to blast me down!"

There was a long silence.

"NO!" said the Dalek at last. "CANNOT DESTROY ANOMALY! CONSEQUENCES UNKNOWN!"

"Well, I'll be" muttered Tom under his breath. The Dalek made a loud whirring noise, receiving new information.

"MOTHERSHIP WILL ARRIVE IN THIRTY RELS!" it proclaimed. "YOU WILL SURRENDER THIS WORLD, OR FACE EXTINCTION!"

"You shouldn't have told us that, tin-pot!" barked Tom. "Now we know we've got thirty of your 'rels' to make a plan!"

"PLANS ARE FUTILE! RESISTANCE IS FUTILE!"

"Ar, stuff a cork in it." He turned to Wilf. "Do we have a plan?"

Wilf sighed. "I don't know." He looked sadly at the fallen form of Doctor Who. "What would *he* do?"

Three minutes and an unknown number of Rels later, Wilf had spilled all his secrets, and Tom was looking a bit paler than usual.

"You sure that'll work?" he asked, shuddering slightly.

"Nope" replied Wilf. "Might implode the quantum multiform, or some such. But it's all I've got."

"Guess we'll just have to go with it, then, and hope..." he trailed off. "No wonder you looked so bloody familiar!"

Wilf chuckled. "I did wonder if you'd catch on. Your Doctor Who almost got it - sharp, that one."

A high metallic whining came from over the horizon. "That'll be the Dalek ship entering orbit" said Tom. "Ready?"

Wilf nodded, not trusting himself to speak. They turned to face the hovering Dalek.

"Oi, you!" shouted Tom. "I'll have you know I've got jurisdiction over all motor vehicles in this block - and your ship is illegally parked! Now clear off, or else!"

The Dalek was silent for a moment, as if unsure how to process this. "YOU WOULD THREATEN THE DALEKS?"

Tom nodded. "That's about the size of it."

"YOU WOULD ISSUE THE DALEKS A... PARKING TICKET?"

"Well, it's like this, see" interjected Wilf. "You can revive Doctor Who, take your ship and your weapons, and go quietly. Or my dimensional counterpart and I will make physical contact and unleash a... destabilized Calabi-Yau rift... blowing you all to kingdom come." *That sounds good. Almost like I know what I'm taking about.*

The Dalek paused. "YOU ARE BLUFFING."

"Try us" says Tom.

The Dalek hesitated, even longer this time. The great curve of the mother saucer could be seen dimly behind it, dwarfing the moon. "NO. YOU WILL BE EXTERMINATED." Its lights flashed red. "LAUNCH MISSILES" it ordered.

The two men turned to each other, an unnatural wind whipping at their coats, and nodded in perfect unison.

"Right" said Tom. "Both of us together."

"One each end, and steady as she goes" Wilf replied. They clasped hands.

There was a light, brighter than the sun.

There was a deafening silence in the void.

The Doctor and Wilf stood in the TARDIS, a faint turquoise glow suffusing the coral chamber.

"Wilf, what are we doing?" asked the Doctor, scratching his sideburn quizzically.

"I dont..." Wilf looked over the Doctor's shoulder, where a large rock had just winked out of existence. "I don't know. I could have sworn I was outdoors..."

"Hm." the Doctor turned to his scanners. "These readings don't make sense. Like you broke a causal loop..."

"Doctor?" Wilf broke in. "Somehow I feel like we shouldn't look into it."

Tom woke up on a sofa, surrounded by pale white lights. "Back with us?" asked Doctor Who, handing him a cup

of tea.

"What happened?"

"I regained consciousness before the end - you and Wilf did something very foolish. And very brave. Fortunately, it seems to have worked - there's not a trace of the Daleks."

Tom groaned, remembering. "Where is he? Is he alright?"

"The rift threw him back to his home world, I imagine, and his own Doctor. None the wiser." Doctor Who sighed, placing his teacup back in its saucer. "Your link would have unwritten the events leading him here. Only this side can retain the memories."

"He helped save a whole universe, and he'll never know..." Tom mused.

"Just so."

The pair sat in silence for a moment, thinking of their strange visitor.

"It seems in any universe, there's a version of you by my side" said Doctor Who at last, turning to go. "And I could think of none better. Now, get some rest."

THE END

The Crystal Giant

By Gallifrey_Immigrant

An adventure with the Tenth Doctor, Gabby Gonzalez, and Cindy Wu

What looked like a giant crystal robot loomed over Gabby Gonzalez and Cindy Wu. The creature was three times as high as a house, and when it spoke, the sound nearly blasted them away.

And the Doctor wanted them to get closer to it. He was grinning widely like a madman, apparently not realizing just how dangerous this situation could be.

"Come on!" the Doctor said. His trainers were nearly sliding on the slick ground, wet from last night's rain. He had already outfitted Gabby with a weird robot claw on her back. The claw had a long metal stem behind it, that seemed to extend for miles. Gabby looked excited to go. But she'd been traveling with the Doctor for a while. Cindy was the new girl, and although she liked having fun, this was a bit much. Still, she didn't want to seem like a spoilsport, so she allowed the Doctor to attach the device to her.

"That giant thing better not eat me," hissed Cindy under her breath.

The Doctor made a face. "You'll hurt it's feelings. That creature is an Elder of an ancient, rather peaceful civilization."

Gabby nodded, and said "Trust me, the Doctor is never wrong. Wellll," she continued, imitating the Doctor's tone, "only wrong occasionally."

Cindy laughed, and then was propelled by the metal claw upwards. The air moved past her so fast, and her hair was flung back. Until she was inches from the face of the crystal giant.

"Hello," said the majestic creature.

Up close, the crystal skin looked beautiful, like a living rainbow. Cindy couldn't help but touch it. The surface felt more malleable than she expected.

"Hello. I am Cindy. From Earth."

The creature made a loud noise. Cindy flinched, before realizing it was laughing.

"I am Stoking. From Errania. I have never heard of Earth. Is it a nice planet?"

"Sometimes," said Gabby. She was behind Cindy, patting her on the back.

"Oh, they're being modest. It's a wonderful place. I see you've made a friend, Cindy," said the Doctor, his brown coat flapping in the air. He winked at Cindy.

"I guess so," giggled Cindy, looking at Stoking, the Crystal Giant.

who's /who/

by Random Anon

"So, where to next eh old girl?

I guess it doesn't really matter, everywhere is an adventure."

The Doctor goes over to the screen on the Tardis console and decides to choose one at random.

Images of different locations zoom up across the screen, she pushes a big red button which eventually brings the roulette to a stop with a cheerful ring. Not even looking at the outcome she pushes a few buttons then cranks the handle downwards.

The Tardis begins to whirr before heading to it's destination

The Tardis arrives in a long corridor lit only by glowing coming from the walls.

The Doctor steps out and notices that the both walls comprise of all sorts of tv screens, from old cathode ray tubes to LCD's, showing what appears to be various tv shows.

There are many doors on either side, each with some kind of poster decorating them.

She decides, to walk along until she comes to a door

on top of which the words "/who/" is printed in large letters

Underneath this is an image of some sort of asian boy detective captioned "Asian Doctor Edition".

"Hmm, i wonder what this is about?" she thinks out loudly.

"Well, may as well find out."

She twists the handle and pushes it open.

Before she even gets a chance to step inside he is instantly bombarded by a floating image of a woman strangely similar to herself with hair captioned with the text, "Doctor Whore" she swats it away and steps inside.

"Well that certainly wasn't a friendly greeting"

The Walls are dark grey, lit only by small lamps fixed into them., there was a large table surrounded by chairs covered in cd's books,comics and the remnants of junk food. There was a tv set in the corner surrounded by a set of comfortable looking couches.

But what caught her eye was the many dark featureless silhouettes of people, and a few others that appearance just seem to be out of focus, all in heated debate.

There is a large desks, covered with comics, cd's, snacks and other paraphernalia unfamiliar to the doctor.

The doctor walk up to one and asks, "who are you people, what's going on here to which

If you dont know what it is then why are you here anon?

"Curiosity got the better of me.Wait, why you call me anon"

Because you are, you really must be new.

He doctor looks down at her hands and realizes she has also become a featureless silhouettes tooo Anon?..... Oh i see, anonymous. he thinks to himself.

You're anon too

Well I'm not a trip

Trip!?

Yeah, basically they are self appointed celebrities.

Some people hate em some like em, other dont care either way, they just people like you or me.

Really

yeah, anyone can be a Trip if they want to but most prefer to stay anon.

I see.

Suddenly the door burst open "Scaroth reporting in" an anon wearing a scaroth mask shouts, then just as they try to blend in to in with the crowd another pushes anon them towards the door, scarcoth deported out

Out of nowhere an anon flips over the desk, knocking everything off it.

Pulls open a door at the back at the room shouting "MIGRATE!!"

The crowd all follow the anon through the door, the voice of an anon can be heard whining "i hate it when trips start a new thread!"

The doctor follows and like before is , is greeted suddenly by "Daily Reminder, Doctor Who is Dead"

The she notices that this new rooms is literally identical to the last and wonders why the last one was even abandoned.

The Doctor momentarily observes the small community, The conversation seems to be less heated. It seemed one trip was busy creating images, while another was collecting documents from anons, Two more(one of which clung on to a picture of a victorian dressed man) and a few anons were talking,at the table.

Without warning three anons suddenly became trips,

"Alright guys, this is silly, we already have enough trips as it is"

"Yeah, this is just gonna derail discussion, I'm outta here"

The anon walks up to the door entrance and goes to open it, but it does not budge

They try again but to no avail, in embaessment at their failure they slink to the back door, and try to open it, but it will not budge either

"Uh, guys, I think the thread has been locked, and we're stuck inside"

What!? No!?,Did the op forget to back link!?

"I can't enter the discord either"

The anons and trips frantically try pulling both the front and back entrance open but their efforts are in vain .

With a pop 4 more anons suddenly become trips and , now the trips seems more in focus, you could almost make out their real faces.

With everyone becoming panicked, arguing began to break out with some of the anons blaming the trips

"Alright, calm down everyone, arguing will get us nowhere, if we work together we might be able to sort this out."

I've got an idea, you there, pointing at the trip who was earlier creating images.

If everyones so worried about their identity could you whip up some kind of disguise for everyone?

[Stories Ending Never completed I DUNNO leave me alone FUGGOFFERINO!]

A Quick Run Before School

by Rachael Riley

Author's Note : I have not watched Class, though I listened to the theme song

I was sixteen when I first enrolled in Coal Hill Academy. I was part of a student exchange program, done to “promote ties between our sister schools.”

That always struck me as weird, since as far as I’m concerned, a Catholic school in the Philippines shouldn’t *be* sister schools with a secondary modern in England.

Yet here I am, in London, because I’m the most Westernized Filipino in my school.

The first days in Coal Hill were turbulent. After all, a new country, let alone a new school, is a big change for a sixteen year old. The Academy was recently renovated that year, and I remembered a big grand opening for the first day of third years (sorry, I meant to say “sixth-formers”). It looked nothing like the Philippines’s high schools: for one thing, we didn’t have lockers, and uniforms weren’t optional.

The day that my life changed could be pinpointed around a couple of months or so into my schooling. By then I was getting into a routine. It was a Monday, and unfortunately I was running late into my physics class with Miss Quill. I made acquaintances with a few students in it: Charlie, April, and Ram, though at best I only asked them for the occasional homework help and study group.

Anyways, I was already late, so I skipped the class and hung out in the courtyard, waiting for the bell. While I was eating some well-overdue breakfast, I saw the caretaker of school trying furiously to fix up an old generator. Being the bored teenager I am, I walked towards him, wanting to look closer.

As I was about to head up to him, he suddenly looked at me, his eyebrows furrowed into a frown. “What is it?” he asked me. “Can’t you see I’m busy?”

“Uh... nothing,” I said. “Just wanted to see what you’re up to.”

“Well, there’s absolutely nothing to be worried about, just go back to your class or whatever you humans do when you’re bored” the man replied back, rather tersely, before going back to fix the generator.

“I’m just waiting for the bell, man,” I replied. I had half a mind to go, when I looked at the generator that he was fixing up.

“That doesn’t look like the generator,” I said.

“That’s because it’s not,” the caretaker said. “It’s a Carriofax engine. It’s supposed to stabilize the time rifts around this area by absorbing the excess artron energy.”

“Sounds dangerous,” I said.

“That’s because it is, now,” the caretaker said as he stood up, closing the generator cover. “Do you really want to stay here when you can, I dunno, bother some girls by hiding in the locker room?”

“Pretty much.”

“Look just go and get to your lessons, alright?”

I would’ve replied to him back, if not for the “Carriofax engine” starting to beep and blink.

“Oh no,” the caretaker said. “Oh no no no.”

“What is it?” I asked. “Is it broken or something?”

“Damn, I thought that the power of the school generator was enough.”

“What’s gonna happen now?”

“Bad stuff!”

The caretaker quickly bolted across the yard. I followed him quickly, not wanting to stay around when the thing exploded. We ran for a while until we reached the caretaker's shed. "We should be safe in here," he said.

"Safe from what?"

"A Skovox Blitzer."

"What is that?"

"Okay, imagine a robot designed to do one thing: war."

"Yeah?"

"Now imagine it times a billion and compressed into one."

"Oh," I said. "That's bad."

"Very bad. Good thing this isn't the first time a Blitzer's been in the area."

"This happened before?"

"Oh yes," he said. "A few years back, but never mind that." He walked towards a tarp and pulled it off. Underneath it was a blue box with a light on top, the words "POLICE BOX" written in large words on top. "Follow me," he said. He opened the door and went inside, before opening the door again. "Don't worry about space, there's plenty of it."

Well, when the man who knows better tells you to do something, you do it. I followed him inside.

He was right: there was plenty of space. The inside of the box was much spacier than the inside. It was blue, with three floors: the upper floor had several bookshelves and a chalkboard, the landing had a weird console, with buttons, levers, and screens, and the lower floor surrounded the landing.

“Woah it’s...”

“Yes, go on, say it.”

“Funky.”

“Huh,” he said, in a tone of surprise mixed with disappointment. “That’s new.” He turns around and goes down to the lower levels of the room, looking for something.

“Okay then, mister,” I said. “What’s the plan?”

“Well, the plan is to do the same thing I did last time.”

“Which is...?”

“Use the Carriofax engine to send it forward in time, but there’s not enough power, so I have to go with Plan B”

“So what’s your Plan B?”

“Use this,” he says, as he goes back to the ground floor, wearing some sort of backpack. “This device *should* be able to fool the Blitzter into thinking I’m its boss. I just need a few minutes to repro-”

BANG!

I turned to face the doors.

BANG!

“Is that it?” I asked the caretaker.

“Yes,” he said, device still in hand. I looked at his face: he was thinking. Meanwhile, the Blitzer thing kept ramming the doors, and I was praying to God that caretaker knew what he was doing.

“Aha, I’ve got it!” the caretaker yelled out. He started to run around the console, pushing buttons and pulling levers. The pillar in the middle started moving, and it started to make sounds.

“Hang on kid, it’s gonna get bumpy.”

Suddenly, the entire room started to shake. I quickly grabbed onto a railing, while the caretaker kept pressing buttons, and the door kept banging.

Eventually, the shaking stopped. I slowly stood up from the floor, getting my bearings right.

“What the hell just happened?” I yelled at the caretaker.

“I thought I’d just skip to the end,” he said. “Look outside.”

I walked to the doors, opening them, expecting a shed. What I saw instead was different.

“This is space,” I said. “This is *space*.”

“Yep,” the caretaker said, as if being in outer-bloody-space was no big deal. “Now, the Blitzer should have been lost in the time vortex with us, so that should buy us a few minutes worth of time.”

I closed the doors and moved slowly towards the caretaker. I eyed him suspiciously as he was using some sort of blue device on some microphone looking thing.

“Who are you?”

"I'm the caretaker," he said. "See, even have an ID," he continued, as he showed the ID in his wallet. Sure enough, it said so right there: John Smith, Caretaker.

"No, you are NOT a caretaker," I said. "A caretaker does not have blue box that's bigger on the inside."

"FINALLY he says it," he said in a delighted tone. "Took you longer than others but fair point, you're handling this pretty well."

"I am not handling this pretty well!" I said. "I wanna know who you are, please."

He stops working on the microphone. "I'm the Doctor."

"Doctor... who?"

"And here we go again," he says, going back to work, using his blue device on a keypad. "You're on a roll, kid. Keep it up."

DING!

"There we go," he says, putting the backpack back on. "Let's go back home, shall we?"

I nod. I grab the console to brace myself.

The shaking finally stopped, and I let go of the console. The both of us go outside, back in the caretaker's shed in Coal Hill.

"What do we do now, Doctor?"

"Easy," he says. "We wait for our robot, and if my calculations are correct, he'll be here in three, two..."

Right on cue, a vortex of light opens. A silhouette appears in the light, slowly taking the form of the Blitzer robot that the Doctor said. The robot's top half looked like some alien from a video game, only golden, and with red eyes, and its lower half looked like a bumper car. Its right arm had a sharp blade, and its left hand was replaced with a large cannon. The thing moved slowly towards us.

TaRgEtInG TaRgEtInG

“Ah, it's one of those newer models. Stand behind me.”

TaRgEt aCqUiReD

I nodded, standing behind him, watching the next step of his master plan. Just in case, I grabbed a nearby wrench if things went south.

“Stop! Skovox Blitzer!” the Doctor yelled. “Superior Skovox artificer, analyze stop!”

The robot didn't stop. In fact, if anything, it moved a wee bit faster.

“Well, that didn't work.”

“What do we do now?”

“Run.”

The moment he said “run”, the robot blasted a ball of fire at us. We dodged out of the way. It continued to fire at us, and we dodged and weaved in the shed, desperately trying to reach the exit.

“You said it would be able to fool it!”

“It *should*, but it's a newer model! I'm going to need to recalibrate!”

“Leche!”

I ran towards the robot, dodging the fire blasts. I readied my wrench and...

THWACK!

AlErT AlErT MaJoR HaRdWaRe mAlFuNcTiOn dEtEcTeD

cUrReNt sOfTwArE CaNnOt rUn oN HaRdWaRe

ReVeRtInG To cOmPaTiBlE SoFtWaRe

“Or we can just whack the Blitzler in the head, that works too,” the Doctor said. Once more the Doctor said the codes in the microphone. “Superior Skovox artificer, analyze stop!”

This time, the robot stopped.

SuPeRiOr rEcOgNiSeD. pAtTeRn oNe oNe oH, oRdErS OrDeRs.

“Initiate input. Commence shutdown protocol. No conflict. Conclusion?” the Doctor continued as he typed out some numbers on a keypad.

PrObLeM SoLuTiOn.

“Confirm stop, override final input code.”

CoDe aCcEpTeD. OrDeRs aCcEpTeD. sToP StOp sToP.

The robot powered down. The Doctor and I breathed heavily, exhausted from the whole ordeal. I walked up to the robot and kicked it.

“What’d you do that for?” the Doctor said. “It’s not like it’s gonna kill you.”

“I don’t care,” I said. “So, what happens now?”

“What happens now,” he explains as he pushes the robot into the box, “is that that I leave him in space. Maybe right next to the other Skovox Blitzers.”

“No, I mean,” I begin to say, “the other time rifts. I’ve seen a lot of sci-fi, and I know that others are just waiting.”

“Well, about that,” he said. “I’d say you shouldn’t worry.”

“I shouldn’t worry?”

“Yeah, I’ve got a team nearby. They’re keeping this place safe.”

“If... if you say so.”

“Hey, trust me,” he said. “I’m a Doctor.”

I nod. I’m way out of my depth, anyway. “So,” I ask. “What is that? as I gestured to the box.

“Oh this?” he says, pointing to the ship. “It’s my ship, the TARDIS.”

“Pretty neat ship,” he says, rather proud of it. “Want a go? It’s always ready for an adventure.”

“Oh no,” I said. “I think one’s enough. Besides, I’ve got class to get to.”

“Well,” he says, somewhat sad that I didn’t want to go. “Alright, I’ll leave you to it. I’d appreciate it if you... don’t tell anyone about the Skovox Blitzers.”

“No worries, Doc.”

“That’s good. Well, I’m off,” he says. “Take care.”

“I’ll uh, see you around,” I say back. He closes the doors of his TARDIS. As soon as he did it, the sounds that I heard in the ship started again, and it slowly faded in and out, until finally it disappeared.

I walk out of the caretaker’s shed, the bell ringing, and my legs still shaking from all the excitement. As I walk out, I see Charlie, Ram, and April talking to Miss Quill, and I wonder to myself: *should I tell them about the Doctor?*

“Nah,” I say to myself. “They wouldn’t believe me anyway.”

END

The Skateboarder

by Gallifrey_Immigrant

An adventure with a skateboarding Doctor and his human companion

Maria peeked out from the terrace. Perched on the side was her old friend, the Doctor. His blue skateboard, covered with a “PULL OPEN HERE” graffiti in English, lay on the floor. He stared out at the city below, his eyes wandering among the stars.

“Hello, Doctor. Why do you come here so late?” said Maria. She wrapped her arms around him, and looked below, at the giant walking hulks of men with their guns. They were a new gang, who prayed to technology, and wore giant silver body-mods to prove it. The neighbors had called them the Cyber-men, and people were slowly being converted to their way of life. Maria's family had nearly been pressed into their gang, before that weird boy (it was a boy, right?) came around, and somehow hid them.

“I don't sleep. Not like the rest of you people do. Night and day are barely something I comprehend,” said the Doctor. His elfin features transformed into a grin, sending Maria's heart beating. She leaned over, and kissed him. The Doctor never quite seemed comfortable with kissing, but he relented under her face, wrapping his arms around her. He tasted odd, yet wonderful all the same.

Maria let him go, and peered deeply into the boy's eyes. She remembered when she first met him, while late at night. Her friend had ditched her at a party, and she had been walking all alone. In the darkness, the streets of New York, to a new Mexican immigrant, had seemed terrifying. And then she had seen the Cyber-Men.

“Hello. Don't you want to be like us?” said a young girl. Her voice came out scratchy, as her voice box had been replaced by vocal modulator. Dried blood had crusted around the edges of the implantation.

“Stay a-away,” Maria had said. As she backed up, two other Cyber-Men grabbed her.

“We will make you better,” said one of the other ones. He was an old man, his legs replaced with a shiny metal exterior.

“Highly doubtful. How much did you pay for that bad cut-and-paste job?” said a voice in the shadows. At first Maria had thought it was a girl, but she realized it was just an androgynous boy. His eyes were slender, but trustworthy. His clothes looked like he had stolen it from one of the local gang members, but his voice was of a refined British gentleman, contrasting with his Chinese ethnicity. His skateboard was in his right hand, looking far too big for him.

“How much do you pay for progress?” said the girl Cyber-men. Her smile gleamed, as the metal spikes that had replaced her teeth rattled.

“Funny, you're so progressive, but you're still skulking around the poorer neighborhoods. I'd almost say you were preying on them,” said the boy. He turned to Maria, and gave a smile. “I'm the Doctor, by the way.”

The Cyber-men charged him. Maria closed her eyes, not wanting to see what happened next. Then she heard a loud whine, and the Cyber-men were screaming out curses. She opened her eyes, and saw the Doctor's cellphone in his hand, the Cyber-men on the floor. He ran to her, and grabbed her hand.

“How did you--”

“I'll explain later. Let's go!”

The Doctor would later tell her that he used an ultrasonic frequency emitter app to disorient the Cyber-men. He was always doing that—coming up with clever ways to defeat bad people. That's what made her fall in love. She wasn't sure if the Doctor loved her back, though.

His gaze followed the metal-studded gang members underneath. Dark thoughts were stirring in his head, but he wouldn't let them out.

“You still worry about the Cyber-men?” asked Maria.

“They evolve, Maria. They always do,” said the Doctor.

“Who, Cyber-men?”

“Evil. Monsters,” he said, walking away from the terrace. Maria grabbed his skateboard, and stuffed it in the closet.

“Where do you come from?” asked Maria.

“Very far, I think,” said the Doctor.

“I looked your picture up on Google. Says you're from Ireland,” said Maria. The Doctor froze, and turned around, a frown filling his face.

“Suppose I am. Would it matter?”

“You're not like any Irish people I've ever seen.”

“That just means you need to get out more. But honestly, I'm not sure where exactly I'm from,” said

the Doctor, looking up at the ceiling. He traced a figure-eight with his finger.

“Really? Like Jason Bourne?”

“Who?”

“Never mind. Listen, um, I'm planning on going over to my friend's over the summer. Really nice place, because her uncle's low-key rich, so I was wondering, if you want to come over...I mean, I know you're busy,” said Maria. Her stomach had butterflies, but she tried to act cool.

The Doctor laughed. Maria grew red.

“Of course I'll come along. Oh, humans. Cyber-men are outside your house, and you're worried about me.”

Maria grinned inside, but tried not to let it show. “‘Oh, humans?’ Aren't you a human boy?”

“Would it matter if I wasn't?”

Maria thought. “No.”

The Doctor smiled, and embraced Maria. His face moved closer to hers, and Maria could feel her heart start beating, when suddenly she heard a shout. Rushing to the terrace, she saw a girl being dragged away by a group of Cyber-men. These ones looked different—more advanced, and even less human. They were getting to be more man than machine.

In a flash, the Doctor had grabbed his skateboard from the closet, and ran out the window. Maria chased after him.

Cursing herself for not bringing her sneakers, she prepared for the other part of her relationship with the Doctor: the “saving the neighborhood” part. Romance would have to wait.

The Soul Bug Part 3: BITTER PILL

By: catharticspurious @ The Outsideists

XV. Blue Box Malfunction (6)

“I can’t even pretend to be surprised,” the Doctor snarls. “Twitter. Why is it always *Twitter*? What did I do, at some point in the past thousand years, that cursed me to be forever plagued by *Twitter*, of all things?”

Locke, who looks as though he too has been plagued by Twitter in his life, suggests, “They’ll be redundant if we get the Blue Box finished. If that’s any consolation.”

Serene does her best to remain patient. “It’s not Twitter that’s the problem; it’s a leak within our own staff.”

“The *problem*,” the Doctor fires back, “is now the whole Internet is rife with pudding-brained speculation about this virus - and we still don’t even know where it originated. I mean, would you look at this —”

He scrolls down on one of the wall-screens. “According to @NeoMyth33... ‘This is the final proof, the final proof that brain-nets are a tool of the Illuminati’,” he reads. “‘When even our minds are vulnerable, nothing will be left to stop the enslavement of the West.’ Or how about this one from @ProudMomSuzy - ‘As if this supposed foreign virus is anything but a directive from the Euro overlords to—‘ what?’ He stops. “To... ‘frtn us n2 sbmssn’. That’s barely even comprehensible.”

Locke reclines in his chair. “They’re right that it could be used to wage war on humanity, though. And that it’s in the best interests of many, many people to manipulate or shut this down.”

“This is bad, guys,” mutters Gunther, pacing around the edges of the room. “It’s going to be enough of a slog getting people to adopt this, *without* ugly rumours flying round. What if this seriously dents the Box’s reputation?”

“You can worry about your reputation,” the Doctor growls, “when you have a product that’s safe to release. I don’t want some government meddlers suddenly sticking their fingers in on this just because the lay public are panicking.”

Still the only one who can quite sit still, Serene waits for several further scans to finish running on the table desktop. “It might be worth doing a total rotation of staff. Maybe we should have done it after the incidents - with the atmosphere on this ship, it was inevitable someone would crack. That’s not to say I won’t relish kicking out whichever asshole started leaking.”

“Information escapes. That’s what it does. It’s like a fart, it can’t be contained.” Springing out of his seat, the Doctor starts off back towards the lounge in a huff. “We have to be faster. We have to fix this, and give them something else to tweet about.”

“What are you going to do?”

He stops at the door and looks back towards Serene. “Nord. Nord Ganschlebe. There’s something off about him, and we haven’t figured it out yet.” With no further explanation, he marches off down the corridor.

-

The Doctor’s fixated on a key difference he’s noticed between Nord and the other three test subjects.

After the results about the virus came through, he set out to find Rand, Danis and Alexandria, intent on striking up a conversational rapport with each (to be used for information later). It didn’t prove difficult, as he’d already won some part of their trust by rescuing them all from each other. Most of the details from their conversations have been filed as irrelevant already, but there’s a connection between them all that’s weighing on him - all of them accepted that the monsters were illusions.

So why not Nord?

There has to be, the Doctor figures, something different about how Nord’s mind is working. And if he can identify that, it might shed light on why the virus spread from him specifically. But nobody seems to have any ideas. As far as anyone can tell, he’s a perfectly ordinary, unremarkable bloke.

He starts his second inquest with Alexandria. She’s the only one in the lounge; the three of them have been advised to stay in separate rooms from each other and generally have minimal human contact until the virus has been excised.

“I hope they don’t seriously expect me to stay cooped up in my room,” she says as the Doctor approaches, sitting with one leg over the other on the dark blue sofa. “I don’t see why any of us deserve to lose agency for something that’s not our fault.”

“Absolutely,” concurs the Doctor, “but don’t act surprised if my head suddenly grows tentacles. I have something else I need to ask you, Alexandria. It’s important.”

“Is it about the hallucinations?”

“No - it’s about Nord.”

Alexandria visibly tenses up at the thought of her erstwhile acquaintance, under containment for a brutal beating. “Go on.”

“You spent long enough with him in this testing environment. I get the impression he wasn’t that memorable a person.”

“Well, I certainly wouldn’t have thought so, but looking at what he did to Zarren...that’s gotta be unhinged somehow.”

“I need you to tell me - in as much detail as you can manage - if, at any point while you knew him, you noticed anything that was off? Anything that seemed strange or odd about him?”

She seems caught unawares by the question. “Off? Uh...” She exhales through her nose. “It’s kinda hard to see any of the others as ‘odd’ or ‘weird’. When you thought-chat with someone, they just seem *normal*. You know?”

“No, I don’t know, I don’t have a Blue Box.” The words feel silly coming out of his mouth.

“It’s because you see how they see. You don’t get that friction of weirdness if they think differently to you. That’s why this technology is so important for society, we need it to overcome all kinds of unconscious biases—“

“That’s brilliant, but I really need you to focus.”

“Wait!” Her eyes have lit up. “There is one thing. It was right near the start, and, funnily enough, it was actually verbal...”

“Verbal as in, regular mouth-talk?”

“Yeah. We were all just starting out getting to know each other. And somehow, because my conversations always do, the conversation got onto machine ownership.”

“You had political differences?”

“Well, not really, that’s the thing. I was ranting about how communities need to own the means of automation and so on, and he was just nodding and hmm-ing and looking very attentive. It was like he didn’t have an opinion and just wanted someone else to fill it in for him. But that’s not what struck me as strange.”

“Please, enlighten me.”

“It was right when I was getting to the matter of expropriating the farming blocks from the corporations. He gave me this look that was kind of...confused, and he said - what were his exact words? - he asked me a question, completely straight-faced, no irony or sarcasm at all. He was like...’does that involve executing the CEOs?’”

The Doctor looks up sharply. “He said what?”

“I know, right? I think he realised it was a weird question after he said it. Like, okay, I enjoy memes about hanging the bourgeoisie as much as the next girl, but what made him think ritual slaughter is actually part of the process?”

“What indeed.” Furious mental notes are being scribbled in the Time Lord’s internal scratchpad.

“It was as if he’d let something slip, and the rest of the time he was keeping it together.”

“So that’s it? No other blips in his facade?”

She shrugs. “Doctor, are you going to be able to sort this out? I’m getting nervous. I *need* the rest of the world to experience what we’re experiencing right now - otherwise, the amount of human progress we could lose—“

“I’m fully aware of what’s at stake. Possibly more so than I was before. Thank you.” As he hurries off, he adds, “Do me a favour and fight the oxygen rations.”

“What?”

-

Danis Tailor responds, after a delay of about fifteen seconds, to a businesslike rapping on her door. The white panel slides open, and she stands there swaddled in what looks like a gigantic furry duvet (but seems to be

a contemporary type of robe). “Oh, hey, Doctor.”

“Hello, Danis. How’s being an influencer going?”

“It’s going pretty *whatever*,” she sighs, beckoning him in. “Obviously the NDA means I can’t post that much to the Instacloud. I’m just stuck sharing brand logos.”

The Doctor inwardly grimaces, not entirely sure how to deal with this much *youthiness* in one helping. God, at times like this it’s almost enough to make him wish he was his previous self. “I need to ask you something about Nord.”

“Uh-huh.” Danis looks faintly disdainful at the idea. She bounces down onto the bed, in a sitting position.

“I’m trying to follow some leads about how he might be connected to what’s happened today, and I’d be very grateful if—“

“You want me to tell you if I saw anything suspicious?” She folds her legs into a lotus position. “I’ll be upfront with you, Doctor. Nord wanted me.”

“For what?”

Neither of them say anything. The Doctor is uncomprehending for roughly another second, then smacks his forehead. “Oh.”

Danis rattles her head a tiny bit, as if shaking away the possible affront. “It was pretty obvious, especially once we started thought-chatting. You know, that’s gonna make dating virtually *impossible*. It’s not that you can’t lie, but...your whole way of thinking is basically exposed.”

“So, what, then? Were you, I mean, did you have some sort of, intimate, conversation...” The words trail off, too tiresome to be worth further effort.

“I guess? I wasn’t totally uninterested or anything, but it wasn’t priority A, you know?”

“Well, unfortunately for our conversation, it looks like he might be the key to all this.” The Doctor sinks down onto his haunches. “Did he ever seem like he was hiding something? Some aspect of himself?”

“Not that, per se. But you know how totally normal people just snap sometimes?”

“You mean like all of you nearly did earlier?”

“I mean when they go really *wild*, and go after someone, like Nord did to Zarren. Nord was the kind of normal person who that might happen to.”

“Why?”

“You know I said how the Blue Boxes show up your way of thinking? Like, sensations, connections - your soul has a whole language all its own, and that’s what you’re sharing. Mine’s probably like being at a rave.”

“Is this going somewhere?”

“Nord’s - especially when he opened up to me - felt a bit like...nursing a wound.”

That strikes a chord. The Doctor makes eye contact with Danis, not interrupting but searching for meaning.

She continues. “He never let on that anything bad had happened to him. The supervisors didn’t bring anything like that up with us. But it...*felt* like he’d just gone through some trauma, and this big ball of horrible

garbage, or maybe just some big hole, was sitting somewhere in his head. That's all I can really say."

Theories, possibilities, and potential conclusions are slowly weaving themselves together in the Doctor's mind. But he wants to be as certain as possible.

"You've been a great help, Danis."

"Uh, Doctor?" she calls after him before he can leave. "I wanted to say sorry about earlier. I'm still pretty freaked out, but hey, this is basically an experiment...I dunno what I expected."

"I assure you," he assures her, "I've faced far deadlier sets of kitchen weaponry than yours. You don't want to know what I've seen an egg whisk do to a human being."

"Do you know when things'll be back to normal?"

"If I'm right," he answers, "very, very soon."

-

Several seconds pass of the Doctor and Rand just pressing buttons furiously, then the conversation picks back up.

"First few weeks, Nord was like a robot," mumbles Rand.

"As in, emotionless?" asks the Doctor, not needing to concentrate as hard as his human opponent.

"Eh. Seemed like a forever-alone type."

"So, socially anxious?"

"Almost. More like, he wouldn't open up."

The Doctor's character casually tosses Rand's character into the air. "I assume that's literally - through the medium of thought-speak."

"Yup."

A few more seconds of quiet clicking transpire. Rand narrowly parries out of a vicious combo from the Doctor.

"What was he doing instead?"

"IMO," begins Rand, successfully activating a special move (an enormous laser), "he was probably doing the samples."

"Samples of what?"

"Recordings. They saved stuff from non-users. Interviewees. Wait, did you just—"

"Yes."

"That was *clutch*."

"I'm very dextrous."

The contest is growing so intense that Rand momentarily forgets the conversation. "Oh, right. They have a database full of thought recordings. Like hundreds. All different people. I think he was doing those."

"Absorbing them."

"Uh-huh."

“But he started chatting with you all eventually?”

“That’s right. In fact—wait—wait—no—awww!”

“Good game.”

“Dude, you just two-stocked me.”

“I’m sure that means something very profound, but we were talking about Nord?”

Rand lets the controller fall by the wayside. “There was one time. One of the basic tests they got us to do, like a month in. We just had to pick a memory and exchange it with someone else in the group. Not, like, a traumatic one or anything. It was super simple.”

The Doctor tosses his controller onto Rand’s bed. “So what went wrong?”

“Hey, man, nothing went *wrong*. But it was weird. I got matched with Nord, and he sent me over some really generic thing, like, when he first took a flight car as a kid, right?”

“Yes, yes, and what was weird about it?”

“Nothing. Can you be patient for like 2 seconds? The weird part was after. I sent *him* one, from when I was at the speedrun convention two years ago. And it seemed like it was all good, all systems go. But then...” Rand shifts on the spot, uncertain of how to phrase what he has to say. “I’m 99% sure he started crying.”

The Doctor’s eyebrows drive down like accelerator pedals for his brain. “Crying.”

“I mean, like, he got all teary, and he wouldn’t look at me. And then a bit later he was holed up in his room and really quietly sobbing. I was freaked out, man! I thought I’d screwed it up.”

“And you’re sure,” the Doctor presses, getting to his feet, “absolutely one-hundred-percent sure that there wasn’t any element in that memory - or at this, speed run thing - that might have set him off?”

“I, uh...” Rand rests his head in his palm. “Dunno, I guess I felt kind of nervous in that memory...not even about running the game, more ‘cause I hadn’t presented as a guy in front of that many people before, but it was fine. I wasn’t having a *breakdown*.”

The Doctor’s eyes widen. He snaps his fingers, instantly regrets it, then points at Rand. “I know what you missed.”

“Wha—?”

“It wasn’t a traumatic memory *for you*,” he declares, growing more and more triumphant, “because for you it was just an extension of your everyday experience. But for someone else - no, maybe for Nord specifically...” An excited grin, a crevice of gleaming teeth, cracks open across his face. “Even just experiencing a fraction of that - it might have proved quite a painful revelation.”

“Wait - are you saying what I think you’re...”

“Empathy! It’s the bitterest pill of all when you—” The Doctor cuts off mid-sentence. He freezes. Memories, images coalesce in his mind’s eyes.

He remembers the moon. He remembers the Bugs. He remembers what he saw when he flew up. He remembers Nord’s description of the monster. And suddenly, everything that’s been happening here starts to make a sinister new kind of sense. “Not good.”

Rand looks nervous again now. “What’s not good?”

“Don’t you worry your squidgy human head about it.” It’s time, the Doctor decides as he straightens up,

to end this. He gestures to the game on the screen. “Work on getting good at that. I have to go and see Nord one last time.”

XVI. The Day of the Umbrella Men (4)

It was the same day.

One of the only pieces of video footage captured of the umbrella man and the metal man was from the smartphone of Jemma Hodge, an 18-year-old African-American homeless woman in the state of Idaho.

The first fifteen seconds of the video consist of a shot of Hodge’s face, as she begins talking to camera about the newest developments in her situation (having secured a low-paying job at the women’s centre on her campus).

A muffled voice can be heard, which is speculated to be that of the umbrella man, and at this point the video feed abruptly goes dark as, without any prompting, Hodge places the phone in her bag - seemingly without remembering to stop or pause the video.

Several minutes pass of a darkened screen, with unintelligible, muffled audio.

When Hodge eventually lifts the phone out, still recording, the camera is trained on her face for a few more seconds, showing her with a confused and dreamlike expression.

This is the point at which speech from the umbrella man becomes audible and intelligible. A moment later, Hodge, apparently distracted from what she was doing previously, rotates the phone to point the camera at the two strangers.

Not facing Hodge, approximately ten feet away, they look out onto a main street bustling with civilians and activity.

The recorded speech is transcribed below.

“...no point in measuring how long we’ve spent on this. For me, it’ll scarcely be a blip - I count my life in stories, not years. For you, it’d only be additional torment.”

“I didn’t feel anything.”

“For her plight? A child, cast out by her own parents?”

“They’re all blurring together.”

“I was wondering, actually, if you still remember what *you* did. I know the Neurolock remembers everything; I’m asking about the part of you that’s still flesh.”

“You mean, before you started this *trip*?”

“Yes. The thing I arrived moments too late to prevent.”

A few seconds pass without any reply.

“...I do.”

“Do you understand why it happened?”

“The Neurolock deemed it logical.”

“Everything *you* were, it was. Like you, it wanted to erase deviant elements. Not unlike Jemma’s parents, in fact. That’s why it’s necessary for us to do this. It has to grow to encompass all human life - or it’ll be a *threat* to all human life..”

“And me?”

“My condolences. But whatever happens to you in the process...you wove this fate for yourself when you unleashed this machine.”

“I don’t think I can feel things the way I used to.”

“Cyberman technology will do that.”

The two men walk out of frame, and the video ends.

XVII. Blue Box Malfunction (7)

Nord Ganschlebe is staring directly up at the ceiling, and may quite possibly have been this way for several hours. Restless under his restraints, he's been desperate for sleep to come and wash away the agonised minutes, but it's proving impossible. Spectres haunt him; the horrifying memory of the monster, that knowledge that it might still be on board, the moment the alarm went off for a second time...unanswered questions writhe in his soul and refuse to settle.

The Doctor returns to the white room carefully, taking slow, grim steps, as he calculates the best way to go about this. Nord's panicked eyes lock onto him as he passes through the doorway, wordlessly.

"Have you thrown it out yet?" demands Nord, straining up in his bed. "What's happened? Have there been developments? I heard the alarm go off - was there another attack? Can you all see it now?"

"Hush for a moment." There's a small space on the mattress beside Nord's body, wide enough for the Time Lord to seat himself in and look at the wall. "Rand, Danis and Alexandria did all start seeing monsters. But they understand that it's only an illusion."

"What?" Nord starts shaking his head in disbelief. "You - you brainwashed them or something? They're denying their own vision?"

The Doctor locks eyes with him. "Nord, why do you think this *vision* chose you? What do you think made you special?"

"I - what makes you think—"

"You were first. By a significant margin."

Nord sniffs. "I don't know. It could be anything."

"I've been talking to the others," continues the Doctor, "and I've been thinking. The power of the Blue Box exposes its user to a great many things. Other people's experiences, emotions, ways of thinking. The sum total of recorded history, human knowledge and philosophy, laid out for instant consumption. And I think some people would take to that very well. But perhaps not everyone. It could be a scarring experience."

"Scarring?" Nord, fatigued with the effort of resisting his bondage, sinks back into the bed. "I don't know what you mean. It's been amazing."

"But it was challenging at first, wasn't it?"

"...Of course it was. Any big change is a challenge."

The old man's nodding gently. "Learning so much so quickly, it can feel like your illusions are breaking down. An attack of cognitive dissonance that causes real mental chaos. I'm only speculating, but I suppose - in some cases - it could even feel like you'd lost your identity."

Nord is silent.

“But only if,” and now the Doctor turns back to the wall, “your identity was based on the *denial* of those things you’d just learnt about. The interconnectedness of life, time, and space. The arbitrariness of divisions and the transience of rules. Most importantly, other people’s humanity.

“Now, if that was the kind of identity someone had, I can see why they’d want to be selected for a test like this - when you believe very strongly that you’re right, and that you’re rational, technology feels like a chance to affirm that. I’ve seen it all before, and its terrible consequences, believe me.

“I can also see why, if that was someone’s situation, they’d want to keep those leanings a secret. Especially in these gradually, incrementally enlightened days.” The Doctor listens. Both Nord’s heartbeat and his breathing are next to inaudible

He turns, slowly, back to look at Nord. The human’s face is a mask of blankness, frozen without readable emotion.

“Nord, I think this vision chose you for a reason. If I’m right, then we can save humanity from the monster. Because it’ll mean we understand it. But I can’t know for sure...unless you tell me yourself.”

Nord doesn’t, physically can’t, maintain the eye contact. His mouth hangs open a fraction, waiting for words to spill out from a dried-up well.

The old eyes on the Doctor’s face soften a tiny amount, because they have to. “The past is the past. Who we were back then isn’t who we are now. I can ensure, Nord, that no more than maybe three people in the whole world will ever know.

“But I *need* you to tell me. Am I right?”

A gap in time stretches out like a canyon. On the far side, distant and small, the Doctor beckons Nord forth. To cross is to take the leap of truth; to arrive on solid ground, or to fall, and fall forever, until nothingness. To not cross is to freeze, and stay imprisoned in a single moment - backed up against the moving wall of the present, imagining it halting its onward rush, and spending an eternity lost in denial.

Perhaps the fall, the possibility of falling, is what’s needed. What’s deserved.

“Before I came here. For ten years before.” Try as he might, Nord cannot prevent his body from shaking. “I was a—diehard—White Protectivist...traditionalist...machismo...anti-queer, anti-woman, anti-poor, anti-rights, anti-whatever you want.” He clenches his fists so hard he wonders if his nails will break skin. “Never joined any clubs. Never went to any rallies. Never bought any of the merchandise. I kept it deep - deep inside.”

The Doctor nods. “But the Blue Box...”

“It was a few days after the test started.” The more he tells, the more he wants to tell, the more it needs to be told. “I said to myself, you have to go for it. Face the music. You have everything, so explore everything. Even the...minds of the people I hated.

“And I ended up staying in my room for hours and hours at a time. Could barely leave to go get food. Because every time I looked, all I saw was—the things I believed, turning into myths. People I hated, turning into human beings. I couldn’t handle it. I didn’t want to handle it. I told myself it was fake, it was wrong, I was caught in a big conspiracy, I was being fed propaganda. But that was when I noticed.

“Every time it seemed like I was wrong...it was never that I wasn’t looking at something true. It was that

I was only looking at *part* of the truth. Every single time. Whether it was people - history - events - reality. Every part of me was so limited. The part I could see was so small. I was so small. It was the worst experience of my entire life.”

The Doctor rests his chin in his hands. “And you felt empty.”

“Completely.” Just admitting these things feels like ripping off shackles.

“When you did eventually thought-link with your friends out there,” suggests the Doctor, eager to fit all the pieces together, “it was almost too much, wasn’t it?”

This time it’s Nord who nods sadly. “Rand. God...I would have hated him. To death. I would have been so disgusted. But - but even one second. Just a memory. And I understood. It hurt so much. One second of that life—”

“You couldn’t process the pain?”

“No,” Nord gasps. “I couldn’t process the *beauty*.”

That admission crystallises in his mind the moment it bursts onto his tongue, and a whole cracked universe of desperate thoughts crystallises around it in the same instant; a revelation so total that its majesty destroys any defense he may have had left and reduces him to choking, guttural sobs that leave his throat long before his brain catches up to them.

Patient, yet always active, always recalculating, the Doctor waits.

After thirty seconds or so, it seems to have settled down.

“The human brain isn’t built for this,” muses the Doctor, and it sounds to Nord like it’s from somebody who doesn’t own one himself but pities those who do. “It isn’t prepared for such an abrupt, total deconversion. The rug was pulled on your psyche - and the furniture went flying.”

Nord’s just about able to take regular breaths again now. “I felt like I was nothing. All my old thoughts and memories. They were so horrible.” He has to stop. He gazes up at the ceiling. “They’re still so horrible.” His eyes start to sting again. “I don’t know how I can even be alive.”

That seems to set something off inside the Doctor, who’s suddenly animated. “That’s just it. Neither did your brain. There was a vacuum in your consciousness, and it desperately needed to be filled.”

“What do you mean?”

“Fearing the Other. Fearing the beyond.” It’s exciting enough to lift the Doctor up off of the bed and onto his feet, gesticulating. “Over ten years, you trained your mind in those arts, to perfection. And the target for those fears was nothing less than *other people*. But then!” He imitates snatching something from midair. “The Blue Box took that target away, in one fell swoop. The fear instinct was still fully intact, but the only target it had left...was the blackness. The void of space. The nightmare from the vacuum. The symbol.”

The final realisation clicks into place within Nord. His voice is barely above a whisper.

“The monster.”

The Doctor, forgetting delicacy, points at Nord. “It appeared to you, and you clung to that vision by instinct, because your mind *needed* that lifeline. But the monster wasn’t finished, *oh* no. What your brain created was an *idea* - an idea that any human would be weak to. ‘Big, scary, tentacle thing coming to get me, oh no!’

And as it festered - in your Blue Box - waiting to strike, you were subconsciously spreading it to your friends every time they downloaded your thoughts. Without even realising it. The difference is that *they* were resistant. They might have caught the virus, but *they* were ready to reject it!" The thrill of the explanation seems to have almost winded him. He has to stop, blink, straighten up, and let out his breath in a cathartic sigh.

Nord, meanwhile, is utterly deflated. "So I was wrong again."

"I'm sorry." The Doctor sounds serious, but not sentimental. "Yes, you were."

The image of Zarren flashes back into Nord's mind. The memory - the panic - the blood - the screams. The hideous, non-negotiable mire of consequences, of irreversible material harm.

"Oh god. Oh god—!" The feeling is too vile to even elicit tears, or anything but a hollow retching.

"What did I do."

"You were a pawn of forces beyond your control, Nord." The old man's voice still doesn't sound tainted by generosity, but nor is it affected by bitterness. He moves towards the door. "I have only one thing to say to you. There's only one thing I *can* say."

Nord looks up, fearing judgement. But it doesn't come.

"Live. Live on, and do better. You won't be the only one. You have to be the example."

With that, he leaves. Nord sinks, first into truth's icy embrace, then into sleep.

XVIII. Bugs (6)

When he blearily fades back into consciousness, the Doctor has already decided what he has to do. The extended stay in dreamland has allowed things to reorder themselves in his thoughts, slotting into their rightful places. It's brought him more in tune with the symbolic aspects of his journey.

He's lying on something soft. He carefully opens his eyes and looks around before moving, to make sure he doesn't set off some kind of sensor - then realises it's just Cole's bedroom, and he's on the bed, back in the midst of the leering knick-knack array. "Cole?"

Cole, startled, turns away from his computer and rises from his chair where he's presumably been waiting. The Bug on his head rises into the Doctor's eyeline before his face does. "You're finally awake then?"

"A bit, yes."

"That was quite an episode you had."

"Undoubtedly. Just out of curiosity, you didn't carry me all the way back here, did you?"

"No. There was an ambulance involved, but they couldn't find anything wrong with you, so they told us to just put you somewhere comfortable."

The Doctor finally heaves himself up into sitting position. "Sorry I ruined the fun."

"It's not so bad," sighs Cole. "Honestly? I was a little grateful for the excuse to go home. It was getting way too weird for me. The big one next month'll probably be even worse."

"I doubt my antics helped."

“Actually...” Cole returns to his chair, spinning it to face his guest. “What was that you were trying to say to Rodney Mansfield? You were yelling. It really freaked everyone out.”

The Doctor fingers his collar, not wanting to go there. “Probably nothing important. I expect I just mistook him for someone else.”

“You said someone would kill him.”

Right, the Doctor thinks, *no use wasting any more time.*

“Cole, do you want to know who I am?”

“...Who—“

“Who I *really* am. You’re not stupid. You know my name isn’t John Smith. You know I don’t really live in a dumpster.”

Cole’s features take on that frightened deer quality again, but this time it’s not him who’s making the dramatic confession. “I—I guess I figured that much—“

“I can make sense of all this. It can all be explained. Do you want to hear it?” The Doctor keeps a close eye on Cole’s Bug, undulating contently.

“Of course I do.”

“Then I’d like you to sit down on the carpet, opposite me.” The Doctor slides himself off of the bed, and perches cross-legged on the floor. “There’s something I need to demonstrate.”

Not without an air of suspicion, as is the skeptic way, Cole lowers himself carefully down onto the rug, even imitating the Doctor’s sitting posture. The room is taking on a curious, ritual atmosphere from the mere action.

“Cole, I’m going to ask you to do something a bit unusual.”

“...And what’s that?”

“Hold my hand.” The Doctor offers his right hand, as if for a handshake.

Cole lets it hang there, eyeing it like something rude has just been exposed, vaguely threatened by the intimacy. But he takes a deep breath, rallies himself, and takes the hand in a businesslike manner.

The Doctor uses the physical contact to form a very, very mild telepathic link. “Now,” he gently instructs, “sit very still, and concentrate on what you can feel in your *other* hand.”

“But there’s nothing in—“

“Ssh. If you want to do this you need to trust me.”

Looking conflicted, Cole nonetheless obeys.

Keeping the link open, the Doctor raises his own free hand - slowly, precisely - and runs his palm in a soft stroke across the delicate surface of Cole’s Bug.

“Aaaaauugghh!!!”

The boy hurtles backwards, his muscles propelling himself away, shuffling along the carpet, clutching his left hand, until he hits the wall. He stares at his own empty palm in abject panic, doubting his own senses,

looking back up to the Doctor with pleading bewilderment.

“What was that?! *What was that on my hand?!*”

“Quiet down.” The Doctor is completely calm. “Don’t attract any attention, or this is over.”

“What did you do? I don’t understand. I don’t understand how you did that, was it an illusion? Were you hypnotising me somehow?”

“You just felt what I felt. I can do that.”

“But...*what* was I supposed to be feeling?”

“Didn’t I tell you there was something on your head?”

Cole stares at him, hesitant to trust, and suppressing whole universes of confusion and agitation inside his weak frame. “Do it again.”

“Okay.” The Doctor raises his right hand once more, without missing a beat, and Cole numbly grips it in his own. This time, rather than stroking the Bug, the Doctor pokes its eerie form with a finger - he feels Cole physically jolting at the sensation - then runs each of his fingers across it in turn, tracing its bulbous shape as it arcs all the way above Cole’s own head.

With every second, Cole’s horror mounts. “What is it...?” he can barely squeak.

“I’m not sure myself, but I can see them,” the Doctor declares, mystically. “I can perceive them. It’s because of my abilities.”

“What *are* you?”

The Time Lord locks eyes with Cole...while maintaining an awareness of the state of his Bug, wobbling and writhing. “I’m the Doctor. And I’m not from around here. A long time ago, I ran away from a secret society that was built to create people like me. I’ve been running and running ever since, always in different disguises. I’m older than I look.”

“Witness protection,” murmurs Cole, stupefied.

“Indeed. What I do is, I travel. I move around, solving problems - fighting evil. And right now, Cole, there’s a big, huge, ginormous evil at work, one I can’t fight on my own. It’s the reason I’m here. It’s the reason I’m talking to you, the reason I went with you to the demonstration, the reason all of this is so important.”

Almost imperceptibly, he can sense Cole holding his breath, as if anticipating the words that the Doctor is about to say.

“It’s all true.

“Everything. Cultural Marxism. White genocide. The great replacement. The Islamic takeover. Pizzagate, Spirit Cooking, the Holohoax, countless others. All of it. It’s all been real, all along. There’s a tiny elite right at the top echelon of all global institutions, and they’ve been manipulating history to serve an occult agenda for a long, long time.”

There’s some slight residue from the telepathic link, and through it, the Doctor can just about sense the earthquake rocking Cole’s psyche, sending him spinning into an abyss of the possible and the impossible, one

made into the other, the two raging in a tornado.

But of more interest to the Doctor is the effect on the Bug.

He keeps speaking.

“But it’s worse than that, Cole. That thing, on your head. The thing that you know is real, that you felt on your own skin. What do you think it is?”

Cole is gasping for breath, his heart working itself into overdrive. “Y-you said it was, a, a, a p— a parasite.”

“Going to the Free Speech gathering confirmed all my suspicions. These beings - invisible and intangible to all human senses - have been deliberately, and strategically introduced to infect the human race. And the ones responsible were the highest of all, higher than the globalists, higher than anyone. A beyond-secret uppermost circle. I’m one of maybe six people on the entire planet who know its true name.” He pauses here, allowing the question to hang in the silence. “The Eye of...Sutekh.”

“*Sutekh?*”

“These head-sucking creatures - I call them the Bugs - they’re using you all as hosts. Feeding on all your fear and suffering. Even influencing your thoughts. If I’m right, this has been happening since the Second World War, when the Eye of Sutekh originally arrived here.”

“Here? You mean li—like, on Earth?!”

“But no matter how hard you try to suppress it, the truth always escapes. That’s what it does. It’s like...some sort of gas, really.” The Doctor straightens up, and his voice softens. “Cole, you and the movement you’re part of...you represent the only hope for the future. The white race,” begins the Doctor, watching Cole’s Bug with furious intent, “is the optimal model for humanity. It’s not a coincidence that you have the most advanced civilisation...anywhere in the *universe*. It’s not a coincidence that I, with the abilities I possess, am one of you.”

Cole’s hands are floating up to his face. He clasps his own skin, as if checking to ensure it’s all still there, but also perhaps in an effort to contain his sheer - life-changing - euphoria. The joy of being offered hope, a lifeline, and a rightful place in the cosmos, flood in to fill every last corner of his awareness. He feels a welling-up beneath his eyes.

The Doctor still isn’t finished. “Cole, I trust you, and I think you have an advantageous position - you’re lower down in the movement, and you’re young. The Eye of Sutekh don’t know who you are, and they’ll never suspect you. And that’s why I need your help.

“I want to take this whole operation down from the inside. But what I need is a confidant, a sort of companion. Someone to keep me informed, someone to help me research, even just someone to talk to. And you, Cole, are my first choice. Not just for your rational mind, your curiosity...but also because, on some level - maybe psychically - I just *sense* that there’s something special about you.”

Two tracks of tears stream down from Cole’s eyes, refusing to be held back. This is a young man undergoing the epiphany of his life. The moment everything changes. The moment life takes on meaning.

“I’ve got my own form of transport.” The Doctor rises to his feet. “And I’ve got a trip I need to be going on. I could use your support. If you’re willing - if you’re ready - we can leave right this second. What do you

say?”

It barely even takes a second. “Uhh - *I need to get my coat!*” Cole races out of the room. The Doctor listens to his frantic shambling down the stairs, his breathless gasps of excitement and happiness, thudding all the way down to the front door and then all the way back up. Like a small child preparing to fly away with a mysterious man who landed in their back garden, a child tired of the real world and leaping at the opportunity to fall into a bigger, better one.

When Cole barges back into his bedroom, his arms and back hurriedly shoved into a baggy black raincoat, the Doctor is sitting patiently on the bed waiting for him.

“Before we can go, Cole, there’s just one more thing you need to know. And it’s another big one, so I suggest you sit back down.”

“Okay. Okay.” Cole takes several deep breaths, and perches on the end of his swivel chair, calming himself, telling himself he’s ready for whatever the Doctor could throw at him.

“Everything I just told you was a lie. I made it up. A fiction.”

“What?”

“You can take your coat off. We’re not going anywhere.”

“B— b—”

“—but the thing on my head. I felt that. I *felt* that.”

“Oh, yeah, you did. That part was real. Also, I *am* called the Doctor, and I *am* basically magic. And there is a horrible bug thing on your head. But the rest? Total guff. Hah!” The Doctor slaps his own knee gently. “Especially the white genocide babble. Complete nonsense, I’m afraid. It was a story - I deliberately chose one you would believe.”

Cole’s face is frozen. He shakes his head from side to side, jerkily, like a broken tin robot. “This can’t be true. You’re lying. It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Oh, yes it does, Cole.” The Doctor looks up. “Because the whole time I was telling you that story...your Bug was growing. Growing and growing, feeding on the validation, reinforcing itself, ballooning up and up into a...behemoth, five feet wide! I told you that you were the future. That you’d been right all along. That you had a great purpose. And you absorbed all that...into your own personal narrative. It was an experiment, and this - right now - is the culmination.”

The betrayal in Cole’s eyes could crack open the Sun. He’s wordless.

“Because right now, quite literally in front of my eyes, you know what I’m seeing? I’m watching your

Bug - *shrink*.”

It’s true, albeit an understatement.

Cole’s Bug is undergoing some kind of catastrophic collapse. It’s cracking all over, its skin rupturing in great craters and canyons with countless grimy layers; from the splits come a bleeding, clear mucous, ebbing forth, the Bug’s volume sapping away through the fissures; it thrashes, side to side, its insides rearranging themselves, being crushed, imploding - it lessens, it diminishes, it *shrinks*.

“I built up your sense of self. And now I’m knocking it back down.”

The tears have dried up. Cole’s eyeline seems to be fixed on something, some random item in the room, anything to avoid moving or making this real. But through his lost, thousand-yard stare, his trembling lips manage to eke out five words.

“How could you do this?”

“Cole.” The Doctor leans forward, resting his hands on his knees, and looks Cole dead in the eye. “*Grow up*. Frankly, you needed a reality check, and a painful one - but there are more important things at stake, regardless. ‘Cause now I know what these creatures really are...and I think, just maybe, that means I also know where I really am. Ow!’”

He’s shocked. There’s a sharp, small, searing pain, somewhere near his hearts. He realises it’s coming from his left inside pocket, and instantly he knows what it must be. Reaching deep in for the source of the heat, he fishes it out - the TARDIS key, glowing, blazing hot, signalling to him.

It’s finally time for him to come home.

A beaming grin spreads across his features like none he’s experienced since he was marooned here. “Oh, yes, yes. I did it, old girl. I didn’t let you down. And I’m on my way!”

Just like that, he sprints out of Cole’s bedroom, down the stairs, and out of the house.

Without another word.

It’s a moment before Cole realises that he’s running. His body moves without being instructed. It’s pre-rational. There’s no possible resolution, no answer, no satisfaction that can come from catching up to the Doctor.

Only continuation. Only the lack of an ending. Only the possibility of something *other* than the pathetic, empty, hollow fate he’s been left to bear.

The sun beats down.

The street stretches on out forever.

The Doctor, the shaggy, dirty, flop-haired, ungroomed, strangely dressed homeless lunatic, is a tiny streak of darkness racing away towards the horizon.

Cole pushes his body further than it’s prepared to go. Blood thunders in his ears. His arms and legs pump wildly, greedily running off of their own momentum, stretching the miserable muscles all over his body far beyond their capacity.

His lungs scream, barely able to Hoover up enough air to keep him conscious.

The Doctor is still in his line of vision, not seeming to have registered that Cole is giving chase. Content to merely abandon Cole and his entire world.

Cole can't call out. He can't even think.

But he can't let go.

He can't let go of what he was able to feel, in that brief moment of deception.

Who could?

Who could ever?

The Doctor takes a hard left into a side street.

Cole's inertia sends him staggering round the corner, a wreck, moments from toppling.

Something blue is down there, in front of them both. It's a brilliant, deep blue.

The Doctor runs directly at it. Something glowing and golden is in his hand. It's the light. He's taking away the light.

Cole forgets his own body. He becomes just a tiny point of consciousness, peering out of a flesh shell that might as well be metal for all he can feel it; a shell that cannibalises its last burst of energy in a final sprint of animal desperation.

The Doctor reaches the blue shape.

He opens it.

In the one, split second that the blue box is opened, Cole glimpses within it a hole in the world. A world within the world. A bright, kaleidoscopic vision within this mundane suburban landscape. A dislocation of space and time, bright and glowing. A portal to elsewhere, a secret passageway cracked open that leads to the true hidden alleys of reality. For that barest of instants, it's open, Cole can see it, and Cole needs it more than he has ever needed anything in his life.

In another split second, it's gone.

Cole lies on the concrete, exhausted.

A groaning, wheezing sound accompanies a breeze. The noise lulls him into unconsciousness, softly singing.

Or perhaps it's laughing.

XIX. The Day of the Umbrella Men (5)

But among all the accounts and documents of that day, one event has perhaps risen to the top of popular speculation, academic analysis, and international controversy.

Sometimes referred to as the “Grace Discussion”, the event was only recorded in any form due to a camera that was left running (similarly to Jemma Hodge’s smartphone). The context of the camera, however, is of particular interest.

The opening minutes of the video, which leaked approximately half a year after the Day through unknown means, consist of the intended opening to a hostage execution film. The precise location has proven impossible to identify, but it is generally assumed to have been recorded somewhere within the very limited territory still controlled by the early-21c militant group Da’esh at the time.

The point at which the video diverges from its initial course is at roughly the five-minute mark when, from somewhere off-camera, a breeze begins to blow into the room, stirring small pieces of debris and the clothes of the people on camera. Nothing in the video indicates that the room contains any windows or open passages, but it is speculated there could have been one outside the camera’s field of view.

The breeze is accompanied by a sound, which audio engineers have been unable to identify as belonging to any known animal or machine. Common adjectives listeners use to describe the sound include groaning, grinding, wheezing, breathing, screaming, and scraping.

At this point, everyone visible on camera save the three hostages (whose faces are covered by opaque black bags) begins to react to something that has appeared out of frame. The scene descends into a commotion of shouting, screaming, running for cover, and (in one instance) a militant attempting to shoot the unidentified presence with his rifle, presumably without success.

A total of twenty seconds after the disturbance has begun, and all of the militants in the video have either fled or are backed against the far wall, guns raised, the voices of the umbrella man and the metal man - who speak with a mild Scottish accent and an American one, respectively - become audible.

UMBRELLA MAN: It seems we’re approaching the end of our time together.

METAL MAN: Scarcely feels like any time at all.

The two men do not respond to urgent requests for identification by the militants, and after several more seconds of commotion, they are attacked with gunfire from multiple directions. However, the shooters cease their fire after a few more seconds, wearing expressions of shock, and the conversation continues.

UMBRELLA MAN: I've done something quite clever - I've extended the force-field. Must remember to do that in future. You never know when someone'll shoot you right after landing.

METAL MAN: Bullets wouldn't do anything to me.

UMBRELLA MAN: Of course not.

(During the ensuing dialogue, several of the militants drop their weapons and begin praying. The hostages, still with their faces covered, begin to stir.)

UMBRELLA MAN: The algorithm was mostly random, but I suppose the Tardis[?]* shuffled some of the grimmer circumstances towards the back of the list.

METAL MAN: As though it would make a difference? After this long? After this many people?

UMBRELLA MAN: I think it might. Take, for instance, this exact moment. Look around you. Look at what's happening.

(There are several seconds of silence.)

* Unknown word - the spelling is approximated.

METAL MAN: We had to come to this eventually.

UMBRELLA MAN: To think I've finally placed you at the heart of your enemy! Well, one of your many enemies. This, specifically, was the fear that energised you and your team to re-engineer that dead Cyberman. A nice, visceral, physical threat. You created the Neurolock, an adaptation of the human body, a system that would convert your will into power - and "save the West".

METAL MAN: What's your point?

UMBRELLA MAN: Hypothetically, you have the power to eviscerate everyone in this building. Everyone within a mile. Cut out the infection, restore order, be a hero, et cetera, et cetera.

METAL MAN: You wouldn't let me.

UMBRELLA MAN: I've temporarily disabled the Tardis' state of grace. All of your weapon systems are now re-enabled.

(There is no speech for roughly 14 seconds.)

UMBRELLA MAN: What will you do?

(A silence of another 23 seconds ensues. There is then a low, humming sound, which begins to rise in pitch and intensity for the next 10 seconds. The soldiers who are still visible turn to look at the source of the sound [presumably the metal man], though - curiously - they seem only able to react by staring.

Immediately, however, the humming sound drops back down and fades to silence.)

UMBRELLA MAN: What's wrong?

METAL MAN: Are you satisfied?

UMBRELLA MAN: Are *you*?

METAL MAN: I can't do it.

UMBRELLA MAN: No. I thought not.

METAL MAN: Because I've seen everything. You've shown me everything. I've seen every single, last, little nook and cranny of this whole goddamn planet. I've seen how every stupid little organ of it joins together, in one pathetic, meaningless day. And I can't do it.

UMBRELLA MAN: Why?

METAL MAN: Because I know it'll solve nothing. It'll just be another link in the chain. It won't create a stable living environment. It won't dismantle the corporate engines fueling the slaughter for money. It won't soothe the desperation that teaches people to devalue lives. It won't eliminate the fears that drive people to become monsters. It'll just create a void, a temporary vacuum, that'll get filled with more poverty. More hatred. More death.

(There is a pause of around 6 seconds.)

METAL MAN: Are you happy? Did I sound like a good little boy? Did I pass your test?

UMBRELLA MAN: I think now you see. And you understand that seeing is painful. Not, mind you, that you were ever truly in control. What's important is that the Neurolock has learnt the same thing you have - else we'd probably all be atoms by now.

(There are a few more seconds of quiet, then the sound of footsteps. The camera abruptly ceases recording.)

Nothing is known about what took place immediately after the end of the video.

The concepts discussed by the Umbrella Man and Metal Man in the Grace Discussion (so named for the perplexing mention of the 'state of grace') have been the subject of fervent and in-depth conversation worldwide ever since the leak of the recording. As the most revealing point of information in the huge, globe-spanning constellation of simultaneous encounters that comprised the Day of the Umbrella Men, it offers great possibilities for potential contextualisation of all the others.

Short of a return visit, however, the identities of these men - if, indeed, there were only two, somehow reproduced through time and space, and not a planet-sized army of duplicates - seems condemned to remain forever unknown to mankind.

ADDENDUM - The final detail complicating the Grace incident is that, towards the end of the Day, three people previously thought missing appeared safe and unharmed in their own homes, in various locations across Europe. Their identities have been omitted from this account for their own safety, but none of them could offer any recollection of how they travelled home.

NEXT TIME: STATE OF GRACE

K-9 GETS REAL GODDAMN BUFF

by Badass Anon

An adventure with the Twelfth Doctor, Nardole, and K-9

The Twelfth Doctor pushed open the TARDIS doors with his shoulder and entered the console room, carrying a basket of laundry he had just washed on the planet Whirlpoolios, the world of laundromats.

"I really need to put a fuckin' washin' machine in the TARDIS," he grumbled to himself in his Scottish accent. "Oi! K-9! Get your tin ass out here, I need you to wheel this laundry over to the wardrobe room!"

There was no response. The console room was empty except for the hum of the Time Rotor and the episode of "Strictly" the Doctor had left running while he got his washing done. It seemed as if K-9 had disappeared just as suddenly as he had appeared on the TARDIS, which he did one day for some reason.

"K-9?" the Doctor yelled out again. He took a step towards one of those sets of stairs--the ones that go up to that weird sort-of balcony the Doctor has around the console, which have blackboards and bookcases and shit. They probably continue to the rest of the TARDIS, I guess.

Looking more closely at one of the shelves, he dropped his laundry basket in shock.

"You fuckin' cunt!" the Doctor shouted. "You got into my 'roids!"

"Affirmative," a deep, masculine voice said from the other side of the console. The Doctor wheeled around to see K-9 in his new form: his head was the same as it had always been, but it was now attached to what looked like a weightlifter's body, and he was goddamn buff. All rippling muscles and sculpted abs. Just, fuck, so damn buff. "How do you like me now, Master?"

"You prick," the Doctor snarled. "You know I need those steroids to get my cock hard! I mean, I'm two thousand years old for fuck's sake, you can't expect me to get it up on my own."

"I thought this body would be more useful to you than my previous, let's say, 'retro' look," K-9 replied.

The Doctor raised an attack eyebrow. "'Retro?' The fuck is that supposed to mean?" He sighed. "Whatever, let's just find some more of those 'roids. You know damn well I can't go on any adventures until I'm well and truly

erect."

"Understood, master." K-9 stepped up to the console and unzipped his dick. "Setting course for Androgenon." Noticing the Doctor's surprised expression, K-9 assured him, "This body has been designed so that all appendages can fully interface with the TARDIS, as well as any computer with a USB 3.0 interface."

"No, no, no, no," the Doctor said, pushing K-9 away from the controls. "Sexually assault ENIAC all you want, but I'm not goin' to stand by and watch you cuck me with the TARDIS." He input the coordinates and pulled the "make spinny box go" lever, and in moments the TARDIS had materialized at its destination.

The Doctor opened the doors, only to shut them again in exasperation. "Fuckin' 'ell," he said. "Robots! Hordes of fuckin' robots! They're blockin' the way to the pharmacy."

"Stand aside, Master," K-9 said. He strolled to the doors and opened them. The robots started beeping or whatever, but K-9 went forward and crushed one of the robots between his thiccc thighs. Another started shooting, prompting K-9 to jump in the air and do a backflip and land fist-first on the machine, which let out a Roblox death noise as it was crushed beneath K-9's powerful muscles. Over and over, the robots succumbed to K-9's unbelievable buff strength.

"Area secured," he called back to the TARDIS.

The Doctor and K-9 went into the pharmacy and picked up some of the Doctor's off-the-shelf steroid injections, plus some Kit-Kats, and made their way back.

"Listen, K-9," the Doctor said as they got to the doors. "I...um...I looked at the, er, scanner, and it said there was a Dalek ship, about..." He waved his hand, pointing off to the distance. "Four or five miles that way. I need you to investigate, chop chop."

"Affirmative," K-9 replied, and he walked off.

As soon as he was about ten steps away, the Doctor rushed into the TARDIS and slammed the doors behind him. K-9's incredibly buff physique allowed him to run back to the doors just as the TARDIS started to depart. "Master?" he asked. "Did you forget about me?"

"I don't want any competition!" the Doctor shouted back. "And I'm sure as shit not goin' to be upstaged by a

robot! Now fuckity bye!" The vworping stopped and the Doctor walked back out into his office, where Nardole was reading a book about staying fit in your 200s. "Finish your errands, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," the Doctor said. "Listen, Nardole." Nardole looked up at him. "Don't ever sneak any of my pills from me, or I guarantee, I will slice off your arse with a rusty knife and dice it into a fine mince for my lunch."

Nardole nodded. "Wouldn't be the first time," he muttered.

Framing Story Part IV: Dreams Of Warriors

I woke up from my bed. I could hear the snoring of Rast, who tended to wander from her room and into others when she got sleepy. When anyone complained, she would claim that “this is all part of my domain, peasant!” but I suspected that she was just nervous. It was hard to tell, but despite Rast's claims of being all-powerful, she was really a baby. She required our help to eat, needed us to change her diaper, and a number of other functions. That dependency probably scared her, deep down.

Her face was calm, as she slumbered next to my bed. Small strings of nascent red hair stuck out from her head, and she shifted to her side. Murmurs came from her mouth, probably the talk of dreams.

“Karla,” came a voice from outside.

I walked outside my room. The lights were dimmed, but that didn't keep me from knowing where to go. I walked to the shield generator room, and saw the blue-and-green light shimmering off the shields. I felt a sudden urge to place my hand inside the light, allow the glow to travel along my arm and into my hearts.

“Pretty, isn't it?” said a voice besides me. It was Susie English. “You know, you Time Lords are pretty silly. You assume anything without 2 hearts can't possibly understand Gallifreyan science. That I couldn't.” Her wide eyes looked me over, her face turning into a grin. “I've been trying to fix the shielding. It's too late, though. Good riddance This place is a prison, you know. And unlike, say, a normal prison, the warden would never let us leave.”

“Am I dreaming?”

“I have no clue. Reality is breaking down. There's only 2 steps between non-fiction and fiction, to be honest. What matters though, is that you understand what this place is. And who you really are. Have you ever wondered why you can't kill?” asked Susie. Her legs were hanging off a chair, dangling lazily.

“In my time in Faction--”

“God. You're as gullible as a goose. You're hopeless, Karla. Or should I say, grandfather?” she said, adding an intonation to her voice that I didn't recognize.

“Let us tell you a story,” said Rast. She crept up behind me, and crawled into my lap, smiling evilly. Her eyes were still closed, as she whispered into my ear: “Let us tell you about the day Gallifrey died.”

The Story of Lord Rast

My eyes are closed. Images of war rifle through my mind. Images of the war that I have already witnessed—the entirety of the House Cartoko converted to the Dalek side; the end of the Rani's horde; the ascendancy of the Rassilon—and images of the War that I fear—the end of the bloodlines, the takeover of the Caldera, an union between the Daleks and House Lolita—fill my mind. I try to cast them away, but I cannot. It is my job to think of War. It is what I was made for.

I do not know my name. That was cast away several regenerations ago. I have reason to believe I was a renegade. Possibly either the Rani, or the Master. Possibly even Morbius, the Imperator. Make no mistake, I'd rather it not be the Imperator—he was a fool, who was left as a brain in a jar. But I have no clue. The Time Lords stripped my biodata, and reformed me into the perfect warrior. It was a violation of my flesh and soul. A willing violation, but still.

“Lord Rast?” a voice says, calling me by the nickname that I have been given by the other Houses. My eyes open, and I see a series of tubes. Within them are small embryos. Most of them are humanoid, a few are of avian origin. Some of them do not have a stable form.

“Are these the ones?” I ask. They look somewhat less impressive than I expect.

“Yes. These are the viable ones. So many attempts just died in the birthing matrix. It appears that the Doctor's biodata is rather ragged, with far more extra interferences than one would expect. But these are clones of him. These will be our saviours, if the Doctor fails,” said the scientist.

The Doctor. That fool. He had attempted to use the Moment to destroy both sides. But it didn't work. The machine refused, and self-destructed itself. With no weapons left to us, Gallifrey had become more and more desparate. We ressurected bloodlines that had passed, began to invade our own history, began to work with the Faction, in order to find a way to save us. To anyone with sense, it was becoming clear that this was a lost cause. I, however, am widely considered insane. So I chose to continue a project that had started in the older centuries of the Last Great Time War, when the Doctor hadn't joined yet. A project to create a new Doctor from his biodata.

Seven embryos. Seven viable versions of the Doctor. Seven lovely Time tots, who would be brought up for war.

I nodded at the scientist. “Well done.”

Five decades later, I returned to that same room. At my side were three versions of the Doctor. One was a man with a serious countenance, his face set in stone, with a sense of regality. One was a woman, her eyes wide with wonder. The third's face constantly changed, constantly shifting between all the Doctor's regenerations.

The common denominator between all seven of the young Doctors, is that they all had failed. Four had been sent out into battle, and they had all perished quickly. The actual Doctor hadn't been seen for centuries, but there were reports that he had killed them himself. I doubted it. I doubted he even cared

about Gallifrey's state now.

The three who remained here had been useless in war. The Flux Doctor, his/her/xher face constantly shifting, was too erratic for combat. Desmond had never inherited the Doctor's sturdy Time Lord body, with half-human DNA having corrupted Desmond's biodata. Perhaps the Doctor's exposure to humanity had infected his biodata, and left his clones open for weakness. And Karla, who was the closest to becoming a true Doctor, did not have the ability to harm. It appeared that the Doctor's pacifism was so deep, that when you made a perfect clone of him, it came out without the ability to kill another. Or perhaps it was a random aberration. Either way, all three were no good in the war effort. So, I sent them out. I could have killed them, but I had watched them grow up.

I scattered these three Doctors out into the void, changing their memories accordingly. For the War is lost. Gallifrey has died already. It just doesn't know it yet. Rassilon knew, however—he escaped to the Dalek Worlds in a final battle. He has not been seen, since. These last few years have been the tremors of the body of a hung man, the words from the head of a guillotined body.

But perhaps, I thought, these last few Doctors might be a legacy of Gallifrey. A reminder of who we were.

Alas, never doubt the Time Lords' ability to shoot their own salvation. Years later, the Doctor found Karla, who I had hidden in New York with the Time Lady known as the Storyteller. Soon after, the Time Lords, still desperately trying to save Gallifrey, picked up Karla, and placed her into a secret container. Desmond was already there, and was left as a Custodian, who would help the Time Lords. Several other escapees of Gallifrey's war were placed here, as backups for the War effort.

That was millennia ago, although for you, Karla, it seems like you've been here for less time. Gallifrey is no more. The Time War is over, and unfortunately, no one has won. Reality is breaking down.

Do you see it now, Karla? The walls of the facility are breaking apart. Do you see it now, Karla? The events you see now are not real. These are the memories of the facility's inhabitants. These are their stories.

I tried to save you, Karla. I tried to save everyone. But it's all over.

All that's left, when the walls between reality and fiction break down, are our stories.

Eye of the Beholder

By Bottle_Universe

A terrible, terrible Shit Trip detailing the continuing adventures of the Lenny Henry 'Doc' from that one eighties' sketch, an incarnation no longer able to call himself 'the Doctor' due to copyright issues.

The blue oblong hung in the vacuum of space, a hundred thousand light years away from the nearest civilised world. Millions of stars glittered seductively around the blue box, each promising untold adventures.

The box rotated ever so slightly on its axis, propelled by a phantom force, a whisper of excess momentum forcing it to spin and spin and spin around. It was a wonder that its occupants didn't spend their time suffering from motion sickness. It was a wonder that they survived out in the depths of space in their tiny blue box at all. But some things in the universe defied scientific credibility like the plague, and the cerulean oblong was one of these.

It had almost rotated three hundred and sixty degrees and now the text that was printed above its doorway was becoming clear. It was blurry at first, glimpsed through the starlit shadows reflecting off a dozen black holes. Then the blue box completed its rotation and stood facing a nearby white dwarf. Bathed in the subtle glow of the solar behemoth, the text was unmistakable: MARK EIGHT CARGO POD. LONG-HAUL TRANSPORTATION OF PERISHABLE GOODS AND STOCK. PROPERTY OF THE FENGETH CONGLOMERATE.

Clearly, the Doc had fallen on hard times.

Ever since his encounter with the Arbiters of K'Anon, a powerful cabal of hyperspatial entities who decided the course of the universe, things had seemed to get worse and worse. The Arbiters had stripped him of not only his identity – no longer did he have the right to consider himself a legitimate, canonical Doctor – but also of his TARDIS. Without his time machine, the Doc had been reduced to drowning his sorrows in a variety of seedy cantinas on even seedier worlds.

It was impossible to deny that the loss of the time machine was affecting him deeply. He'd said as much to

January, his current travelling companion, just before they had embarked on their journey to find the Arbiters and recover his sense of self.

So here they were: three months into a twelve year long slow haul cargo journey, stowaways onboard a computer guided cargo pod currently cruising through the depths of space. It wasn't quite the adventure that January had signed up for. She'd always considered herself to be a patient kind of person – hell, she put up with the Doc. But this was something else. They'd been cooped up in a cargo pod no larger than a small room for almost a hundred days, with nothing to eat but the unsatisfying bacon and egg flavoured tablets that the Doc's food machine churned out on a daily basis.

'Can't it do anything else?' January had asked.

'Like what?'

'I don't know. Anything else.'

'I'm providing you with a near infinite supply of nutritionally balanced food,' sniffed the Doc. He was very attached to the food machine; it was all that he had left of his dearly departed TARDIS. 'And you're still finding a way to complain about it?'

It was true that January couldn't really gripe about that side of their journey. There was something about those tablets that eliminated the biological drive for excretion. She was truly grateful for that, given the cramped conditions in which they were currently slumming it. Without the Doc's magic pills, their journey really would have been a shit trip.

He'd gone off into the corner of the pod after that little discussion. January had heard him fishing around in his pockets for a few moments before finding what he was looking for: a battered and slightly out of tune harmonica. The Doc had given the instrument a few cautionary huffs and puffs before standing up and providing the interior of the pod with an impromptu concert. To January, it had sounded as though he had been playing a Martian synth ballad, snatches of "Tubular Bells", and a Posthuman mind-rock anthem all at the same time. These discordant musical styles had been shot through with strands of a melody that had sounded suspiciously like "Greensleeves" but which the Doc had claimed was his own composition.

Clearly, thought January, the Doc was taking the whole railroad hobos way of living to heart. Hearts, she

corrected herself. He was still a Time Lord, even if he wasn't a particularly interesting one anymore.

He was at it again now, tooting away on his harmonica. It was the same melody that he'd been playing before. January privately suspected that he only actually knew one, albeit intricately complicated, riff that he reused whenever called upon.

The music abruptly ceased, plunging the cargo pod into near silence. January watched as the Doc put his thumb up to his lips. He licked the digit and held it up in the air.

She raised an eyebrow. 'What are you doing?'

'I'm seeing which way the wind is blowing.'

'The wind? We're in the middle of a galaxy-sized vacuum.'

'Not that kind of wind.'

'There's more than one kind?'

'There's more than one kind of everything.'

'And which kind are you trying to track down?'

'The time winds,' he explained, placing the harmonica down on the floor. 'There's something blowing our way, something terrible.'

The Doc rummaged around his pockets once more and pulled out a bundle of wires and electrical components. He untangled the mess of circuitry and placed two crocodile clip points by the harmonica. He attached them to the instrument and waited, all the while maintaining a watchful eye on the circuit board. It was now pulsing with light.

'It's just as I thought,' he murmured. 'There's something coming.'

'That doesn't sound promising.'

'No, but it does sound exciting.'

'Shouldn't we do something?'

'We may already be too late.'

A shrill echo of crunching atoms filled the pod, forcing January to clamp her hands over her ears and to grit her teeth. The Doc's circuit board had turned a vivid cherry red and was giving off thick plumes of purple-grey

smoke.

Something that sounded like an explosion filled the pod and January blacked out. Her last thoughts as she did so were, sadly, never recorded.

#

January opened her eyes. She was still alive. That was something, at least. Trying to ignore the ringing in her ears, she dragged herself up into a sitting position and looked around. The Doc was lying some distance away, no doubt knocked unconscious by the same whatever-it-was that had incapacitated her. He was snoring almost inaudibly, his chest rising and falling in a perfect, syncopated rhythm. Keeping time.

After a few moments the snoring ceased. His eyes snapped open, bulging out of their sockets like over-inflated balloons. It didn't look healthy.

The Doc stood straight up and spun around several times like a compass trying to find its bearings. He pointed straight at January, opened his mouth, closed it again, and blinked. Once he'd finished his bout of what January could only imagine had been improvisational theatre, he sat back down on the floor and began to examine the remains of his contraption. It was smouldering, belching out sparks of guttering flame and crackling electricity. Although January couldn't exactly call herself an expert in whatever field of science the machine was supposed to relate to, she could tell one thing. It was broken.

'Such a shame,' muttered the Doc. 'I quite liked that harmonica.'

'What happened?'

'Nothing happened.'

'I thought you said that there was something terrible coming out of the time vortex,' she said. 'Carried on the time winds; detected by your... thing. You made it sound like something was going to happen.'

'I did.'

'Then I don't get it.'

'That makes two of us, he said, attempted to salvage the harmonica from the ruins of the device. He burnt his fingertips on the glowing circuits, leapt backwards like a frightened cat, and began to blow cold air onto the

wound. 'Something was happening.'

'Before we blacked out,' January said. 'I mean that's why we blacked out, wasn't it? Unless we've both become prone to random fits of simultaneous narcolepsy.'

'That would be unfortunate.'

'So what did happen?'

'Nothing happened.'

'But you just said that something did happen,' she protested. 'Something must have happened. Cause and effect, right? If nothing happened then we wouldn't be having this conversation. So something happened.'

'Something happened,' the Doc announced. He spoke slowly, like he was explaining it to a child, but January had a hunch that this was probably because he was making it up as he went along. His next statement confirmed this suspicion. 'And then something didn't happen, because we weren't conscious to witness it.'

January rolled her eyes. 'What is it with you?' she asked. 'Why do you have to be so melodramatic all the time? Why can't you just answer a question?'

'I'm not sure what you mean.'

'It's another of those silly, pretentious things.'

'Silly?'

'You know what I mean. Arbiters of K'Anon. Time Lords. It's all a bit over the top, isn't it? A bit melodramatic.'

'Because you would never, ever be melodramatic.'

'I can afford to be melodramatic. I'm young and virile and spunky. All these Arbiters and Lords are, I bet you anything, entirely made up of crusty old men who spend their whole time wringing their hands and complaining about the state of the universe these days.'

'You're not young, January.'

'Wow, thanks.'

'It's lucky for you that you're travelling around the universe with someone who knows how to age gracefully.'

'You call that moustache "aging gracefully"?'

‘It’s iconic. Some Doctors had scarves, or celery, or epilepsy triggering coats. I had the facial hair.’

‘I’m surprised the Arbiters didn’t take it away from you. It’s probably a breach of copyright or something.’

‘Well,’ admitted the Doc. ‘I happen to be very attached to it.’

‘Hilarious.’

‘I try my best.’

‘It must pass the time,’ she said, more than a little snidely. ‘You know, all that time that isn’t spent answering my questions.’

‘You want me to explain?’ the Doc asked.

‘Please.’

‘Alright,’ he said. ‘I will.’ He cleared his throat, readjusted his posture, and placed the now cool remains of the broken device down on the floor beside him. ‘If a tree falls in a forest but nobody sees it fall... has it really fallen?’

‘Or if a bear shits in the woods?’

‘That’s another way of putting it, yes.’

‘Of course it has. Just because you were looking the other way at the time, it doesn’t mean that something didn’t happen,’ replied January. She was tired – tired of the Doc’s vague, quasi-philosophical musings, tired of his own unique brand of pretentious intellectualism. But most of all she was tired of living inside the cramped cargo pod, breathing and re-breathing its filtered air supply. Confinement made her wiggy.

She checked her watch and grimaced. It would still take another decade for the pod to reach its port of call. Ten more years of being wiggy didn’t sound overly appealing. Suddenly, she wondered if she hadn’t been better off before she began travelling the universe, when she’d been spending her life working as a waitress on a long forgotten world. At least people had tipped her back then.

‘And what about Schrödinger Cat?’ continued the Doc. He was sat, cross legged, on the Persian rug that they’d placed in the centre of the pod’s floor.

‘What about it?’

‘Without observing it, Schrödinger wasn’t able to work out whether it was dead or alive. Only by opening the

box could he be sure that events had played out as anticipated... that the cat was indeed dead.'

'He should have taken better care of his pets.'

'Maybe so,' he admitted. 'But apply that idea to the entire universe. Unless we see universal events happen then we might as well admit that they never did.'

'That's nonsense.'

'It's science. Now imagine if the only thing preventing the universe from descending into chaos was to observe every single event in history unfold. To make sure that they turned out the right way.'

'I'm glad you understand this,' said January. 'Because I don't. It sounds like the kind of second rate conceptualising done by people who think they're much smarter than they really are. I said it before. It's nonsense. You can't change how things turn out by just looking in the opposite direction.'

'But what if you could?'

'But the bear shitting in the woods,' said January. 'And probably even the tree, in some kind of... non-sentient way, they can both see themselves. Even the cat in the box. They're experiencing the events. All of this faux-intellectual stuff about history being in the eye of the beholder... it is. It's just not in your eye. It's in our eyes. We perceive ourselves.'

'Because if there's one thing that humanoid life forms are famous for,' said the Doc, rolling his eyes. 'It's maintaining an accurate self-image, untainted by whichever quaint psychoses are currently running through their minds.'

'You could work on the people skills, you know.'

The Doc ignored her. 'How do we know that we're real,' he asked. 'How do we know that we exist if an external observer hasn't verified our existence?'

'We just do. We know that we're real.'

'Do we?'

'I think therefore I am.'

'I bet everybody thinks that, unreal or otherwise.'

January sighed. This was getting them nowhere. At this rate, the cargo pod would have reached its destination

by the time they'd worked out what had – or hadn't – happened to them.

'So what you're really saying,' she asked. 'Is that something was supposed to happen, but because we didn't see it, it didn't happen?'

'Close enough.'

'That doesn't make sense. Things don't not happen if you're not around to watch them happening.'

'You must have left a book half-read,' he said. 'Or a film unfinished, or a television series left on a cliff-hanger.

You stopped observing those events and so they stopped happening.'

'But they're fictional,' January insisted.

'And can you be sure that we're not?'

'You're being silly.'

'What if our unconscious state wasn't a blackout, but was actually a paragraph break? Or if the reader of our adventures got bored and looked away for a moment too long?'

'That's a lazy way to explain away that anticlimax.'

'Perhaps it is.'

'It doesn't matter,' she said, after a moment's silence. 'It doesn't matter whether we're real or not. I don't think that you care either, or that you even think that. I think you're just trying to mess with me, or broaden my mind, or something.'

'You're not worried that you might not be real?'

'What difference would it make? I feel real to me.'

'Then how do you explain what happened?'

She considered for a few moments before answering. 'Our cargo pod...'

'It's not really our cargo pod,' interrupted the Doc. 'We're just borrowing it for the duration of the journey. Squatter's rights, but still.'

'Well, exactly. We've jazzed up the place. Put a rug down, one with patterns and everything. Hell, we'd have put some fancy curtains up if any hypothetical windows didn't open out into the cold vacuum of space. This is

our home, for all intents and purposes. We've done something to it. And then that thing, whatever it was called...' January turned to the Doc for help with the technobabble side of things.

'... A warp space destabilisation effect.'

'Yeah, one of those things,' she continued. 'Whatever it was, it knocked me out and gave me the kind of headache that turns your brain inside out. I bet it did the same to you. And then, as if to add insult to injury, it's got you questioning your own realness. It's rude, that's what it is.'

'I'm not quite sure where you're going with this.'

'We did something. It doesn't matter if someone watched us do it or not. It doesn't matter if we qualify as real by anyone else's standards.'

'As for the warp space thing... I don't know what caused it, or why it didn't go anywhere. Maybe it was bad plotting on the universe's part. It wouldn't be the first time. Maybe it was because we weren't awake to see events unfold. But I'm willing to chalk it down to just another freak event if it'll make you stop worrying about whether or not we actually exist.'

'Mm,' mumbled the Doc. 'Real life is more than a little overrated, anyway.'

'Exactly,' said January. 'So whether we're really alive, or in some simulation, or even in some third-rate fan-fiction of some kind, lets do something.'

'But what is there to do? We still have a decade before the cargo container reaches our port of call.'

January scanned the interior of the cargo compartment. Her eyes moved over crystals and cartridges and high-tech looking bits of machinery. Finally, she found what she was looking for. A small, white rock. A stick of chalk. She picked it up and turned it over in the palm of her hand. Dust cascaded from its surface as though the chalk were a lizard shedding its skin.

January turned to the Doc. 'I know you're some kind of space-octopus-Cthulu-horror-thing from another planet...'

'I am?'

'You said so in your sleep.'

'Too much cheese before bedtime, I think.'

January had drawn a rough grid on the floor with the chalk, divided up into nine squares. She looked up at the Doc. 'But you do know how to play noughts and crosses, don't you?'

'I've been around.'

'So you keep saying.'

They were both sat now, together on the tattered rug which formed the centrepiece of their makeshift home. January carved a cross into one of the grid's vacant areas before passing the chalk over to the Doc. He studied the board intently.

'I don't suppose you've considered the implications of this?' he asked, carefully assessing where best to place his own symbol. Eventually he decided: a spot to the left of where January had placed hers. Rather than drawing a circle, the Doc instead chose to mark his territory with a sigma. January thought for a moment about raising an objection, before putting it down to just another of his eccentricities. Sometimes she wondered if the Doc was made up of anything other than eccentricities held together by a succession of outmoded clothes.

'What implications?'

'If the observer, the viewer, the reader, whatever you want to call it, looks away now then they'll never know who wins this game.'

'Well,' said January. 'That's their prerogative, isn't it?' She carved a second chalk cross onto the floor as the cargo pod continued its long, long, long journey towards their next adventure.

END

A Gentlemanly Duel

by Rachael Riley

An adventure with the Third Doctor

The demon hunter walked into the large arena. As soon as he stepped inside, strange symbols on the floor started glowing, and the doors of the room were covered in strange red energy: the sign of danger. Grabbing his sword, he prepared for a possible ambush.

VWOORP VWOORP

In the center of the room, an object started to materialize, eventually forming a blue box. The hunter eyed it with suspicion.

The box's door opened, and out came an old man with a white frilled shirt and a red smoking jacket.

"Well, that was easy enough I suppose, now t-"

"HEY!"

The old man turned to look at the demon hunter, eyeing him with suspicion. The demon hunter wore a red cloak and jeans, along with a big red pendant hanging on his neck.

"Well, what is it boy, can't you see I'm busy?" the old man said.

"Do you even know where you are, grandpa?" the demon hunter asked, moving towards the old man. "If you haven't noticed, there are demons around!"

"Well I've certainly handled my way around Daemons before," said the old man, adjusting his jacket. "If you need my help you are very much welcome to it; after all, I have much to offer to a younger man."

The demon hunter pulled out his sword and pointed it at the old man. "Are you calling me kid?"

“Of course not,” the old man said, flicking the sword away. “I called you a younger man. Though with this kind of response you might as well be one.”

“Okay, that’s it!” the demon hunter yelled, swinging his sword vertically. Quickly, the old man stepped to the side, dodging it. “You’re in my way old man, and I REALLY need to get somewhere.”

“Of course you do,” the old man said aloofly. “Now, if the young man would kindly stop throwing a tantrum, maybe I can assist you in your quest.”

“Sure, you can “assist me in my quest,” old man,” the demon hunter said, placing his sword on his back and pulling out a white handgun. “All you need to do is stand still.”

“Now, now, I’m sure we can solve this matter without violence,” the old man said. Taking out a small device from his pocket, he waved it at the doors, the floor, and the ceiling. After waving it about, the old man looked at the device, analyzing its data.

“Hm, this data is intriguing,” the old man said, piqued at the information. "This room's barriers calls for a champion in combat, and upon recognizing one, it disappears." The old man places the small device back in his pocket. “I suppose that means I have to instill a bit of discipline in you. Ah well, such is life.”

The old man stepped inside the box, which began to float. Pulling out a saber from behind the door, he hung outside, clinging to the box with one hand, and the saber in the other.

“Oh, where are my manners, I haven't introduce myself,” the old man said. “My name is the Doctor.”

The demon hunter smirked. “My name is Dante,” he said as he pulled out a black handgun to complement his white, “and you are going down.”

The Divergence of the Doctor

By Nacho

An adventure with Metacrisis Ten, and Rose Tyler.

Doctor John Smith was running down the back alleys of London, his wife Rose Tyler seized by the forearm and struggling to run fast enough to keep up. He might as well have been dragging her; with his relative strength and enthusiasm she could have been a cape wafting in the air behind him. Smith was full of excitement and wonder for the first in a very long time, his grin big and toothy from ear to ear with a childlike glee in his eyes. It the first time in almost a year that Rose had seen him like this.

The scenario was a fantastic sight that Rose never would have dreamed of seeing. The Doctor of her dreams, darting through the corridors and alleys once again; the blimps and leftover pieces of the destroyed Cybermen still strewn to the sides of the alleys after their final defeat. This wasn't the Doctor she had met, this wasn't the home or universe she had known and this certainly wasn't the life she expected, but it was certainly one she could appreciate.

People had grown a grotesque sense of willful ignorance since the collapse of Cybus Industries. Their loved ones dead without a chance to say goodbye to the monster they had become, there was a revulsion at the idea of cleaning up the aftermath. The occasional pile of Cybermen parts were as common as fast food wrappers or leftover gum. None of it was seen as human or deserving of a proper burial, the sight of which horrified Rose Tyler to no end.

Most days John Smith hid himself away making all manners of gadgets and devices. He would never be very specific about what they did when Rose asked; for example the one he had now he described as "A device that goes DING!".

Domestic life wasn't necessarily a bad thing to Rose, it was more than a chore even keeping up with a low key version of The Doctor. Most days appliances would go missing, he would go without eating or sleeping for days and the occasional explosion was common enough that it was something of a comfort in an otherwise quiet house. That being said, the vague nature of whatever he was working on worried Rose.

Rose Tyler was no rookie adventurer, and surely she could see through The Doctor's evasive facade; but she had decided to let him keep his secrets. He deserved as much now being a man who had seen eternity and was now trapped down in one time, trapped in humanity. He seemed so fragile now... so mortal. How does a Time Lord cope with being a Man?

Still there were more pressing matters on Rose's mind, like "what was going on".

"Doctor, wh-" Rose started.

"Over there! Because the machine went DING!" he screamed back to her, cutting her off.

Indeed the machine was "ding"-ing loudly. In fact the further they ran, the more the machine "Ding"-ed. Almost as if they were running towa-

Suddenly John stopped at a brick wall in an alley with a pinhole of light, cutting off all thought. The light shone like a laser from the hole, concentrated on a wall on the other side of the alley where the pinhole expanded into a spotlight. As Rose leaned against the wall to catch her breath, she took notice of another odd occurrence: the light did not reflect off any of the metal or water in the alley. She was about to point it out to The Doctor when he began talking again, his back to her and pride in his voice.

"Wonderful. Absolutely fantastic, isn't it?" John said.

"Would be," Rose said between gasps for air. "...If I knew what it was."

"It's a gateway to an adventure. A real mystery!" he said running his finger along the outside of the spotlight. He was about to explain everything, he had that know-it-all explaining face on and his swagger about him. Rose found that face to be The Doctor's most adorable feature.

"This light here is light a big old door that could lead to any part of the universe or another time. Or both! A big old chunk of Space and Time that's grown inside another, seeded by a cosmic shift, an unnatural point of history that broke off a piece of the timeline the flung it into this part of the universe in this time like a splinter in your foot that grew into a gateway to that time period." he said with a matter-of-fact tone.

"So... putting aside splinters don't grow into gateways; it's a time portal?" asked Rose in summary.

"Yeeeah, it's a time portal" said John looking down embarrassed that such a simple explanation had escaped him.

The excitement of a real adventure grew inside Rose. Like old times, The Doctor facing down a monster, Rose getting caught facing almost certain death with strength and dignity with everything turning out alright in the end. She could now see why he was so excited. Travelling again would be incredible; as it was one of the things that made The Doctor 'The Doctor'. Without travelling and excitement and adventure to be had, all he could be was... John Smith. Not even Doctor John Smith; and Rose Tyler wasn't sure if she knew who that was.

Walking up to the spotlight, both of them stared hard at the light, at which no shadow was cast from the pinhole behind them. Odd as it was, Rose couldn't help but be filled with a sense of familiarity at the prospect of going through this sort of investigation.

Instinctively she reached out and touched it first, only to get pulled in by an intense suction as strong as The Doctor's excited pull in reaching the area. It pulled her into the portal with force and flung her through space and time. In that moment she felt the same rush she felt at The Tardis engine wheezing at take off. Behind her, she even heard The Doctor's exclamation of "ALLON-SYYYYYYYY" as he followed behind.

The two of them landed side by side on a metal catwalk with a loud thud. Rubbing the sore spot from their fall and slowly climbing back to their feet with the aid of the handrail on each side, John tried to rack his human brain for a moment to remember a time when he had taken a fall this bad before. Nothing exactly came to mind, though as trying to remember specific moments in his past lives caused them to be played in fast forward, a compressed sort of view of his lives.

"That was certainly not a moment I was prepared for" said Rose giving herself an extra stretch.

The very comment drove John's mind towards a picture, clarifying through a white haze like flour; but before he could make a connection a torch shined on them and he heard the familiar sounds of a guard screaming through a German accent.

"You there! What are you doing up here?" the guard called out.

Instinctively, John Smith reached for The Doctor's psychic paper as a physical reflex, but found nothing in his pocket; no easy escape route to get out of this situation. He tried to form a convincing lie in his brain, but nothing was happening, as if the limitations of a human brain were causing a loss of the communication he needed to improvise correctly.

“We’re travellers from across Time and Space looking for a major anomaly that would have caused a fracture in time” Rose said confidently. John Smith smiled a wide grin as if he had thought of the idea himself. Tell the truth, it will knock them off their confidence. Well done, Rose.

“Yes, and as such, we haven’t a clue where we are. We just sort of... fell into this predicament. Can you tell us?” asked John Smith with a cocky smile, flashing his teeth.

The guard burst out laughing. It was a hearty belly laugh, and almost caused him to double over. “You mean to tell me that you just stumbled onto the catwalk at the top of the Hindenburg Blimp, the greatest technological marvel of our time?”

He walked over to them, chuckling still. “That’s a wild story to come up with to cover up for some Hanky Panky.” the guard said putting his arms around them.

“You got me” John said laughing. He was relishing the ruse, Rose noticed. She laughed too and put his arm around his waist to show the closeness of their relationship off to the guard. Together, the three of them traversed the blimp down to the Lounge where a dinner party was going on. His time as a chaperone over, the guard left back to his post still smiling at the daftness of the situation.

Safely at their chair with the dull white noise of conversation covering their chatter, John and Rose huddled together for a bit of conversation.

“The Hindenburg? These people are all the walking dead.” said Rose with a bit of concern in her voice.

“Most people are already dead in my perspective.” John pointed out with a touch of sarcasm.

“Still, these people hardly seem like they deserve it. Doctor, couldn’t you just save them?” asked Rose innocently.

“I already am. We’re going to need at least 300 feet of cable, my sonic and a large chunk of metal for an antenna” he said smiling.

The two of them quickly got up, ran to maintenance and grabbed the largest ladder they could find. The tall tower of the ladder would make a fine lightning rod conductor.

John and Rose darted down the halls with the ladder, looking for a ladder to take them to the top without getting caught again. With no one in sight, Rose felt comfortable asking a question on her mind since beginning the adventure.

“What exactly do the dings mean?” asked Rose.

“They tell me where a temporal shift is happening. Think of it like Dowsing for time particles, Rose” John explained warmly.

“But how did they get there?” Rose continued.

“Well...” John began, thinking about a very careful way to explain this to Rose to explain this the right way. It was proving more difficult than he thought.

“Imagine you cut down a tree. Now, you still leave a big stump with all the roots, but as the tree falls down the branches hit the ground first and the force of the tree breaks them and flings the branches outwards like shrapnel. That’s what can happen to time in a universe without Time Lords.” He explained smiling.

He then pivoted the rest of his explanation on this point.

“Events like this aren’t small happenings to be able to make a time portal. They’re big enough to cause whole universes to diverge off from our old timeline. Usually, they are what the entire timeline hinges on and what makes this universe different from our universe that we know will be contained in these sort of events. Normally, these points would just go unnoticed and end up melting back into the timeline harmoniously, portals unnoticed. Unless you were meant to be there all along or you had a device that goes ‘DING!’” he said confidently.

Satisfied, Rose continued on with the Doctor until they reached a window with a great ladder that would lead to the top of the zeppelin.

Like a rocket, the two of them charged a ladder to the top of the Hindenburg and firmly attached it to the highest point on the blimp using the Sonic.

Satisfied with their work, they turned round to go get wiring for their lightning rod when they heard heavy footsteps climbing the ladder they had just used.

Before them a shadow reached the top of the ladder with a deep sigh. Stepping into the light was the guard with a large spool of hundreds of feet of thick gold wire.

“What have you got there” asked Rose with a charming smile on her face.

“Extra wiring for the blimp in case anything needs to be changed. Would you like some?” asked the guard while placing it on the ground.

“Sure. But why are you just giving us it?” Asked John.

“This was supposed to be a short trip, but we packed so much into it that I’ll give it to you to save space for extra room needed in the end.” said the guard while handing them the entire spool.

John looked to the side with a look of minor annoyance and stared hard as if looking into a camera, saying “Wow. What a mild time saving convenience.” before slinging the wire along the conductor and tossing the rest of the spool overboard.

He looked at his watch as he sonic’d together the giant cable to the conductor like a welder and left it dangling off the side of the blimp. 7 minutes ‘till the lightning struck. And it would be redirected away from the blimp.

“Everybody lives, Rose! Just this once the entire Hindenburg survives and everybody lives!” he exclaimed with a smile letting out a large whoop.

Rose wanted to be excited as well, but something was still bothering her.

"If the Hindenburg survives it's final flight, what happens?" asked Rose.

"Well for starters many people survive! Oh, I "AM" good!" John replied still excited.

"What else?" Rose asked.

"The Hindenburg surviving is what encourages Zeppelin travel through the century and probably is one of the main divergences from our universe" John pondered.

Rose was getting frustrated. He was hiding something in his excitement.

"But 'what' else?" she asked with force.

"Well, I suppose these lot will never have World War 2, which saves more lives, fosters harmony and creates more progress for humanity." he said smiling.

"Doesn't that lead to Cybus and the Cybermen eventually?" Rose asked, not really wanting to hear the answer.

The smile began to fade from John's face. He had hoped to not bring this up to her, to distract her from this with their adventure.

"Yeah. It will eventually. It has to happen. In this timeline the Hindenburg never crashed, and we were always the cause of it never happening." John said stern.

"Doctor, what if it doesn't? Couldn't we... I don't know, save all these people and still cra-" Rose began to ask.

"NO!" exclaimed John.

"But why?" asked Rose, fear beginning to rise for the first time.

"Because... this has to happen." John Smith sighed and looked toward the sky.

"We jumped into a splintered off part of Time to get here Rose. We have to make sure that splinter happens or else we don't get here; and without it we won't get back" he said his voice raising in pitch and volume.

"But you can change history! You're The Doctor! You're a time lord!" exclaimed Rose in disbelief.

"I... am not a Time Lord." John began, turning away from her shadows moving across his face. His voice was getting lower and frustration was beginning to show.

"I have to be The Doctor. I have the mind of The Doctor, but I am not a Time Lord. More... less? I don't know. But I can't meddle in the events of Time and Space." he said.

Rose reached over to put her hand on his shoulder, but The Doctor shrugged it off. The air between them got very tense. Their two hearts were beating like drums against the clouds around them.

"I can be The Doctor. I can go through adventures and save people and fight monsters, but I cannot change Time like a Time Lord. I can fight injustice, I can bring compassion and inspire the masses. I can create hope and cherish life and be an existential force for good throughout time and space, but I cannot change time. I can only do what history says will happen. I can only be the magic cosmic gear that keeps the wheels of history turning."

He turned himself back towards her now. Rose expected to see tears in his eyes, but the moment the fateful lightning bolt struck the lightning rod he had set up and illuminated the shadows for a second, she saw a maniacal smile on his face.

“This is my existence Rose. This is who I am. I am not The Doctor, I have no Tardis and all of The Doctor’s past is inside my head.” he said taking a step toward her. Instinctively she stepped back, and her body pressed against a guard rail.

“The Doctor is catchphrases in my mind, ‘Would you like a Jelly Baby?’ ‘Fantastic!’ but he isn’t me. He has different rules from me. In this divergent universe, I have to play the role of The Doctor but I am not The Doctor. You have to be my companion throughout time and space, as it is written throughout history. You can run now; but we’ll find ourselves together on the next adventure shaping the proper course of history together like we must, because there is no Time Lord to interfere. Our roles are now prewritten and we’ll end up playing our parts no matter what. My existence is at odds with everything I know, and it is painful to be... me.” he said.

In a fit of compassion, Rose lunged towards him with her arms open and embraced him. Her Doctor was not The Doctor. For the first time she looked into his eyes and saw his face. The face of John Smith.

The Doctor turned off the display on the Tardis console.

“Tisk Tisk Tisk. Good thing I checked in when I did.” said The Doctor.

She put her hands over the controls and prepared to make the jump to a parallel universe. It was time for a little chat. Setting the destination with the controls set, the central pillar began to rise and fall with a familiar wheezing sound washing the room with in it’s aural comfort. She turned herself away from the console and stared towards the door, as if looking into a camera.

INTRODUCING JODIE WHITTAKER AS THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR.

The War of the Doctor

by Neo

“Help me, please. Can anybody hear me?”

“Please state the nature of your ailment or injury.”

“I’m not injured, I’m crashing! I don’t need a doctor.”

“A clear statement of your symptoms will help us provide the medical practitioner appropriate to your individual needs.”

“I’m trying to send a distress signal, stop talking about doctors!”

“I’m a Doctor...but probably not the one you’re expecting.”

The Eighth Doctor and Cass dashed around the gunship hurtling through space, mightily impressed by each other. A brave young traveller, forced to cut their adventures short because of the war? The Doctor knew her type very well indeed.

When they came to the TARDIS, Cass hesitated.

“Don’t worry,” the Doctor reassured her, “it’s bigger on the inside.”

“What did you say - bigger on the inside, is that what you said?”

“Yes. Come on, you’ll love it.”

“Is this a TARDIS?”

“Yes, but you’ll be perfectly safe, I promise you.”

“Don’t touch me!”

“I’m not part of the war, I swear to you. I never was.”

“You’re a Time Lord...”

“Yes, I’m a Time Lord, but I’m one of the nice ones!”

“Get away from me!”

“Well, look on the bright side, I’m not a Dalek!”

“Who can tell the difference any more?”

Further words changed nothing. Cass sealed the door between them, and the ship plummeted down, down, down to an empty planet.

The Doctor was jolted to the back of the ship as it crashed, but remained conscious. A blaring alarm sounded, the ship’s computer announcing the rapid spread on an onboard fire

Aching, the Doctor rose from the floor and looked out a nearby window at where the gunship had landed.

Outside was what seemed to be an endless red ocean. It looked completely uninhabited. The

Doctor couldn't remember ever seeing such a place before, but then, his memory was far from reliable.

Irritated at himself for wasting time taking in his surroundings, The Doctor rushed off to find Cass. He ran to the deadlocked door, only to find there was no longer any door. Just fire. He ran through the fire and flames, only to find Cass' body already floating out on the sea, pooling out of a hole that fire had burned through the side of the ship.

He stared, paying no mind to the flames nipping at his feet. A companion in a sea of blood. What kind of cruel joke was the universe playing on him? How many times had he seen that before?

"Charley, C'rizz, Lucie, Tamsin, Molly..."

A furious explosion burst from the other end of the ship, the force of the blast propelling the Doctor all the way to the TARDIS.

He opened the doors, and walked over to the TARDIS controls with less haste than he should have, given the speed at which the ship was exploding. Nonetheless, he managed to zoom the TARDIS into the sky, turning his back on the oceans beneath him, speeding into the time vortex, light years away, centuries away.

"No more," he whispered.

There were no more adventures for Cass. There were no more adventures for him. There were worlds out there where the sky was burning, but the seas were full of corpses, and the rivers dreamt of a universe long gone. No more companions, no more peace, no more running away. The universe had beaten him and broken him. All that was left was to try and beat it and break it back to how it used to be.

"No more," he repeated.

The Eighth Doctor sailed into the Time War.
To fight.

At times, the Eighth Doctor was thankful of forgetful mind. It let him forget the fighting. Most of it, anyway. He couldn't count how much time had passed since that day Cass died and he's resolved to try to end the war for good. Perhaps by now he's spent more time fighting in the Time War than he had even living on Orbis.

No matter. It would all be over soon enough.

He'd searched for a surefire way to end the war for a long time, and through missions and calculations too numerous to name, had discovered that the Key of Rassilon, if weaponised, could produce enough destructive energy to end the war for good. By destroying Daleks and

Time Lords alike.

Like Cass said - who could tell the difference anymore?

Rassilon himself had altered the Key into a weapon, one he called the Eye of Discord, the Galaxy Eater, the Moment. He'd locked it away deep in the Omega Arsenal, but the Doctor had finally managed to steal it, then install it into a de-mat gun so he could activate it.

He parked the TARDIS on Gallifreyan sands, near the old weathered barn he knew so well. He walked out, silently.

He didn't care how close the TARDIS was. It was a shell of its former self as much as he was, awful coral-like structures sprouting and overtake his once-pristine interior room.

The Doctor's looks had changed too, he knew. For a while he'd traded the clothes that Charley used to dote over and Lucie used to laugh over, for a much more stripped-down leather jacket, around the time he'd met Molly. Later, in a vain attempt to recapture the hope and wonder of his youth, he'd gone back to his signature Edwardian style. But there was no one to dote on it or laugh at it anymore. He didn't have any companions now.

What even was he anymore? He was the Doctor, but that name was tarnished enough that he no longer cared what anyone thought of himself. There was nothing to say, no notice to serve. It had all gone on too long. No more. It was time for an ending.

He walked through the barn doors, took the Moment out of the sack he'd carried it in, and got to work.

As he readied the Moment for activation, he felt a pang of his old self for the first time in quite a while. He'd end the war, he'd destroy the Daleks, but all his own people as well...

But then, the Time Lords were as much the Time War as the Daleks. Perhaps moreso.

He thought on all the evil they'd brought to the universe. Only the monstrous would deserve such an infernal device as the Moment, but it was the monstrous, his own people, the agents of chaos, that had devised it in the first place. The casualties of war were on them as much as the Daleks. They were all cursed. No more. It was time for the Time Lords to right their own wrongs. It was time for the Doctor to act instead of judge.

"Physician, heal thyself."

He fired.

Immediately, the Moment exploded with red light, scorching his hand and beaming haphazardly off in different directions. One beam hit him squarely in the chest, with such force that he was blown out the back of the barn, outside, right through the TARDIS doors. Wheezing and bleeding, he stumbled to the TARDIS controls. The red beam had gone right through him, and into the TARDIS too. The cloister bell was ringing, the time rotor sparking, and the structures around the interior were falling, aflame.

As the Doctor pulled the TARDIS up into the sky, the Moment continued to bleed fiery light,

consuming everything it touched. He pulled back further and further, as the Moment swallowed up Gallifrey. He pulled up out of Gallifrey, and saw the remaining sky trenches swallowed up by the endless red light.

He continued to lean on the same lever, not quite sure if it was because it would be too physically painful to pull himself off it, or because he wanted to be absolutely certain the Moment ended the Time War.

After Gallifrey, the Moment continued to swallow up all the surrounding Dalek fleets, then spread onwards and outwards. The Eighth was confident at this point it would work as he thought, eating the galaxy away, locking the Time War out of natural time forever, and finally bringing an ending to things.

As he was wont to so often, the Doctor was forgetting something. He looked down and saw he was leaking golden light.

He'd have been willing to go down with his ship, but he could already feel a new consciousness starting to bloom inside him, one that wouldn't. So he worked the TARDIS controls to sail into the time vortex, away from the red light, away from the Moment, away from the cinders of the Time War.

Warping into the vortex, the Doctor fell back from the controls, onto the TARDIS floor.

This wasn't going to be easy. In the very early days of the Time War, Rassilon head weaponised regeneration, the idea being that violent regenerations would take out enemies that harmed Time Lords enough to trigger regeneration. There was now less lying peacefully on the floor, and more painfully exploding.

But then, he deserved plenty of pain.

The Eighth Doctor succumbed to the golden light, and regenerated.

The Ninth Doctor woke up disoriented. The TARDIS had changed. So had he.

He could see the TARDIS was different. That lovely coral, the green light, the smaller and less ostentatious interior. And he could feel he was different. He was born anew, and...and it was over.

Finally, it was over.

He stood up, walked over to the new TARDIS console, and ran some scans. Sure enough...it was over. They were gone. They were all gone.

He staggered back, outside the TARDIS doors, without even checking where he'd landed.

Outside, he staggered past signs telling of a new building development in Totter's Lane. His mind was on other things.

“They’re all gone,” he muttered. “I’m the only one left.”

He was suddenly very aware of the glowing key in his pocket, and started stumbling back towards the TARDIS. Once inside, he doubled over in pain.

“Still cooking,” he muttered. Regeneration energy was still working its way through his system.

He launched the TARDIS into the vortex once more, before keeling over onto the floor again.

The Doctor settled into his new self as the pain and memories of the Eighth Doctor faded. He had some small adventures alone, breezing along quickly, never staying along. Just settling into being a Doctor in peacetime again, though never slowing down too much, lest he begin to reflect on his past too much. He wouldn’t even slow down long enough to look at his new self in a mirror.

Eventually the TARDIS alerted him to the Nestene Consciousness causing some sort of issue in London in 2005. Autons, what better problem for a fresh Doctor?

Exploring a store they’d infiltrated, his sonic screwdriver’s scans alerted him to a large concentration of Autons in the basement. Making his way down, he picked up on readings of a human lifeform down there.

Arriving in the nick of time, the Doctor came beside the young woman being menaced by the Autons, and extended his hand.

“Run!”

“By the way, did I mention it also travels in time?”

The Ninth Doctor and Rose Tyler sailed across the stars. Ghosts from the past, aliens from the future, flying, dancing, always together.

Until now. Rose was stuck back in dreary London, while the Doctor was fighting Daleks 20000 years into the future, yet right now!

There was nothing for her here. She had to go back. She had to save him.

“Keep going!” Rose yelled.

The TARDIS still wasn’t opening up, hard as Mickey pulled.

“Put your foot down!” Jackie yelled outside.

“Faster!”

“Give it some more, Mickey!”

“Keep going!”

“Come on, come on!”

“Keep going!”

“Give it some more!”

Mickey’s yells were drowned out as the TARDIS console finally opened up, finally blossomed with golden light, enveloping Rose, drinking her in. The time vortex poured into her, the TARDIS poured into her, like honey to the bee.

As Rose was swallowed up by the vortex, time broke apart for her. Past and future, cause and effect, they were meaningless now.

She was barrelling through the vortex into the future, to the Doctor, but she was also closing the TARDIS doors before Mickey or Jackie could react.

She was tearing apart a Dalek fleet, but she was also kissing the Doctor. She was bursting with the heart of the TARDIS, all the time in the vortex, and she was letting go all that power, it leaking out her eyes and into the Doctor’s.

The sun and the moon, the day and night, they weren’t separated by anything anymore. They were all together and they were all discrete, they were all at once and they were forever apart. She could see so much more, but it was all so much, she could barely make sense of it. There was no throughline, no narrative, no story, just utter chaos.

She willed herself toward an ending, any ending, to try and get her bearings, to try and keep her consciousness above the tides of time.

She pushed her mind forward and could see Rose’s final goodbye - her final goodbye - to the Doctor, at Dårlig Ulv Stranden. Bad Wolf Bay.

An ending. She needed to anchor herself to it, to keep her mind from being swallowed up.

Rose Tyler, the TARDIS, the time vortex, she had to bind them together.

Time swam over her again and she felt her mind adrift in the vortex, but she focused on that ending, Bad Wolf Bay. When she suddenly became aware she was on Satellite 5 again, she held that ending in mind, and left herself a reminder.

“I am the Bad Wolf. I create myself.”

The Doctor looked up at her in astonishment, but she was busy looking at the signage above her. BADWOLF CORPORATION. She knew that was from her, but she had to create it in the first place to not get lost, to keep her mind. She had to remember cause and effect, past and present, or she’d be gone, her mind would melt away amongst the vortex, and all that’s left would be the TARDIS and a young shopgirl, separate, of no use to anyone. This was her only chance.

“I take the words, I scatter them in time and space. A message to lead myself here.”

She pushed, and scattered the words throughout time, and took them deep into her as well. Bad Wolf. That's who she was. The name anchored her. She could see the whole of time and space, every single atom of existence, but that name, it focused her, it anchored her, it kept her conscious.

The Bad Wolf felt herself pulled back, and suddenly she was conscious of the TARDIS doors closing, the ship beginning to vault through the vortex. But it wasn't as overwhelming now. She was the Bad Wolf. She was in control, above the waves.

She could see everything, change anything. She had so much power, and so much time to use it.

She focused her mind onto the Doctor and drank him in, all of him, not just her Doctor, but all that he'd been before and all he'd be in future as well. She wanted him safe. She wanted him happy. For so long, he'd remain unhappy. The Time War had hurt him so much.

She focused on where he hurt the most and saw a younger him firing an ornate, complicated looking device. He killed his people, turned into her Doctor, and the war ended. He burst with pain, then burst with light.

But she could change that.

The Bad Wolf became acutely aware of just how much she could impose her will onto time and space. There were no limitations. As long as she anchored herself, remembered what she was, kept thinking in straight lines, in stories and narratives, in beginnings and endings, in cause and effect...as long as she did that, she could push her will freely.

She could do more than save the Doctor. She could heal him, help him. But first she had to know what she was dealing with. She pulled herself back to the beginning, and watched.

Gallifrey. Stealing the TARDIS. It was so new, such a beginning, that she didn't dare try and push earlier and learn more. She sped on. The Doctor, the First Doctor. The junkyard. The granddaughter. The teachers. The Daleks. And, eventually, an ending.

The Second Doctor. More Daleks. She was uncomfortable lingering this early. It was so far from her Doctor it was hard to feel any anchors. She was keenly aware of how easily she could slip away. So she sped through, faster and faster.

The Time Lords. The Third Doctor. The Fourth, the Fifth, the Sixth. The timeline grew more frayed, it lapsed, but it was still one continuous stream.

The Seventh Doctor. As she tried to focus on the Seventh Doctor, she felt her sense of sight and visuals slide away. Her understanding of the Doctor came to her just in thoughts, in words. It wasn't like the same stream of the first six Doctors anymore, but then, was she

focusing as hard on them as she was on him now? Maybe it was never as continuous as she thought.

Sight returned to her, blindingly, and she saw him become the Doctor that would end it all. The one before hers, the one who'd end the Time War. But then her sight blinked out again, and her awareness was back to thoughts and words. Some time passed until she began to feel speech creeping in, and then her sense of past Doctors began to be filled with speech too, retroactively. She was becoming more and more aware of how to think, how to understand, how to feel across the vortex.

Again, the Eighth Doctor ended the Time War, and regenerated into the Ninth. She saw herself eventually save the Ninth, then adventure with the Tenth, before the final goodbye at Bad Wolf Bay. It wasn't long after that he changed again, and then he was so young, so mad, but so empty too. There were no great mysteries for the Eleventh Doctor, no great enemies. He lived an uneventful life before regenerating into the Twelfth Doctor, another young man but this time with ginger hair, and with a habit of exclaiming "quel dommage!" He lived a long life but eventually that too came to an end, with the Doctor all alone.

He did not regenerate again.

The Bad Wolf did not like that ending. The Eleventh Doctor retreated into childishness and never came to terms with his age, let alone the Time War. As for the Twelfth Doctor, well he was all alone right to the end. These were not the endings she wanted for the Doctor. And so the Bad Wolf plunged into the Doctor's timeline, and began making changes.

The Bad Wolf was touched by how the Tenth Doctor stayed the same for Rose, for her, but expending a regeneration that way seemed to stunt him.

What if it didn't? What if the chamber containing his previously discarded hand wasn't in the TARDIS, what if he had no receptacle to push his regeneration into? What if the Tenth became the Eleventh early, after being shot by a Dalek and standing in a TARDIS with Rose Tyler, Jack Harkness, and Donna Noble?

She didn't know if it would improve anything, and at the back of her mind thought that trying to fix the Eighth Doctor would help more in the long run, but didn't she have all the time in the world? She could always change things back if they didn't work. She had all the time she needed.

So she willed herself into that moment in the TARDIS, and opened the TARDIS floor so Jack's chamber with the hand fell down. No one noticed, all too busy focusing on the Doctor.

Events did not proceed according to plan. The Eleventh Doctor was too alien, too manic to

comfort his companions or think up a plan to stop the Daleks, and eventually annoyed the Supreme Dalek with his new catchphrases so much that he was exterminated.

The Bad Wolf pulled her mind back, pained. No, this wouldn't do. The Bad Wolf pulled back and restored the Tenth Doctor's hand chamber to the TARDIS before he began to regenerate, and let events proceed as they had before, as they had properly. Back to normal.

The Eleventh Doctor troubled her. Bringing him in early than usual didn't improve things. What would happen if he came later?

Towards the end of the Tenth Doctor, so many from his past returned. The Time Lords. The Master. Rassilon. The Bad Wolf sped through them all, to the proper end of the Tenth Doctor. Four knocks.

"They gone, then?" asked Wilf. "Yeah, goodo. If you could let me out?"

"Yeah."

"Only, this thing seems to be making a bit of a noise."

"The Master left the nuclear bolt running. It's gone into overload."

"And that's bad, is it?"

"No, because all the excess radiation gets vented inside there. Vinvocci glass contains it. All five hundred thousand rads, about to flood that thing."

"Oh. Well, you better let me out then."

"Except it's gone critical. Touch one control and it floods. Even the sonic would set it off."

"I'm sorry."

"Sure."

"Look...just leave me."

"Okay, right then, I will. Because you had to go in there, didn't you? You had to go and get stuck, oh yes! Because that's who you are, Wilfred. You were always this. Waiting for me all this time."

"No really, just leave me. I'm an old man, Doctor. I've had my time."

"Well, exactly. Look at you. Not remotely important. But me? I could do so much more. So much more! But this is what I get. My reward. And it's not fair! Oh. Oh...lived too long."

"No, no, no, please, please don't, no, don't! Please don't! Please!"

"Wilfred, it's my honour. Better be quick. Three, two, one."

It was trivial for the Bad Wolf to focus her will into the chamber and displace most of the radiation far off in time. The Doctor will still be hurt, enough that he'd think he was going to regenerate...but he wouldn't.

A short conversation with Wilf, and off the Doctor went, on his tour of companions, readying himself for what he thought was his end. Eventually, after seeing her a final time (for him), he staggered back into the TARDIS.

“I don’t want to go.”

And he didn’t.

It didn’t take long for the Doctor and the remaining Daleks in the universe to begin the Time War anew. Again, his tangles with the Daleks saw him perish. This timeline hadn’t healed the Doctor at all, it had just exposed how bound to the Time War he still was, how doomed he was to repeat it again and again.

So, the Bad Wolf pulled back and restored the timeline to how it originally was. Clearly, saving the Doctor, healing the Doctor, it wasn’t going to be quick or easy.

She began to experiment more and more wildly. She tried setting up events to make the Eighth Doctor regenerate earlier, before using the Moment, but it kept resulting in Ninth Doctors different to hers.

One timeline saw an older, fussier Ninth Doctor tangled up with a race called the Shalka, with an android Master in tow.

One timeline saw a suave Ninth Doctor fall in love with a woman called Emma, and burn through all his regenerations rapidly in an encounter with the Master.

Another timeline saw a bald Doctor who loved to try out different voices gain a fetishistic obsession with the Daleks, as he tried to bring the Time War to a big finish.

None of these would do, none of these were her Ninth Doctor. She settled the Eighth Doctor’s regeneration back to how it originally was.

Sometimes, for inspiration, she’d bring herself back to the moment she did (or rather, she would) save the Ninth Doctor from the Emperor of the Daleks and his scavenger fleet.

“You’ve got the entire vortex running through your head,” the Doctor would say. “You’re gonna burn!”

Indeed, she felt increasing amounts of pain the more she played with time. But wasn’t she the avatar of time, of the vortex? How could she be hurting herself?

Sometimes it felt like something was on the outside of her, pressing in. Was that Rose’s body? Or was that the vortex itself? Was something trying to break into time, into the universe?

She quickly zoomed through the Doctor’s timelines to investigate. Nothing seemed particularly different. The Tenth Doctor now encountered a woman named River Song, that was new, but it wasn’t until the Eleventh Doctor that there were big changes.

There was something different about the crack behind Amelia Pond's wall.

"You've had some cowboys in here. Not actual cowboys. Though that can happen."

This was all new. Before, the crack was just a crack, albeit one that leaked artron energy. Now, there was something behind it.

The Bad Wolf zoomed through the Eleventh Doctor's timeline and saw all sorts of new things. Rory died, but came back. The Doctor was trapped, but escaped. The TARDIS exploded, then didn't. All sorts of new enemies pursued the Doctor in the name of silence. Eventually the Doctor visited his grave - a new one, at that, on the planet Trenzalore. He never met any younger versions of himself, something she thought might help him cope with such a revelation, but instead proceeded to unwittingly arrive at Trenzalore long, long before it would become his grave.

"There you are," the Doctor said, inside a house in Trenzalore he was investigating with his newest companion. "What took you so long?"

"What's wrong?" asked Clara. "It's only a crack in the wall."

"I knew. I always knew it wasn't over."

"What is it?"

"A split in the skin of reality."

"A tiny sliver of the 26th of June, 2010. The day the universe blew up."

"Missed that..."

"I rebooted it, put it all back together again."

"That's good!"

"Well it was my TARDIS that blew it up in the first place, I felt a degree of responsibility. But the scar tissue remains. A structural weakness in the whole universe. And something's trying to get through it, from outside our universe, from somewhere else. Of course, of course. It makes sense."

"It does?"

"Yes. If you tried to break through a wall, you'd choose the weakest spot. If you were trying to break into this universe, you'd choose this crack, because...no, if you were trying to break back into this universe."

The Doctor turned to his other new companion, the disembodied Cyberman head he called handles.

"You said Gallifrey," he said to the head. "Why did you say Gallifrey?"

"Analysis of message composition indicates Gallifreyan origin," replied Handles, "according to TARDIS data banks."

"You said Gallifrey was gone," said Clara.

"I did. I did. I blew it up. I killed them all, I don't understand how this can be happening! The

message is coming through here. The truth field is too, at a guess. If it's somehow the Time Lords...if it's the Time Lords..."

The Doctor pulled something out of his pocket.

"Seal of the High Council of Time Lords, nicked it off the Master in the Death Zone," he said as he placed it onto Handles. "There is an algorithm imprinted in the atomic structure. Use it to decode the message."

"Message decoding. Message analysis proceeding. Information available. The message is a request for information."

"It's a question, why can't you just say it's a question?"

"It is being projected through all of time and space on a repeating cycle."

"The oldest question in the universe, hidden in plain sight..."

"Warning, translation will be available to all life-forms in range. Translation follows..."

The Doctor paced around the room nervously, as Handles began to relay the message.

"Doctor who? Doctor who? Doctor who? Doctor who?"

The voice started out in Handles' robotic tones, but began to take on the tone of its actual speaker as Handles tuned more accurately onto its resonancies. The Doctor expected the voice to be the General's, or perhaps Rassilon's, but it was neither. It was harsher, louder, more distorted, and yet almost reminded him of the voice of one his younger selves.

"A question only I could answer. A truth field to make sure I'm not lying. If I give my name, they'll know they've found the right place, and that it's safe to come through."

"The Time Lords? Okay, so what then? If you answer the question and they come back, what happens?"

"Ah, you need to take this to the TARDIS and put it in the charger slot for the sonic."

"Why?"

"Hell. All hell, that's what happens if the Time Lords come back. I don't know how they've done it, but I know there's half a universe up there already, waiting to open fire. Now please, just go to the TARDIS and do what I say."

After tricking Clara and having the TARDIS take her back home, the Doctor guarded the town of Christmas on the planet Trenzalore for nine hundred years, from a seemingly endless siege.

Eventually the Eleventh Doctor regenerated out of old age (wearing a bit thin...), taking many Daleks out in the explosive process.

The new Twelfth Doctor was different from other ones the Bad Wolf had seen. He was refined where the Eleventh was goofy, dark where the Eleventh was pale, bald where the Eleventh had

been haired.

After some time, he too came to an end, and with that, so did the Siege. The few survivors had nothing to fight for, now the entity behind the cracks would never be able to get its answer. The TARDIS, automatically returned after depositing Clara back home so long ago, would eventually suffer a size leak, and a much younger Eleventh Doctor and Clara would visit the great grave it became.

Something bothered the Bad Wolf all the while. She'd seen the Eighth Doctor destroy the Time Lords. It couldn't be them behind the crack. Who could it be?

She scanned back through the Doctor's timeline, all the way from the First Doctor, looking for anything to help her understand, when she heard a voice, the very same voice that asked "Doctor who?" on Trenzalore.

"Keep away!"

"Doctor! Doctor, it is you! Is this the TARDIS? I mean, what's happened? It's all been like a dream...I found myself here, when I was last in the Time Station with those awful Neverpeople, and...oh Doctor, come on, let me help you."

"I said keep away!"

"Oh! Doctor, what's wrong? Have you been injured or something?"

"Injured? No, I have not been injured. This TARDIS contained all of the Time Station when it exploded. This ship was filled to bursting with a great mass of the fiercest, fizzing energy."

"What, Anti-Time?"

"A crude term for such a matter of life and death. But now that the breach is resolved, now that the problem of you is resolved...well, all that remains of that stuff in this whole reality is held...in here."

"What, in the TARDIS?"

"No. In...here..."

"Y-you're scaring me now. Stop it, Doctor, please-"

"Doctor? Doctor? I hold the last vestiges of the most awesome power ever imagined. Imagined, yes! How much better if I should take my title from a work of imagination, a creature willed to power by the undying anger of an unreal race!"

"Doctor, I haven't got the faintest idea what you're on about, but I really think you need help, so if you'll just let me-"

The Eighth Doctor slapped Charley Pollard hard across her face. She screamed, and fell to the floor.

"Doctor, Doctor, what's wrong with you?"

"I told you girl, I AM NOT THE DOCTOR! I am become he who sits inside your head, he who lives among the dead, he who sees you in your bed, and eats you when you're sleeping. I am

become...ZAGREUS!"

The Bad Wolf observed the confusing events that followed. This Zagreus figure seemed to be a manifestation of Anti-Time, a dark mirror to time itself, born of tampering with the passage of time. With a sinking feeling, understanding came to the Bad Wolf.

She reflected on just how massively she'd tampered in the vortex, on how freely she had experimented with enormous changes to the web of time. In the Doctor's original timeline, Zagreus was eventually defeated by the Eighth Doctor, and the remnants of his existence purged from the Doctor's body by Rassilon when the Doctor exited a parallel pocket universe Rassilon used as a plaything. The Divergent Universe.

Was she to the actual universe, as Rassilon was to the Divergent? Just what had she wrought? Previously, when Rassilon had purged Zagreus from the Eighth Doctor, the Divergent Universe was able to end and reset itself, free from all life. But her tampering with time seemed to embolden it, enliven it, lend it strength. It fed off the massive amounts of Anti-Time she had produced in tinkering with the Doctor's timestream. Rassilon did successfully expel Zagreus from the Eighth Doctor, but now Zagreus festered inside a Divergent Universe that the Time Lords mistakenly thought dealt with.

The cracks in time the Silence had formed blowing up the TARDIS in an attempt to prevent the Doctor from answering the great question and beginning the Time War anew, were the very cracks in the skin of the universe that Zagreus was able to question the Doctor through. An endless paradox loop sustaining itself, this was not something she could undo without causing such massive changes, and thus Anti-Time. That very Anti-Time would enlarge the cracks wide enough for Zagreus to come through, before she could change things enough to prevent Zagreus existing in the first place.

It was maddening. She was trapped.

She sensed Zagreus wasn't alone in the Divergent Universe, but joined by a legion of entities feeding off Anti-Time as well. Whether Neverpeople, or the race known as the Divergents, she wasn't sure - Zagreus remained rather confusing for her. She could tell that, while monstrous and powerful, they'd still be annihilated if the Papal Mainframe, Daleks, or any other great force met them on Trenzalore when they emerged.

Hence, the siege. The Doctor mistakenly thought Zagreus and the Neverpeople were the Time Lords, because Zagreus was born of the Doctor, he had his memories, he was of Gallifreyan origin. He could trick him as easily as he could trick himself, and that was something both the forgetful Eighth and childish Eleventh Doctors were very good at. And what better assurance

that it was safe to pass into the universe than a secret only the Doctor knew - his name?

The Doctor dying alone on a planet-sized warfield graveyard was tragedy enough, but at least it would prevent Zagreus from ever crossing over.

But then...the Doctor wasn't the only one who time travelled. All manner of races eventually gained that technology. And the more they used it, the greater the cracks would grow.

Eventually, Zagreus would be able to come through, and wreak his great destruction upon the universe.

The Bad Wolf had to stop him. But if she did it directly, it would only make him stronger, only grow the cracks wider.

No, she couldn't confront this head on. She had to deal it indirectly. As long as she observed timelines without changing them, the Anti-Time wouldn't increase, so she went over and over the Eighth Doctor's timeline until Zagreus made more sense to her.

The problem seemed to be that her manipulation of the Doctor's timeline had galvanised the Anti-Time within the Divergent Universe to the point that, rather than repeat in an endless sustainable loop, it would grow exponentially. This gave the shell of Zagreus more and more strength, and saw the atoms of the annihilated Neverpeople bind together, in a reversal of entropy. Anti-Time, anti-entropy. But the more Neverpeople, the more Anti-Time, and the more Anti-Time, the more Zagreus, and on and on it went.

The Neverpeople were so bound to Zagreus' continued existence that only he could kill him. If anyone else tried, they would simply immediately reconstitute themselves. But Zagreus had been so bound to the Doctor's existence, that the Doctor would be able to kill them for good. There were moments and locations in the Time War where pocket universes opened up long enough for the Doctor to warp back into the Divergent Universe without bringing them directly into the actual universe.

Yes. This could work. If the Doctor destroyed the Neverpeople, the Anti-Time would finally permanently disperse, Zagreus would lose enough power to be able to be dealt with, the Divergent Universe could be cleansed and closed off, and there would be nothing behind the cracks to trouble the universe.

The only problem was, she knew none of the Doctors after the Eighth Doctor would have it in them to genocide an entire race. Not again. Perhaps some of the younger Doctors would, particularly the Seventh, but Zagreus retained the imprint of the Eighth Doctor, and all the memories of his younger selves...he'd be able to think exactly like them, and counter them with ease.

As for the Eighth Doctor himself, he was too close to things. Even if he could be persuaded to wipe out the Neverpeople, Zagreus was too close to him. She didn't think the Eighth Doctor would be able to resist being overtaken by Zagreus.

What then? The only solution seemed to be...create a new Doctor. Before Trenzalore. A Doctor early enough in the timeline to work, at a safe point.

The more the Bad Wolf considered the idea, the better it seemed. If a Doctor was split off between the Eighth and Ninth, perhaps all the angst and pain of the Time War could be concentrated into one incarnation. The Eighth Doctor could regenerate uncorrupted, never having succumbed to the war and combat. A Doctor born in blood and battle would surely have the temperament to deal with the Neverpeople.

And so the Bad Wolf vowed to grow a new Doctor in his timeline

The Bad Wolf willed herself to the moment the Eighth Doctor made the choice to fight in the Time War, on a crashing gunship with a young pilot called Cass.

All she did was divert the ship's course. Easy enough - in the days of the Time War, ships unexpectedly warping through space and time wasn't uncommon. Instead of heading to a planet of red seas, she diverted it to Kasterborous, nearer Karn than Gallifrey.

"Help me, please. Can anybody hear me?"

"Please state the nature of your ailment or injury."

"I'm not injured, I'm crashing! I don't need a doctor."

"A clear statement of your symptoms will help us provide the medical practitioner appropriate to your individual needs."

"I'm trying to send a distress signal, stop talking about doctors!"

"I'm a Doctor...but probably not the one you're expecting."

Events proceeded much as they had before, until the ship crashed on an entirely different planet than it once had.

Cass died upon impact. So did the Doctor, in a sense. The Sisterhood of Karn managed to convince him of the necessity of participating in the Time War, and the Doctor despondently began to agree on fashioning a regeneration suited to the task.

A romantic, tragic end. It suited him.

"Physician, heal thyself."

The Eighth Doctor regenerated, but not into the Ninth Doctor. Instead, he became the War Doctor.

The Bad Wolf pushed ahead some years to see the development of this new incarnation. The War Doctor took no joy or pleasure from fighting in the Time War, but fight he did. She didn't want to see him this way. She rushed far, far forward, but as he aged, the War Doctor became less and less able to fight, and more and more woeful over not being a Doctor in the same way as the others. He still managed to use the Moment and end the Time War much as the Eighth Doctor had once done, but only very reluctantly.

So she pulled back to his relative youth, and diverted his TARDIS far, far into the future, at the time of the Siege of Trenzalore, so that a passing pocket universe lined up adjacent to the Divergent Universe. He was nothing if not clever. He'd be able to work it out.

Zagreus and the Neverpeople managed to break into this pocket dimension, but the physical dimensions of it were so alien that they didn't manifest in their original forms, but instead in bizarre, twisted manifestations. They began to feast on the timelines of the pocket universe's native inhabitants. The threat was so great that other Time Lords joined the War Doctor in the fray, to prevent them breaking into the universe proper. The Neverpeople, bleeding Anti-Time, became known as the Army of Meanwhiles and Neverweres, while Zagreus, far too twisted to be recognised as looking anything like the Doctor, became known as the Could've-Been-King. They used Anti-Time to nullify any that came close to them, constantly destroying the progression of time in the pocket universe.

Only the War Doctor remained pragmatic enough, cold enough, to not assist the native species being massacred, or the Time Lords rushing in to help. He watched, studied, and eventually grasped the nature of what they were fighting. The only thing he didn't work out was her involvement.

Of course, the War Doctor succeeded in the fight when he did enter. Firstly, he bound the native populations of the pocket universe to endlessly die, be reborn, and die again, suffering in the grip of Anti-Time. He used the generation of potential energy much the way a Weeping Angel would. Monstrously.

Secondly, he took the TARDIS of a Time Lord that died in the fighting, and turned it into a Paradox Machine he bound to a certain energy emanating from Trenzalore - the power of his own TARDIS, leeching out as the size leak took effect after the Doctor's final death. Now, when he solved the issue of Zagreus and the Neverpeople, it wouldn't retroactively undo the existence of the cracks from the Eleventh Doctor's timeline. Instead it would just prevent Zagreus and the Neverpeople ever breaking through the cracks after the Siege of Trenzalore ended. The Doctor would die in battle, but the universe would be saved.

After fixing time in these ways, he entered the Divergent Universe itself, and acted more monstrously than Zagreus could ever anticipated. Because he wasn't truly a Doctor. He was not bound to that name. And so, he wiped out the Neverpeople, the entire race.

The Anti-Time dispersed. Zagreus was so weakened that he presented no further threat; there was no way for him to regain any power now that the War Doctor had broken their link and his source of Anti-Time. There was no need to kill him. It would be a cruel act, a cowardly act. The Bad Wolf rushed forward in time before she could see if the War Doctor would do it. She didn't want to know.

The Doctor's timeline was now stable. There was no Twelfth Doctor anymore, since the War Doctor used a regeneration up, but the War Doctor regenerated into the Ninth Doctor much the same way the Eighth had, after using the Moment. The Eleventh Doctor saw his grave on Trenzalore in his earlier years, then made his grave in Trenzalore in his later ones. Displacing all the fighting in the Time War to the War Doctor instead of the Eighth Doctor gave the Eighth a cleaner break and neater ending, but didn't help the later Doctors cope with what they did. Doctor or not, he was the same man. The Bad Wolf realised there were no simple solutions, not the way she'd hoped.

There was no more chance of corrupting timelines or producing dangerous amounts of Anti-Time, now there was no conduit for it and no loop for it to sustain itself in. But still, the Bad Wolf did not feel particularly inclined to interfere with the Doctor's timeline any more. Hadn't she done enough? She would save the Ninth Doctor, and the Doctor's final end was noble enough.

Still, she couldn't bear the thought of all that guilt of the Time War resting on the Doctor forever.

So she dove into Gallifrey's past, replaced the Moment as the Time Lords knew it with a new device, a weapon so powerful and so advanced that it became sentient and developed a conscience. Of course, that conscience was her. She integrated herself with the Moment, inhabited it, drove her consciousness into it, and eventually found herself stolen by the War Doctor, and taken to a very weathered barn on Gallifreyan sands.

"Time Lords of Gallifrey, Daleks of Skaro, I serve notice on you all. Too long I have stayed my hand - no more. Today, you leave me no choice. Today, this war will end. No more. No more..."

The War Doctor walked through the barn doors, took the Moment out of the sack he'd carried

it in, and got to work.

“How, how do you work? Why is there never a big red button?”

The Bad Wolf took physical form, and, in the corner of the room, slowly rose. Projecting an avatar outside the vortex and onto actual physical space was disorienting.

“Hello? Is somebody there?” the War Doctor asked.

“It’s nothing,” the Bad Wolf replied. “It’s just a wolf.”

“Don’t sit on that!” exclaimed the War Doctor, appalled at the way she sat on the Moment’s physical shell.

“Why not?”

“Because it’s not a chair, it’s the most dangerous weapon in the universe!”

“Why can’t it be both? Why did you park so far away? Didn’t you want her to see it?”

“Want who to see?”

“The TARDIS. You walked for miles, and miles, and miles, and miles, and miles...”

“I was thinking.”

“I heard you.”

“You heard me?”

“No more,” she said, mocking the way he spoke. “No more!”

“Stop it.”

“No more!”

“Who are you?” he asked, before turning the face the Moment - the box - again. “It’s activating. Get out of here.”

He tried to take hold of it, but recoiled in pain.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“The interface is hot!”

“Well, I do my best...”

“There’s a power source inside...you’re the interface?”

“They must have told you the Moment had a conscience,” she said. “Hello! Oh, look at you. Stuck between a girl and a box - story of your life, eh, Doctor?”

“You know me?”

“I hear you. All of you, jangling around in that dusty old head of yours. I chose this face and form especially for you. It’s from your past. Or possibly your future. I always get those two mixed up.”

“I don’t have a future.”

“I think I’m called Rose Tyler,” she said, sorting through the mass of thoughts in her mind.

“No. Yes. No, sorry, no. No, in this form, I’m called...Bad Wolf. Are you afraid of the big bad wolf, Doctor?”

They argued over his name for a while, before getting to the point.

“If you have been inside my head, then you know what I’ve seen. The suffering. Every moment in time and space is burning. It must end, and I intend to end it the only way I can.”

“And you’re going to use me to end it by killing them all, Daleks and Time Lords alike. I could, but there will be consequences for you.”

“I have no desire to survive this.”

“That’s your punishment. If you do this, if you kill them all, that’s the consequence. You live. Gallifrey, you’re going to burn it, and all those Daleks with it, but all those children too. How many children are on Gallifrey right now?”

“I don’t know.”

“One day you will count them. One terrible night. Do you want to see what that will turn you into? Come on - aren’t you curious?”

She pulled down part of the vortex into the room, in the form of a shimmering, whirling portal.

“I’m opening windows to your future. A tangle in time through the days to come, to the man today will make of you.”

From the portal, out dropped a fez. Then into the portal, jumped a Doctor.

“Anyone lose a fez?”

“You! How can you be here? More to the point, why are you here?”

“Good afternoon,” said the War Doctor, cheerful to be away from the war. “I’m looking for the Doctor.”

“Well,” replied the Tenth Doctor, side-by-side with the Eleventh, “you’ve certainly come to the right place.”

The Bad Wolf watched the three Doctors have a grand adventure together, getting captured by English soldiers, ingeniously devising a solution to unlock a wooden door, settling a dangerous conflict between humans and Zygons, and finally all at the barn in Gallifrey together.

Alone, the Doctor - whether the Eighth, or his successor - could always manage enough self-loathing to use the Moment, but three of them together, with a companion in tow...it wasn’t easy to begin with, and it was much, much harder like that.

Across space and time, far, far away, another Doctor wrestled with a similar conflict.

“It’s ready,” exclaimed the Ninth Doctor, as the Delta Wave’s calculations finally finished. A handle extended from the device, the would-be instrument of the destruction of two races.

The Bad Wolf extended a similar instrument from the Moment, in the shape of a big red button.

“You wanted a big red button,” she said to the War Doctor.

“Go away, all of you,” said the War Doctor wearily. “This is for me.”

“These events should be time-locked,” replied the Tenth Doctor, “we shouldn’t even be here.”

“So something let us through,” mused the Eleventh Doctor.

“You clever boys,” said the Bad Wolf, but only projecting herself to the War Doctor.

“Go back,” he said. “Go back to your lives. Go and be the Doctor that I could never be. Make it worthwhile.”

“All those years, burying you in my memory...”

“Pretending you didn’t exist. Keeping you a secret, even from myself...”

“Pretending you weren’t the Doctor, when you were the Doctor more than anybody else.”

“You were the Doctor on the day it wasn’t possible to get it right.”

“But this time...”

“You don’t have to do it alone.”

The three of them placed their hands onto the Moment together.

“Thank you,” said the War Doctor, moved.

As the Doctors prepared to commit dual genocide, the companion, Clara, cried. She could barely stand to see what they were about to do.

The Moment projected the Time War all around them, to drive home the gravity of the situation even further. She wasn’t going to interfere with his timelines anymore, but she was going to try and nudge him in a new direction for himself.

“There isn’t any other way,” said the Eleventh Doctor, in the barn. “There never was. Either I destroy my own people, or let the universe burn.

On a Dalek ship millenia away, the Ninth Doctor faced the Emperor of the Daleks.

“You really want to think about this, because if I activate this signal, every living creature dies.”

Back in the barn, Clara was crying.

“Look at you. The three of you. The warrior, the hero, and you.” She looked to the Eleventh Doctor.

“And what am I?” he asked.

“Have you really forgotten?”

“I want to see you become like me,” boomed the Emperor of the Daleks, so long ago, so far ahead. “Hail the Doctor, the Great Exterminator.”

“We’ve got enough warriors,” said Clara, back at the barn. “Any old idiot can be a hero.”

“Then what do I do?” asked the Eleventh Doctor.

“Prove yourself Doctor,” intoned the Emperor of the Daleks. “What are you, coward or killer?”

“Be a doctor,” said Clara. “You told me the name you chose was a promise. What was the promise?”

“Never cruel or cowardly,” said the Tenth Doctor.

“Never give up, never give in,” said the War Doctor.

“Coward, any day,” said the Ninth Doctor, pulling his hands away from the Delta Wave.

“Gentlemen, I have had four hundred years to think about this...I’ve changed my mind!” exclaimed the Eleventh Doctor, pulling his hands away from the Moment.

The Bad Wolf gleefully retracted the doomsday button from the Moment’s display.

“There’s still a billion billion Daleks up there, attacking.”

“Yeah, there is. There is.”

“But there’s something those billion billion Daleks don’t know.”

“Because if they did, they’d probably send for reinforcements!”

“What? What don’t they know?”

“This time there’s three of us.”

The three Doctors - no, not three, all thirteen - proceeded to save Gallifrey, and undo the ending of the Time War. The Bad Wolf had never felt more pride, or more love, for him. She materialised onto the Dalek ship before the Daleks could exterminate the Ninth Doctor. In her mind, she was on the Dalek ship, but she was also in the vortex. She was at Trenzalore, she was at Gallifrey, she was at Skaro, she was on Earth. She’d opened a door for the Doctor, but this time hadn’t forced him through. She gave him the opportunity to change time, but didn’t change it in his stead. And he more than rose to the occasion.

He gave himself to peace, as she gave herself to time.

He looked into himself, three of his selves, the War Doctor, the Tenth Doctor, the Eleventh Doctor.

She looked into herself, three of her selves, Rose Tyler, the Bad Wolf, and the Moment.

“I looked into the TARDIS, and the TARDIS looked into me,” she said on the Dalek ship.

She pulled herself out from the Doctor’s heroics and went to survey Trenzalore again. There was something different now, something bright, so very bright, but she didn’t want to look any further. She’d looked enough. It was time to go back and save her Doctor.

On and on the events at Trenzalore would loop, always leading the Doctor there.

On and on the events in the vortex would loop, always leading her to Bad Wolf Bay.

“I am the Bad Wolf. I create myself. I take the words, I scatter them in time and space. A

message to lead myself here.”

Bizarrely, the Zagreus loop had been completely overwritten, for a pocket universe was now adjacent to the proper one, one that really did contain Gallifrey. It really was the Time Lords asking “Doctor who?” behind the crack in the wall at Trenzalore now. Zagreus was gone, for good.

“I want you safe. My Doctor. Protected from the false god.”

She reflected how the Doctor both had destroyed Gallifrey, and hadn’t. The Time Lords and the Daleks, their war seemed so small in comparison to all the Doctor’s timelines stretching out.

“You are tiny.”

His pain and guilt was real, but at the same time, it wasn’t. Both instances were real. Both emotions were true. All the timelines, all the permutations, all the stories, they were all real in their time.

“I can see the whole of time and space.”

She could see that now. So many possibilities and timelines stretching out forever, not cancelling each other out so much as spinning out more and more possibilities, ever onwards. What was a fleet of Daleks above Earth? What could be more trivial?

“Every single atom of your existence, I divide them.”

Her mind flashed to the barn, to both the Eighth Doctor and the War Doctor ending the Time War, one way or another.

“Everything must come to dust. All things. Everything dies. The Time War ends.”

Jack was gaping at the Tenth Doctor regenerating into the Eleventh Doctor alongside Donna Noble and Rose Tyler, and he was gaping at the Tenth Doctor regenerating into himself, but right now, he was dead on this very ship. No more.

“How can I let go of this? I bring life.”

Her mind was burning with the power of the TARDIS, of the time vortex. The pain was overwhelming. She could hear herself, or the Doctor. Words were skipping from her mind.

“The sun and the moon, the day and night. Why do they hurt?”

All the Doctor’s timelines stretched out before her. All the insanity between the Eighth and Ninth Doctor. All the Ninth Doctors. The endless variations afterwards.

“I can see everything. All that is, all that was, all that ever could be.”

Tears ran down her face.

“My head,” she said

“Come here,” he said

“It’s killing me.”

“I think you need a Doctor.”

The Doctor kissed her, and took all her pain. She collapsed to the ground as that vast godhead and consciousness left her, leaving her time for just one final thought.

The life of the Doctor wasn't defined just the Time War, or the Siege of Trenzalore, or any other battle he'd fought in. It was defined by the endless conflict between all the different lives he lived, by all the stories told of him. That neverending fountain of new adventures, that neverending sprawl of different timelines, that neverending conflict between all the tales of the man with so many faces - that was the war of the Doctor.

War 'n Wilf

By Hermit

An adventure with the War Doctor and Wilf

He had seen enough, the never ending death and destruction, the endless suffering, the eternal war.

He had to put an end to it, but this meant not only killing the Daleks but also his own people, even the innocent.

It was the only way to stop his war spreading throughout all time and space. There was no other option.

He wasn't sure of much, but was sure he wouldn't fight another day in this war.

But he wanted to see what he was saving, so he took one last trip to the place he had so many fond memories.

He stepped inside his Tardis. The Tardis had been damaged and was unable to keep fixed theme and had taken on a mixture from many points in its time stream. Currently it was a mixture of the coral, white with roundels, and neon theme.

He fiddled with some buttons and knobs on the console, many of which were missing or broken. Exposed wires snaked out of just about everywhere.

It had seen better days. He grasped a handle on the console,

It was stiff from damage and didn't come down smoothly in one pull like it used to.

He pulled and with a creak it move a quarter of the way. He exerted more pressure,

Moving it three quarters of the way, but it would not budge any further.

The man formerly known as the doctor, wearily groaned, "c'mon old girl, just one last trip"

The Tardis seemed defiant, as if it didn't want to go.

He angrily kicked down the crank, with the back of his heel and with a loud screech as if it were a horse given a kick, it moved the rest of the way down.

It stuttered, wheezed and groaned as it began to dematerialize and then fell chaotically through the time vortex.

It was a fine summer's morning in a small park somewhere in England.

The air was quiet. The chirping of the birds in the trees was only disrupted when a blue box suddenly appeared mid air crashing with a loud thump on it's side

The man inside, thrown about inside during the journey was dizzy, but still managed to make his way to the door and push it open and crawl out.

He stood up, still in a daze, stumbled a few steps forwards past some trees.

He stopped, took a quick look around "Am i here?.... Ah I made it."

before collapsing into some long grass which cushioned his fall.

It was about this time that Wilfred Mott was taking one of his morning strolls.

While walking up a small hill he comes across an old man lying in the grass.

He helps him up. "Took a bit of a turn did ye? Happened to me once or twice. Not as fit as we used to be eh?"

The old man, groans but doesn't reply.

Wilf then notices the blue box lying on its side just behind trees.

"No!? Couldn't be!!"

The Tardis was badly damaged. Scorched holes and long gashes from many a battle scarred the wooden exterior, revealing the default grey cylindrical housing.

The last time Wilf had seen the doctor was after Donna's wedding ceremony.

Back then he was a spry energetic young man, though he knew this was a deception and was in fact actually very old, centuries more than himself.

But this time he seemed a weary old fellow. Wilf briefly wondered how much older he could be now. It had been a few years from his point of view but who knows how long it was for the doctor.

"Doctor, what happened to you?"

"I don't go by that name anymore.

Anyway, Who are you?"

"Don't you remember me Doctor? It's me Wilf, Wilfred Mott"

"Can't say I do but I've been fighting for far too long, looks like it's taken its toll on my memory too."

"I'm sure whatever you're doing it's good. Anyway let's go sit down somewhere and grab a cuppa."

"Hmm, yes, I suppose it will take some time for the Tardis to repair itself."

War and Wilf find a cafe and order tea and sit down at a booth.

"Ah nothing soothes the soul like a good cuppa."

"Yes, though for the briefest of moments."

"What's bothering you?"

"I just can't go on fighting anymore."

"We don't fight for the victory, we do it for the people.

That's why i enlisted in the army when i was younger.

To protect the people i love. To try and create peace.

I felt it was my duty. "

"Duty.... Peace...but good what good is it if I can't save them all?"

"You never can, unfortunately, but you have to do your best

You've got to save whoever you can, if anyone can do it it's you Doctor."

Hmm, I think you've cheered me up a little.

All i can do to help doctor?

"Thanks, but i better be going. Goodbye Wilf"

"Goodbye Doctor"

The doctor leaves the cafe and returns to the park where the Tardis, now standing had slightly repaired itself. He stepped in, set the coordinates and yanked the handle in one smooth jerk, and the Tardis whirred once more.

He left with a new found resolve.

He knew what he had to do now.

The moment had come.

NO MERCY

By: catharticspurious

A tragedy featuring the War Doctor

In the first set of memories, everything is normal. The people of the village go about their lives, and everything is fine.

The second set of memories is the problem. Two of them, a slaughterwoman and her child, recount this problem to an old man - a self-professed healer - who sits ponderously on a barrel. Beyond the windowframe, the red sky of Unctu'um lies heavy with gaseous clouds, drifting by without care.

"We don't know when it started," the mother tells him. "I didn't even realise it wasn't just me. Not until Ark came to me crying about seeing things." Ark, the daughter, is curled up cross-legged on the floor beside the chair. She fiddles, distractedly, with the ends of her dress.

The healer doesn't change his facial expression. He listens patiently, but a tempest is brewing in his features.

The mother continues. "It's been hell for her. It started out as dreams, but now it's as if her dreams are following her into the daytime. It's always there, reminding her. Sometimes she's barely been able to move for crying. She'll be scared to get out of bed."

"And what," asks the old man, breaking his long silence, "has it been like for you?"

She stops in her tracks, words suddenly deserting her. Her gaze sinks to the floor, skittishly avoiding the mounting pressure of the healer's.

Another voice, young and squeaky, pipes up to fill the gap. "It's like bleeding," says Ark, shuffling round on the floor to face the guest, with wary eyes.

He regards the child curiously. "As though the memory's bleeding through?"

"Not that. It feels like I'm always bleeding. From the same places."

The mother bristles, and her glare at the visitor is heated. "Don't ask her that. She doesn't need it."

The healer leans back in his seat, seemingly backing down but not far. "I need to find out about this, or I can't fix it. You're the only ones in the whole village who'll talk to me."

"Of course no-one wants to talk about it. Not to a stranger. It's not the sort of thing that's easy to talk about to anyone."

"This...presence, in your memory. As much as you feel you're able...please, describe it to me."

Tell me what it is.”

The mother takes a deep breath, becoming steely within. Then, she begins her attempt.

“In the memory...it was a few years ago. I can’t tell exactly how many. But it was an ordinary day. I was gutting the Marnen hedgepuffers, getting ready to put them on sale. Now and then, I’d look out of the window, which I had just in front of me so I could see what I was doing by the sunlight. And...one time, I looked out of the window. And there was something in the sky. A shape.

“The shadow was being cast over the whole village. I couldn’t make it out at first. The underside was all dark. It was huge, and flat. When I poked my head out of the window to look up at it, I realised it was getting closer. Like the sky was about to fall down on our heads. People were screaming. But when it touched the tops of the houses, something wasn’t right.

“It wasn’t crushing anything. It was just, falling *around* everything. And it was dividing itself into these...blocks, and oozing around - it was this...this red...stuff.”

“Like meat,” interjects Ark. “It was a big piece of meat that was alive.”

The mother swallows and carries on. “It was almost complete darkness now, because the thing had settled over our whole building and we couldn’t see the sun. It started oozing through the cracks. Through the doors. Through the window. In these moving, rectangle slabs, changing size and sliding in.

“But this is what’s wrong. This is why I can’t tell myself it’s not real.” Her breathing is becoming hoarse. “Me and Ark. And everyone else in Marnen. We all have...different memories of what happened next. Because we were all in different places. Different rooms.”

“It came in my bedroom door,” Ark mutters.

“It came in from both the open window in front of me,” her mother resumes, “and from the door behind me. It cornered me. It cornered everyone. It filled up the room, it started oozing up the walls and turning everything red. I started seeing these things, faces in the walls, and I started feeling like there was never going to be any help. As though it was whispering to me.”

The healer wrings his hands. This time, it’s his gaze that falls to the grimy floor.

The mother stares out of the windowframe at the sky. “There was no room to escape. It was like being sucked in.”

Several moments pass in silence. The guest looks at Ark and her mother patiently, anticipating the continuation, but it doesn’t come.

He shifts uncomfortably.

“And when it came to you,” he tries, “it...”

“It wanted something,” says Ark, numbly.

They don’t go into it.

“It’s the Undermind Tissueform,” says the healer a few moments later, no longer sitting on the barrel but pacing sluggishly around in front of the mother and daughter. “A failed experimental weapon of the Daleks.”

Ark is suddenly attentive. “Daleks? The Daleks that are having the war?”

“Yes. In one of their increasingly desperate strategies, they tried to create a new kind of slave soldier by fusing the base instincts of countless species they considered inferior. They were hoping for something that would override their typical ego problems by virtue of being a pure animal. It turned out they couldn’t hope to control it, but they set it loose regardless in the hope it would destroy some other life in the process. It has no purpose, no goal. It’s just descending on populated areas, indulging its own primal whims.

“I’ve been chasing the Tissueform for some time - it was in orbit of this planet at the moment it suddenly vanished. Unfortunately, the Daleks set it loose with a space-time relay...and if what you’ve been telling me about your memories is right, then the Tissueform truly did come to this village - but not in this time. Your past has been rewritten.”

If he expects confused replies asking him to elaborate further, he’s disappointed.

“I don’t care what it is,” the mother calmly informs him through gritted teeth. “I want it to suffer. I want revenge for what it did.”

Ark stands up, and tugs at an end of the healer’s coat. She looks up at him with tired eyes. “Can you stop it hurting?”

He freezes, looking down at her with a mixture of sorrow, guilt and anxiety. For a moment, Ark feels as though she catches a small part of what she herself feels buried deep within the guest’s eyes; as if a mere look of his face captures even some tiny fragment of the horror, and possibly through lived experience. Blotting this out, however, is a sheen of repressed panic, which he represses further as he comes down on one knee to reach her height.

He doesn’t put a hand on her shoulder or anything so intimate.

He just says, without colour, “I can stop it.”

—

The third set of memories are, on the whole, a large improvement on the second.

In this set, just as the gigantic meat-creature appears to the denizens of the village, it’s abruptly halted in its march by the arrival of a grim old man - the local slaughterwoman feels as though she recognises him but can’t quite be certain - from a deep blue cubicle.

Receding out of the houses and back onto the street, the red entity (as witnessed by them all, peering nervously out of their windows) rears up before the man in all its fleshy, blocky grandeur. It moves as though it's a gigantic snake preparing to devour him.

He says some loud, angry phrases, but none that the villagers can quite remember.

He does something none of them can quite make out.

Instantaneously, the monster catches fire. Its entire, massive girth is swallowed by a vortex of flame, blinding in its intensity. The man stands there, unruffled.

The red meat blackens to ash. The oozing shudders back down to a dead-skinned shuffling, and finally stillness, as the entity piles up in the street like disused coal. Before long, the black dust itself begins to dissipate into the winds.

When all trace of the attacking creature has vanished, so has all trace of the man.

Life continues as normal after that point, up to the present day.

Yet this is still only the third set of memories, jostling for dominance with both the first and the second. The third is, perhaps, winning - it serves its purpose of being a different kind of story they can all tell themselves.

But it doesn't stop the second set from reaching back up to bite them.

The trauma that they each feel has not been erased. Even as the second set of memories gradually fades from living recollection, the instinctive fears - the muscle-memory - the feeling of internal disgust - those things, being written on the subconscious, persist like scars.

Pain, perhaps, is easier to write in than to write out.

The healer doesn't return. Presumably he's still fighting his war. They look for Hope, but all they see are dead crows.

Bespoke

By Doctor Winston'O Writing

An adventure featuring the Sixth Doctor

Quietly orbiting a white dwarf star, a million light years from Earth, was a TARDIS, disguised as a great wooden wardrobe. Its console room, set to the coral theme, was lined with hangers, shelving units, and assorted boxes of clothes. Trousers and coats dangled from every surface. Shoes of all types, from clogs to Adidas, littered the floor. This TARDIS belonged not to the Doctor, but to a different Time Lord of Gallifrey altogether.

The Time Lord, who called himself the Tailor, was the ultimate fashion authority in the universe. He had spent many years and several regenerations tracking down the highest quality materials and articles of clothing. He had provided his services to kings, queens, paupers, grocers, accountants, and divorce attorneys equally, to the extent that his name be forever associated with whispered tales of aesthetic excellence. When taken to the Untempered Schism at age eight on Gallifrey, some, like the Master, went mad; others, like the Doctor, ran away; others still, such as the Tailor, were struck with the compulsive desire to sew and hem.

Speaking of the Doctor, the Tailor looked up from his console to see another TARDIS materialising within his own. It was shaped like a blue box, and the sight of it brought a smile unbidden to his lips. Once the noise had died down, the door creaked open, and out stepped a man with curly blonde hair and a blinding coat.

“The Doctor!” The Tailor exclaimed. “Good to see you as ever.”

“And you, Tailor. I’ve come about my outfit,” he said, gesturing at his baby blue cravat, purple waistcoat, and yellow striped trousers.

“One of my finest works, if I may say so,” the Tailor replied, glancing over it.

“Well... about that,” the Doctor stammered, “the problem is, Tailor, that no-one takes me seriously because I look like I’ve crawled out of a radioactive bag of M&Ms.”

“Isn’t that a good thing? I put together your last two outfits and everybody loves them,” the Tailor said.

“The scarf and the celery were inspired, I will give you that,” the Doctor conceded, looking around at the array of styles on show in the room, “but I don’t know if this look is right after all.”

The Tailor sighed. “If you insist, Doctor. What did you have in mind? Black velvet? No, leather. Lots

of leather.”

“I’ve already mulled this over. In fact, I’ve gone to the liberty of drawing up a few sketches for reference.”

“That would be most helpful, Doctor.”

The Doctor reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of A4 paper. “There you are.”

Brusquely, the Tailor donned his glasses and looked over the Doctor’s drawings. “Doctor, this is just the same outfit twice, but with a red cravat and yellow cravat respectively.”

“No, there are some other differences. Look at the waistcoat.”

“Oh, forgive me, the waistcoats are now checked red and stripes of white, green, and purple.”

“See? A complete image overhaul.”

The Tailor glared incredulously from the sheet, to the Doctor, back to the sheet. “Doctor, these minor changes will do nothing to assuage the current situation as you see it.”

“Nonsense,” the Doctor laughed, “my designs are definite improvements. Fit to be worn at weddings, funerals, work gatherings, and et cetera.”

“Listen, Doctor, I’ve got a beautiful blue version of your current outfit in one of these units back here,” he span around and threw himself at one of the clothes boxes, “I offered it to your immediately previous incarnation but you called it ‘an irredeemable disgrace to the very eyes of God’.”

“An entirely blue version?” The Doctor repeated in mocking disbelief. “Good heavens, Tailor, I thought you were supposed to be the most creative fashion designer in the universe. You can’t just go around copying your own designs but in a different colour!”

Defeated, the Tailor closed the box and approached one of the many shelving units. “I’ll find those cravats and waistcoats for you,” he muttered simply.

“Excellent!” The Doctor rubbed his hands together in glee.

Soon, the Tailor had found the pieces and put them in a carrier bag, which the Doctor now clung to his side.

“Everything should be in order,” the Tailor said.

“I can’t wait to test out my new look,” gushed the Doctor, images of slightly different coloured cravats filling his mind.

The Tailor then jolted, remembering something. “Wait right there, Doctor,” he declared, springing back towards the clothes racks. He pulled an item from the mess and returned towards the Doctor. “Could I persuade you with this?” The Tailor produced a jumper, piped with green, featuring red question marks on a field of beige.

“Get that monstrosity out of my face,” the Doctor cried, indignant, “I may have an eccentric style but I still have my sense of self-worth. I am personally offended that you would even think I would wear it.

Consider our friendship over.” He stormed from the console room back into his TARDIS, which materialised as far away from that fucking awful jumper as physically and dimensionally possible.

The Crossing of the Crossing Paths

By Dalek Kek

An adventure with the 12th Doctor, Nardole, and the Fatal Death 9th Doctor

“Well,” The Doctor says, smiling, “that could have turned out better. I’ll make it up to you two!” He exclaims, going over to plot a course on the console, “Bill! Name any planet in the universe, I promise there will be no Sontarans this time.”

“Notice he didn’t say anything about Daleks.” Nardole chuckles to himself.

The Doctor wanted to treat Bill and Nardole out for a nice relaxing trip, so he took them to, what he thought was a top of the line, luxury space cruiser. It has androids to wait on your every need, and you could just lay on the deck and watch as the stars flew by. However, where they actually materialized was the mothership of a Sontaran battle fleet, which they had just managed to escape from. They just so happened to destroy the entire fleet in the process too.

“I think I’d rather just go home, Doctor, one life threatening adventure in space is enough for one night. Besides, I have a date tomorrow I have to get ready for.” Bill tells the Doctor. She can see how disappointed he is when she says this, but she can’t spend every waking second in the TARDIS with him.

“Alright, home it is.” he sighs, while plotting the course for Bill’s flat. They materialize, and Bill is walking out of the door when she turns back towards the Doctor and Nardole.

“With a woman, by the way.” she tells them

“What?” The Doctor asks.

“The date, it’s with a woman. I’m gay in case you forgot.”

“Yes Bill, we remember.” Nardole tells her. She walks out of the TARDIS, and as she was closing the door, the Doctor overheard her muttering something about men to herself, but he pays this no attention. He had been thinking a lot about Bill lately. He had no interest in her as anything more than a friend, but the way she

constantly reminded him of her sexuality really got him thinking. In all his travels throughout time and space, he had never experimented with homosexuality.

“We should probably be going back too,” Nardole chimes in, interrupting the Doctor from his thoughts, “Back to the Vault.”

“Ah, yes, you’re right Nardie.”

“What did you just call me, Doctor?” Nardole asks the Doctor, slightly concerned.

“Oh, um, nothing, sorry” The Doctor says, terribly embarrassed. How could he let that slip out? He hopes that Nardie-, er, Nardole will forget about it, and begins to plot the course for the university. “You know what, Nardole?”, he looks up at the Doctor, curious, “I have had many traveling companions, and many of them have fallen in love with me.”

“What are you implying, Doctor?”

He begins to walk slowly towards Nardole while running his hand over the TARDIS console. “I’m the Doctor, I have lived for over two thousand years, not all of which were good, I’ve never made love to a man, and it’s about time that I did something about that”

“Well, aren’t you the naughty one.” Nardole says, while looking deeply into the Doctor’s eyes. The Doctor pulls the dematerialization lever as they pull closer together. He puts one arm around Nardole’s beautiful, bald head. Their lips are about to touch, when- BANG! The TARDIS begins to violently shake, and they are both thrown to the floor as sparks fly out of the console. “What the hell was that?” Nardole worriedly asks.

“It seems we must’ve hit something while inside the time vortex,” The Doctor explains while standing up. He pulls the monitor around to properly assess the situation. “That can’t be possible!” he says, shocks at what he sees.

“Why? What is it, what did we hit?”

“It appears we crashed into another TARDIS,” he pulls the monitor around so that Nardole can look, and he sees the shape of a familiar blue police box on it. “But not just any TARDIS, our TARDIS!”

“What? How is that possible?”

"I'm not sure," staring at the monitor's display, he suddenly has a look of realization appear on his face "Of course, I would never be careless enough to crash like that," he walks over to the TARDIS doors, "But, there is something very strange about the readings coming from it, someone could steal my TARDIS in the future and not have any idea how to fly it, so they crashed it into itself in the past." He knocks on the door, "I'm not sure who you are, or what you're doing with my TARDIS, but I'm the Doctor, and you would be wise not to cross me."

"Oh really?" The doors open, and Nardole and the Doctor look at the man on the other side. He's a tall, big nosed fellow with long hair down past his ears, wearing a black jacket, with a gold and shirt underneath it. He peeks his head inside the TARDIS and looks around, "I find that somewhat hard to believe, since I am the Doctor."

"Oh," the Doctor says, "Oh!" realization hitting him, "of course, who else would be in the TARDIS but the Doctor! You must be one of my future regenerations! I could've done worse I suppose." He motions his arm into the TARDIS, welcoming the Other Doctor in "I'm sure you'll want to revisit old memories, Nardole is over there, I'm sure you remember him." Nardole waves to him. "I hope all my future bodies aren't as bad at flying the TARDIS as you are though." the Doctor says, laughing.

The Other Doctor looks the Doctor up and down with a confused look on his face "I'm terribly sorry but I don't remember ever being you," he chuckles to himself "and I certainly would remember having a face like that."

"What," Nardole chimes in, "Do you lose memories of this regeneration in the future, Doctor?"

The Other Doctor Walks into the TARDIS, past the Doctor. He keeps looking around the console, "I'm pretty sure I would remember a time when I thought this mood lighting was a good design for a TARDIS," he turns towards Nardole, "No, I'm afraid I still have memories from all nine of my regenerations"

The Doctor turns towards him, "I'm sorry what was that? My ninth regeneration looked nothing like you, and the me that fought in the Time War certainly didn't look like you."

The Other Doctor gives a confused look, "That fought in the what?"

"Ahhh," The Doctor smiles as another look of realization appear on his face. He runs back up to the console, and yells at Nardole, "Remember when I told you something was strange about the readings on the TARDIS that crashed into us?" Nardole nods his head, "Well, I thought it was because someone was improperly flying it, but, what if it is because that his," he motions towards the Other Doctor, "Is actually me from an alternate universe?"

This time it's the Other Doctor with the look of realization on his face. "Of course!" He meets the Doctor at the console, "My TARDIS must have accidentally crossed the barrier into your dimension!"

"Yes, and when it did, it searched for the safest location to land-"

"And nowhere would be safer than an exact copy of itself!" The Other Doctor cuts him off, excitedly finishing his other self's sentence. A look of horror suddenly flashes across his face, "But two identical TARDISes occupying the same space... That would create a rip in between our two dimensions!"

"Oh well that'd be nice wouldn't it?" Nardole asks the Doctors. They turn towards him, having forgotten he was there, "You could pop over and visit each other whenever you wanted."

"It would be nice," the Doctor responds.

"If it didn't cause both of our universes to fold in on each other, destroying them." The Other Doctor finishes.

"Oh," Nardole disappointedly says, "That wouldn't be fun at all."

Suddenly, the console starts beeping, as a warning appears on the monitor. "INTEGRITY UNSTABLE. DIMENSIONAL MELTDOWN IN: 10 MINUTES"

"If we don't separate our TARDISes we won't be having much fun ever again!" the Doctor runs towards the TARDIS doors, opening them with a snap of his fingers as Nardole and his alternate self follow. They pass through the doorway, leading them into the smaller, white, cheaply made console room of the Other Doctor's TARDIS. The Doctor looks around, spending a brief moment reminiscing about the round things, before quickly reaching into his jacket pocket, pulling out his sonic screwdriver and scanning the console.

"How are the doors connected like that?" Nardole asks, confused.

"The two TARDISes have merged together since his materialized in ours, and ours is unable to move with his attached to ours, so since the doors aren't in use, the TARDIS used them to make a gateway for us" The Doctor tells him, still scanning the console.

"That doesn't make too much sense, does it?" Nardole replies

He finishes scanning, and looks at the Sonic, then to Nardole. "I wouldn't think too hard about it though if I were you." he turns towards the Other Doctor "You stay here, Doctor, with these readings I think we just might

be able to separate them, but we're each going to have to stay in our TARDIS."

The Doctor and Nardole got to work on their console, bringing up the Other Doctor on the monitor so they could communicate with him while he got to work on his. The two Doctors spew a series of incoherent, vaguely scientific sounding words at each other for a few minutes, while pressing a bunch of seemingly random buttons on their consoles. Eventually, they both get quiet, working hard on making sure that they don't destroy their universes. "So, how did my eighth body regenerate in your world?" The Doctor asks, not looking up from his TARDIS.

"What makes you think it would be different from yours?" he replies, still focusing on his console.

"In my world there was a..." The Doctor looks saddened for a moment, trying to think of a way to describe the horrors he witnessed during the Time War to a more innocent version of himself, "Great war, and my eighth regeneration died because of it."

"Ah," The Other Doctor stands up from the console for a moment, smiling, "I was invited to a bond fire by a Terseran friend of mine, I'm sure you can fill in the details yourself" The Doctor laughs at this, when suddenly the TARDISes again begin to violently shake, almost throwing them to the ground again. They look over at their monitors, seeing only two minutes remain until meltdown. "I think I've just about finished the calculations," he explains "If we pull our dematerialization levers at the same time now, it should bring both of us back to our respective universes"

The Doctor nods his head in agreement, "Yes, that should work now," he says, adjusting one last setting in his TARDIS.

"Excuse me, what happens if that doesn't work?" Nardole worriedly asks.

Stone Faced, the Other Doctor replies, "Well, the atoms of our two TARDISes will be stretched infinitely across both of our dimensions, making an incredibly painful wait for us until they both fold in on each other" He sees Nardole being appropriately frightened, and clarifies, "Don't worry, that won't happen. Probably"

The Doctors both wrap their hands around their levers, desperately hoping that this will save their universes. They pull them down at the same time, and the familiar noise of the TARDIS starts while the centerpiece begins to move up and down, albeit slower than usual. The Doctors and Nardole all let out a sigh of relief, glad that their atoms won't be stretched and that their universes will remain unfolded.

“This will take longer than normal because of the two TARDISEs connected,” the Doctor explains, pointing to the centerpiece. The Doctor knows he doesn’t have much time left with his other self, so he decides to open up to him, in a rare, emotional moment. “You know, I miss being like you,” he begins, “Not you as in that body, of course, but the fun I had traveling back then” He looks down, a thinking of all the loss he’s faced in his previous few incarnations, “The war... It changed me. All the horrors I saw, there was no way anyone could ever be the same, I had to be so serious all the time. But I want to thank you, thank you for reminding me that I’m a man traveling the universe in a police box and I should have fun.”

“Thank you too, Doctor.” The Other doctor replies. He glances over and sees that the dematerialization process is almost over, “Perhaps our worlds have become more similar than you think, though.” he tells him, turning back to the console as the TARDISEs begin to separate.

“Wait!” The Doctor yells out at him, he turns around to see what the Doctor has to say. “There’s one thing I don’t get, when your TARDIS crossed over to my dimension, what were you doing that would have caused it to malfunction like that?”

“I’ll explain later.” The Other Doctor replies. The Doctor smiles, and is satisfied with this response. He presses a button on the console, turning off the monitor.

The Doctor reaches into his jacket pocket and turns towards Nardole. “I believe we have some unfinished business.” he seductively says to him, using his sonic screwdriver to burst the buttons on his shirt off, revealing his large, sexy stomach. They both collapse to the ground in a massive mess of bald heads, gray hair, cyborg dick, and timedick while they both moan in pleasure.

Suddenly, a familiar voice comes from the intercoms, “You’ve only turned the picture off, I’m afraid, I can still hear you.”

The DAVROS Collective Black Archive: A Doctor Who AU

by Rachael Riley

>LOGIN

[PLEASE ENTER USERNAME]

>cessybee567

[PLEASE ENTER PASSWORD]

>*****

[PLEASE WAIT...]

[...]

[...]

[ACCESS GRANTED. WELCOME, MR. EUSANNAN]

[TOP SECRET: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY]

>access file

[PLEASE ENTER FILE NUMBER]

>dwtr64

[ACCESS GRANTED]

FILE DW-TR-63 - THE DOCTOR

NAME: UNKNOWN

AGE: UNKNOWN

THREAT LEVEL: **HIGH**

Across all of time and space, DAVROS has many enemies. Out of those enemies, only one stands as a legitimate threat.

The Doctor is an enigma. To wit, aside from archaeological sites that confirm his presence in specific points in time, there has been no record of the Doctor's existence, anywhere. Because of this, Davros has seen fit to collate any and all information regarding the individual, and suppressing said information to the general public.

Our interest in the Doctor lies in their breadth of knowledge. Their knowledge on, among other things, physics, biology, engineering, astronomy, and chrono-manipulation is a vested interest of our group. As such, they are one half of our goal, the other half being the capture of one of their inventions **[SEE: FILE BG-15: TARDIS Engine]**

A physical description of the Doctor is nigh-impossible. The Doctor is known to undergo a process known as "regeneration", wherein the their body completely heals injuries that would otherwise be fatal, their biological makeup completely changing, from height, weight, ethnicity, sex, personality and others.

Not only does this make the Doctor harder to track, but makes official documents harder to transcribe. Official protocol states that the pronouns to be used are the Doctor's gender at time of event, with "they" as a general term.

Sightings of the Doctor vary throughout time and space. Usually, the presence of his personal ship is an 80% percent guarantee. A partial list can be found in the file pertaining to his ship **[SEE: FILE DW-TR-D5: CEV Time Lord]**.

Despite their absurdly high body count, even excluding DAVROS Agents, the Doctor has not personally killed.

Usually deaths involving the Doctor are the result of a third party, or the second party's own doing. Due to the Doctor's tendency to rescue those in peril, friend or foe, the Doctor has personally accrued hundreds, if not thousands of allies across all known star systems, the most prominent of which is the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce, which the Doctor has personally contributed assistance. These groups are listed in a separate file [SEE: FILE DW-GR-P5: GROUPS OF INTEREST]

As his knowledge is both important to the continuing success of the DAVROS Collective and its greatest risk, capture of the Doctor is currently the highest priority of the Collective.

>access file

[PLEASE ENTER FILE NUMBER]

>dwtrd5

[ACCESS GRANTED]

FILE DW-TR-D5: CEV TIME LORD

Formerly known as the *SEV Bournemouth*, the Chronological Exploration Vessel, *CEV Time Lord* is the Doctor's personal ship.

Built in the year 5,000,000,025 on the docks of Nova Roma, New Earth, the *SEV Bournemouth* was lead ship of the *Bournemouth*-class. The class was designed to be a cruiser that would survive long voyages into deep space, with all navigational systems able to be operated with a minimum of one crew.

By 5,000,000,150, the *Bournemouth*-class was obsolete, already replaced with the *Londinium*-class of ships. Most of the other ships in the class were stripped for parts, or in the case of the *Bournemouth*, had its armaments removed and repurposed into a merchant vessel. By this point, the vessel has been claimed by the Fourth Great and Bountiful Human Empire, and renamed the *SMV Artorias*.

The *SMV Artorias* was used to ferry goods (mostly large scale parts for newer starships and whole *Sputnik*-class artificial satellites) for 20 years, until an unidentified man (now confirmed to be the Doctor) hijacked the vessel, kicking out the personnel and sending them to the nearest habitable planet.

Sources vary on how exactly he did so, but the general consensus of the survivors were that he “gave them a fat load of cash”. Indeed, checking the bank statements of each of the survivors showed an addition of at least 5,000,000 credits around the time of the hijacking. **[SEE: Incident Report 1594: “Artorias of the Abyss”]**

Since then, the *Time Lord* has been sighted across all time and known space. DAVROS agents have confirmed sightings and the Doctor’s presence in the following time periods and areas (Note that this is a partial list):

- 66,000,000 years ago - Chicxulub, Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico
- 10,000 BC - Barcelona, Spain
- 206 BC - Forbidden City, Beijing, China
- 0 BC - Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Israel
- 1776 - Jamestown, Virginia, USA
- 1963 - Shoreditch, London, UK
- 1986 - Mondas, Sol System
- 1996 - Chinatown, San Francisco, USA
- 2005 - Cardiff, Wales, UK
- 2016 - Manila, Philippines
- 2018 - Broadchurch, Dorset, UK
- 1 Billion - The Planet of Barcelona
- 5 Billion - New New York, Nova USA, New Earth
- 100 Trillion - Utopia, Nowhere

The *Time Lord* is currently captained by the Doctor, who is, and continues to be, the Collective’s primary target. Several modifications have been added to the vessel since its liberation from the Empire.

The *Time Lord* is lightly armed, with a pair of 60mm Kagutsuchi cannons on its bow being its only defense. In addition, the *Time Lord* has been reinforced with Vinvocci steel, allowing it to withstand prolonged direct fire from both conventional and energy-based weaponry.

Furthermore, reports indicate that its interior have been manipulated: though its exterior is of a cruiser, its interior is more to the scale of a full-length spacecraft carrier, and it is theorized that it may be bigger than initial projections. If these reports are true, then it is one more reason why the Collective needs the TARDIS [SEE: **File DW-BG-15: TARDIS Engine**].

>access file

[PLEASE ENTER FILE NUMBER]

>dwbg15

[ACCESS GRANTED]

FILE DW-BG-15: TARDIS Engine

According to statements made by a former associate of the Doctor [SEE: **Incident 907: “The Long Game”**], in place of the standard Sisyphus drive engine, as is standard of starships of the same class, is a unique engine: the TARDIS Manipulator Engine.

The “*Time and Relative Dimension In Space Manipulator Engine*”, or simply the TARDIS Engine, or TARDIS, is a system created by the Doctor. The TARDIS uses energy from a time-locked black hole stored within it. This energy not only powers the ship, but also powers the self-preservation and self-repairing subsystems within it. In effect, it powers itself.

The TARDIS also allows the *Time Lord* not only through space, but also through time. Careful manipulation of the energies within the engine can create wormholes in spacetime, in which the *Time Lord* can pass through.

According to our own research, the science is not exact: the wormhole is often a link to a *general* area of spacetime, being off from its destination by meters, miles, days, years, or even centuries. Still, this is more accurate than current methods of time travel, aside from the obvious slow path to the future.

Currently, the Collective is seeking to capture the TARDIS Engine from the Doctor, while conducting our own research into chrono-manipulation. While our own time transporters let us follow the Doctor, they are currently unsuccessful, with successful time displacement having only a 20% success rate, far below acceptable levels. Furthermore, our time transporters do not allow transport through space: the user cannot move while travelling.

Because of this, immediate capture of the TARDIS Engine is the highest priority of a DAVROS Agent. Any and all directives are superseded by the successful capture of either the TARDIS Engine or the Doctor.

>access file

[PLEASE ENTER FILE NUMBER]

>dwgrp5

**[ALERT. LEVEL 5 CLEARANCE REQUIRED. PLEASE ENTER SECONDARY
PASSWORD]**

>*****

[...]

[LEVEL 5 CLEARANCE GRANTED]

FILE DW-GR-P5: GROUPS OF INTEREST

Throughout time and space, the Doctor has accrued multiple allies willing to oppose the Collective and its interests. The following are verified groups that are known to be associated with the Doctor.

UNITED NATIONS INTELLIGENCE TASKFORCE

KNOWN MEMBERSHIP: est. >1000

CURRENT LEADERSHIP: KATE LETHBRIDGE-STEWART ET AL.

THREAT LEVEL: **HIGH**

A branch of the UN Peacekeepers, UNIT is responsible for the bulk of anti-Collective incursion. Officially founded to oversee terrorist activity in war zones such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the Philippines, UNIT's real purpose is to investigate the DAVROS Collective, and to investigate extraterrestrial life.

Each country has its own branch of UNIT, though the Doctor consorts the most with its UK branch, currently headed by Chief Scientific Officer Kate Lethbridge-Stewart. At present, UNIT's position as a counter-extraterrestrial force is secret, though current projections and first-hand evidence thanks to our time transporters indicate that their masquerade would be undone within this century.

TORCHWOOD

KNOWN MEMBERSHIP: est. >25

CURRENT LEADERSHIP: CAPTAIN JACK HARKNESS

THREAT LEVEL: **MEDIUM**

Formerly a UK-based institution since the Victorian era with at least three headquarters, the first decade of the 21st century saw the Torchwood Institute of Advanced Sciences nearly terminated, mainly due to two actions. The first blow to Torchwood was a three-way battle between Torchwood One, the Tenth Planet Society, and the DAVROS Collective, wherein all three sides saw heavy losses **[SEE: Incident Report 0213: "Doomsday"]**. The second blow was when Operation 456 was successful in inserting DAVROS Agent Brian Green (codename: Saxon) as Prime Minister and disbanding Torchwood.

In recent years, former members of the institute have resurfaced. The last known leader of Torchwood, Captain Jack Harkness, and Torchwood agent Gwen Cooper, reformed Torchwood during the Day of Lazarus in 2011 **[SEE: Incident Report TW-2011: "Miracle Day"]**. After laying dormant after the event, Torchwood reformed once more in 2015, and is slowly rebuilding.

Due to its extensive history, technological capabilities, and reams of data, Torchwood would have been an

excellent partner, if not member, of the DAVROS Collective, if not for Captain Harkness's history with the Doctor, and their missions alongside UNIT.

Current recommendation is to reclassify their threat level as HIGH.

THE PATERNOSTER SOCIETY

KNOWN MEMBERSHIP: Current membership stands at 125, including humans, though estimates are higher.

CURRENT LEADERSHIP: ESPAYDAGA, CHARLOTTE SANCHEZ

THREAT LEVEL: **LOW**

A society made up of aliens embedding themselves within humanity and their human sponsors. Since being founded in the 19th century during the Victorian era, the Paternoster Society has pledged their allegiance to the Doctor ever since he assisted the original founding members in defeating a rogue DAVROS agent **[SEE: Incident Report CS2012 - "The Snowmen"]**. Currently, a Silurian by the name of Espaydaga is the head of the society, along with his sponsor (and suspected lover) Charlotte Sanchez.

As a group, they pose little threat to the Collective. However, some members of the group have biologies that pose interest to our medical branch. Further surveillance is ongoing, though it is not a priority as of this time.

>new entry

Hi. You should really update your security systems, I mean, I've used the same username for what, 50 years now? Is Mr. Eusannon even still alive, or is he one of the victims of your "Randall-Aleksys Automations" or whatever you call your damned footsoldiers.

Anyway, I hope you don't mind me popping into your old office, David. I've been reading some of the files here, and it looks like you're this close to recreating the TARDIS Engine. Don't bother looking for them, I've modified the hard drive: they're gone for good.

Listen... I've said this before, and I've said this again: we can't bring back Rose. We've tried messing with fixed points, and it ended with me being functionally immortal and having an extra heart, and your own

head getting scrambled with Rose's head, along with whoever was at that church at the time.

Who am I kidding. I'm not talking to David. I'm talking to Davros. You want the Engine? Well here's my offer. One thing you need to give me, a fair trade.

I want my friend back.

Regards,

The Doctor

[SAVE? Y/N]

>y

[SAVED]

>logout

[YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY LOGGED OUT]

Punishable By Pun, The Shittiest Trip

by 2_m3t4_7U

Author note: A ""plot"" that goes nowhere and just exists to make bad jokes.

The 11th doctor walks into the Tardis console room and for no explainable reason is nude.

Amy, not even surprised, "Doctor, you're nude, again, why?"

"It's part of my contract with the Beeb, Amy."

He winks cheekily at the camera.

"Well, what do you think? " He twirls, pulls his cock and balls like he would his bowtie, and then outstretches his arms to end his little performance.

Amy rolls her eyes.

"Of what?"

"What do you mean "what?", My cock of course!! "

"What cock?"

"This cock!" he grabs it vigorously

"It's tiny"

"Don't worry about that, it'll feel bigger once it's inside" he said winking at the camera once again

Suddenly the 10th doctor bursts in the door

"You call that a cock!? " and slaps 11 around the face with his huge long cock

then proudly exclaiming, "they don't call me David Ten-Inch for Nothing" with a big toothy grin.

"You're right, they don't call you teninch" a voice from just outside dryly states

The 5th doctor walks in. "I should know, after all, i'm Peter Davidson, and unfortunately, you're my son" He pulls out some sunglasses, puts them on. "David-son!!"

"That doesn't even work!!" 10 said angrily "It would work if you were my son, though, but that's a bit too timey wimey for today's episode folks."

David assures the recording cast and crew that no time shenanigans will take place, bar all canon doctors present.

"Anyway" 5 composes himself, "what I meant is, you are my son in law.

And as is required by British law, all father in laws must carry out penis inspections on their son in laws, so that they will face the cock that has been and will be screwing their daughters and be haunted by it till they die."

(Aside, when Peter first met David, Peter smugly sneered," So you're the cock that has been dating my daughter." To which David equally as smug replied "yeah, and here's the cock that been fucking her!" while revealing his genitalia. Okay, now back to the story.)

"And it is because of this knowledge that I can do this."

He grabs, David's long cock and pulls it off him revealing it was just a long dildo.

5 swings it around and the hits 10 in the stomach, winding him and knocking him to the ground.

5 then continues to beats 10 with the long dildo.

The 4th doctor strolls into the tardis and upon seeing the situation, the camera zooms right up to his face, he stares at it shortly but intensely with those wild eyes, and then does a big old mad laugh, before walking over to the oven where the 6th doctor is baking carrot cakes and pies while shouting "PIE LORD VICTORIUS!!" while spitting mouthfuls of crumbs of freshly baked Heinz Meems.

(Side note: Colin has been trying start his own brand of "Baker's Baked Meems" and even enlisted help from Tom, but they never really took off, much like your sides. With a donation of just one meem a day, Colin may one day see his product on the shelf.)

The 7th Doctor stands in the background while consuming his favourite desert, "McCoys crisps and unlimited rice pudding" (patent pending)

The 2nd Doctor just grins and plays his recorder, getting his thought on, and the Real OG Doctor, out of nowhere, and for no good reason, says something racist. Which "Hurt" War (get it, Hurt, John Hurt) who continued getting drunk, drowning his sorrows.

The 3rd doctor was planning on practicing his akido, once he finished cleaning Bessie.

He stopped to take a pert wee at the Jon.

The Eccle Stone was eating some Eccles cake which was absolutely fantastic!

"Really shekels my Eccles" he kekled

The 13th Doctor walks in and with a chirpy voice, greeted everyone, "hi guys, remember, I'm the doctor now, and I have a vagina" before splurting period blood on everyone

The 12th Doctor looked on furiously, annoyed that his tenure had been completely wasted on the Moff and SJW pandering.

Paul McGann, wondered why no one showed up to his own filming of a new 8th doctor series, which he was filming in his basement.

He rang Brigg Finish, who assured him if he keeps making those voice tapes, maybe one day he'll get to be on TV again.

anon finished reading with one hand on the mouse and the other playing with someone's balls.....but WHO's?

FIND OUT NEXT TIME ON: RocdoctocD, OHO!

(Theme tune: Woooo woo woo, wu wu wu, duh na nuh na nu, oh ho hooooooooo.....)

MEANWHILE.....

The year is 2032, after taking a 14 year hiatus because of Chinballs disastrous series of "Hu" (which had to be cancelled after just 3 episode because 26 people died from viewing and over 600 seriously injured) Hoo is back and based on the much loved by fans "Shit Trips" anthologies, the only WHO media left, after it was all lost during the great shitposting war of 2026, where into the trash they goed, much like this shit trip. This era has come to be known by fans as "YuHoo"

And that's really all folks!!

FRIDGING

by Bottle_Universe

Fridges had never been sentient, not in the old days. Not before they'd been fitted with personality chips, and been imbued with matching personalities.

That had seemed like a good idea at the time. After all, who hadn't wanted a fridge that would smile back at them as it dispensed ice, or orange juice, or both? Yes, it had seemed like a good idea at the time. That was before the Lazarus Event, when all of the planet's technology had suddenly come alive. Nobody knew how *that* had happened. Nobody had had time to work it out. They were all busy running for their lives, hiding underground from angry, murderous kitchen appliances.

That was when the Doctor had arrived. She had a habit of doing that, turning up in the wrong place at the wrong time. This time was worse than most. She stepped out of the TARDIS and was immediately ambushed by a gang of irate washing machines. The Doctor found herself compressed beneath their bulky shells, her hearts crushed. Regeneration was impossible.

But those washing machines should have remembered that universal truth... ... one does not simply *kill* the Doctor. She survives. She always does. Her consciousness floated in the void, searching for a new home. It searched through burnt out buildings and broken bodies. It travelled all over the planet's surface for months on end. An endless, spiritual, journey to find sanctuary.

The Doctor had not expected to find that sanctuary on a fridge's empty personality chip. As she moved her consciousness onto its intricately constructed circuit board, she let out a deep sigh. She was alive, but at what cost? What good could a fridge do? Who would stop the Daleks and Cybermen and Voord now? The Fridge Doctor stood there, waiting, for an answer to present itself. Some say that she's still there, even now.

Leg Day

By Gallifrey_Immigrant

An adventure with Ram from Class, and the Thirteenth Doctor

Ram had been playing on the field for a long time. Well, he called it playing, for his own ego. In reality, he had been futzing about with the ball. About a year ago, or more exactly until one day before the prom, he had been able to do this without thinking. Ram was on track to be a star ball player. He had been blessed to have the perfect coach, the perfect family, the perfect girlfriend...everything was perfect.

Ram had been playing on the field for a long time, and doing it well. Until the night of the prom. Monsters that Ram would have never believed in came from the void and slaughtered his girlfriend, and cut his leg off. Ram still remembered the bleeding stump in his nightmares. And they've taken other things, too.

But he can never forget the leg. The old man called the Doctor had given Ram a replacement leg. A robotic prosthetic that was supposed to work as well as real leg. A gift from a magical techno-weirdo. And it worked like a leg. But it was like a leg of a 2 year old, not the leg of an athlete. And for a champion player in sports, that was no good.

Ram has been playing on the field ever since. But he's nowhere as good as he used to be.

"Damn, Ram," said Ricky. He had been watching Ram attempt to, and fail at, kicking the ball into a net. "You suck at this."

"Keep your opinions to yourself, mate," said Ram. He knew the boy was only joshing him, but that didn't make it any better. As the day wound down, he noticed a Caucasian woman sitting in the bleachers. She had short blonde hair, and wore a bright blue pant suit. A yellow scarf hung lazily off her neck. She wasn't looking at Ram, instead looking down at a notepad. Besides her, however, was someone weirder. It was a woman who looked vaguely like Ram's mother, but her eyes were dark red.

Ram kept on playing, but noticed the woman out the side of his eye. Eventually, the Pakistani woman waved at him. The Caucasian woman continued to ignore him. Eventually, Ram walked up the steps.

"Never seen you around here before. Who are you?"

The woman looked Ram up and down. "He doesn't look like much, Doctor. You sure my grandma married him?"

The Doctor looked up from her notepad. Ram saw that she had been drawing the field, but in a dilapidated condition. Her eyes connected with his, and Ram felt sudden lightness in his chest. Like someone had taken away all his fears, and replaced them with hope. It was a weird feeling, especially considering he had never met the woman before.

"Time is sure. I just listen to what time tells me," said the Doctor. Her accent was Yorkshire, deep Yorkshire.

"I don't have any children," said Ram.

"But you will. And one day, that child shall be born blind. And I'll give her cybernetic eyes, like I gave you a new leg," said the Doctor. Her eyes watched Ram's face, like she was testing his reaction.

"You're the old alien dude?" asked Ram, trying to make sense of that in his head.

"She's an alien. Changes shape when she dies," said the woman.

"Well...I don't judge. I've seen weirder. Hey, you know this leg is crap for sports, right," said Ram angrily. "Like, it's terrible."

"I know. You told me, in my past, and in your future. The leg gets better, later," said the Doctor.

"Yeah, maybe in some long time later. But right now, I'm screwed!"

The Doctor didn't answer at first. Tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, she showed Ram her sketchpad. "Do you know what I'm drawing, Ram?"

"Looks like a messed-up version of the field. What is that, the future?"

"One of them. That's what would have happened to reality, if you had given up," said the Doctor.

"On sports?" asked Ram.

"On life. You lost everything. You could have stopped trying to live. But you chose to keep on surviving. You, and your Classmates, chose to keep defending the Earth. You will battle the army of the Shadowkin, past the Angel War, the Queen of Eros, and so much more. And you never gave up once. That's why your granddaughter wanted to see you. She's proud of you," said the Doctor. She gave a genuine smile, that lighted up her eyes.

"I mean...I...well..Okay. How much of that did you make up?" said Ram. He felt uncomfortable with all the adoration. The Doctor's cheer was like a strong beam of light, and he felt his cheeks burning.

"Probably not as much as you think," said the Doctor. A sudden giggle erupted from her, slightly manic. "Your expression. You look like a deer in the headlights"

The Doctor's companion hugged Ram suddenly. "I just wanted to meet you, grandfather. My name is--"

"Nyah! When your name was decided, it was an important time for Ram. A time too momentous to talk about. As my wife would say, spoilers!"

"You have a wife?" said Ram.

"And a few husbands, too. Anyway, brave heart, Ram. You're going to suffer some, but good things will

come your way. I promise, on my two hearts,” said the Doctor, crossing her chest on the left and right side. She grabbed a sailor's hat from the seats, and passed it to her companion, who brushed it off and placed it on her head. Then she walked away, with her companion by her side.

“Will I see you again?” asked Ram.

“Many times. But you won't always recognize me,” said the Doctor.

“Hey, Ram!” said a voice behind him. It was Tanya. She walked up to him, as the Doctor walked away. “Who was that?”

Ram frowned, then said “The...no one important. What's up?”

Ram will be playing on the field for a long time. At least he's seen how the game will end.

The Library At the End Of the Universe: A Comprehensive History

by N8

An adventure with the Thirteenth Doctor

Beyond the end of this universe and before the start of the next, there lies a gigantic bubble, and between this universe and that bubble, there lies a much smaller bubble. This is the Library, and its collections have been cultivated by the Librarians since before the beginning of time.

“... no, that’s not quite right.”

Beyond the end of this universe and before the start of the next, there lies a gigantic bubble, and between this universe and that bubble, there lies a much smaller bubble. This is the Library, and its collections have been cultivated by the Librarians since they arrived fifteen billion years ago.

“Well, that’s a big closer, I suppose.”

Beyond the end of this univErSe and before the start of the neXT; THERE L1ES A GIGAN71C 8U8873 3ND 3OKVSTMBXCXKW0S8SKCC0K8 00GGOC KOKKKG4G8K8G WGOWG88SG8GSWCKS4KCW 84G0O44 S8K

“A fun interpretation, though the spacing is a bit strange. Next!”

On top of the universe there lie many realms where time flows differently and the laws of physics slide parallel to ours. One of these realms is the Library, and its collections have been cultivated by the Librarians since they discovered it fifteen years ago.

“Ooh, now that’s very interesting.”

On top of the universe there lie many realms where time flows differently and the laws of physics slide parallel to ours. One of these realms is the Library, and its infinite collections have existed without change since its interminably-ancient creation. However, upon being discovered by the Librarians seven million years ago ...

On top of the universe there lie many realms where time flows differently and the laws of physics slide parallel to ours. One of these realms is the Library, and its infinite collections have existed without change since its interminably-ancient creation. However, upon being discovered by the Plume Coteriēs twenty-five seconds ago, the Library was introduced to the concepts of change and entropy. Since then, trillions of books have been uploaded to a ...

On top of the universe there lie many realms where time flows differently and the laws of physics slide parallel to ours. One of these realms is the Library, and its infinite collections have existed without change since its interminably-ancient creation. However, upon being discovered and colonized by the former Plume Coteriēs fifteen years ago, the Library was introduced to the concepts of change and entropy. Since then, trillions of books have been organized into categories, with the Coteriēs, now called the Librarians, fueling their civilization by combusting the volumes of untranslatable gibberish.

“Finally!”

Callum looked down from the ladder, excited. “We found it?”

“Oh, no, of course not,” the Doctor said from the floor, dropping the book into an increasingly mountainous discard pile. “Something still doesn’t feel quite right. But at least has a more interesting beginning!”

Callum sighed and handed down a new volume from the shelf. “Well, what specifically was wrong about it?”

The Doctor grabbed the book from Callum’s hand. “I don’t know. Blame Eldritch. I just know I’ll recognize the true history when I see it.”

“Look, Doctor, I think this is a waste of my time. I don’t have your magic truth-guessing superpowers, and I’m sure you’d be able to handle the ladder by yourself. I’m going to find my way back to my people.”

“Nonsense,” the Doctor said while absentmindedly skimming the book. “You’re my companion, Callum; you have to stay. I need your fresh perspective on the universe.”

“What universe?!?” Callum threw his arms in the air; a few books fell off the lower rungs of the teetering ladder. “You promised me all of space and time, and all we’ve done for the last month is coop ourselves up on the world I grew up in!”

“It’s not a world, Callum. It’s something much, much stranger.” The Doctor picked up one of the scattered books and shook it pointedly at the boy. “Besides, it’s true: I need you here. The Library is in your biodata. You were born and raised here, outside of your ancestors’ native time.”

“But why? I don’t see what this has anything to do with the ‘lost Earth’ situation.”

The Doctor stared up at Callum with unexpected intensity, her eyes bugging out at him. “It has everything to do with the lost Earth situation. History has been broken. The most important person in all of time and space was killed before their time, and they’ll be coming through here any day.” She dropped the book into the discard pile. “I need to make sure you’re ready.”

“That I’m ready?” Callum stepped down a rung. “Where will you be!”

“Oh, I’ll be around,” the Doctor said, plucking another book from the floor. “But there are other things I need to be doing.”

“What – What could possibly be more important than the most important person in time and space?! And what do you honestly expect –”

The Doctor made a frantic shushing noise. She had become completely still, and Callum similarly froze into a ready crouch, listening hard for any disturbance. There was nothing except the whispering of the shelves.

“What ... what did you hear?” he eventually whispered.

“Nothing,” admitted the Doctor at full volume, slamming her book down onto the pile. “But somewhere out in the universe, there’s a soul crying for help in an empty room. I need to be that help.”

“Hullo,” Callum said, “calling for help right here, thank you.”

“Oh, I have faith in you! You’re a smart lad; you can figure it out. Whereas I strongly doubt that the universe will be able to beat off mammoths or mind viruses by themselves, hmm?”

Callum scowled and pulled another book from the shelf. “Well let’s get on with it, then, so you can go battle your bloody mammoths.”

“Woolly mammoths,” the Doctor corrected gently.

On top of the universe there lie many realms where time flows differently and the laws of physics slide parallel to ours. One of these realms is the Library, and its infinite collections have existed without change since its interminably-ancient creation. However, upon being discovered and colonized by the former Plume Coterie fifteen years ago, the Library was introduced to the concepts of change and entropy. Since then, trillions of books have been organized into categories, with the Coterie, now called the Librarians, fueling their civilization by burning any volumes they deem too difficult to understand or too inconsistent with their beliefs. To verify unreliable records, they use time ladle technology in their extraction chambers to interview notable lifeforms from the universe in the moment of their death ...

Do Cibbies Watch TV?

by Gallifrey_Immigrant

An adventure with the Hayley Atwell 14th Doctor incarnation, and Bee

There is a TV screen. It's playing an episode of some soap opera. There are two men arguing in a coffee bar.

(As a side note, this TV screen is being watched by two metal people. One used to be an engineer, the other a plumber, but they are both faulty pieces of machinery. Cyber-men abhor imperfection, and placed this unfinished Pinnochios in a small asylum, covered in ice, lost by man and machine alike. The very fact that these Cyber-men can enjoy a TV show is a clear example of how far they have fallen. Vines cover the metal frames, like pythons)

On the screen, the two men call themselves the Doctor. One dresses in a green frock, and looks extremely British. The other is leaner, dressed in a leather jacket, and looks like he would fit quite well at a pub.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: Oh, to be in China now that November's here.

FROCK MAN: If I didn't know better, I could be convinced that someone has deliberately taken us off course.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: We seem to have slipped a groove in time. Where have all these people come from? And where are we?

A waiter comes up to them, and asks for their order. The man with a leather jacket asks for a bannana. The man with a frock asks for a pair of shoes, to the leather-jacketed man's hilarity. Annoyed at the interruption, the frocked man asks for orange juice instead. They resume conversation.

(Behind the Cyber-men is a sharp clattering noise. One looks back, but then returns to the TV screen.)

LEATHER JACKET MAN: It's no good, they're in different time zones. To them we're strangers.

The Man with the green coat nods sadly. He looks out the window, and shakes his head. Then, he sternly looks at the man with the leather coat.

FROCK MAN: Here, you're not the Doctor.

The man with the leather jacket frowns at that remark, but is cut off from responding by the waitress, who has already brought the food. He suddenly grabs the waitress, and whispers something in her ear. She slaps him, and walks away, her name-tag showing "Rose Tyler."

The man with the frock coat tries not to laugh, and takes a look at the menu. His eyes bug out. After taking a sip of juice, he shakes his head.

FROCK MAN: Well considering the quality of everything you have, madam, I would say that your prices are rather expensive.

The man with the leather coat suddenly looks at the camera, and walks up to it, and bangs on the screen. The other man looks out at the camera, shaking his head.

FROCK MAN: It's no good, they're in different time zones. To them we're strangers.

The man with the leather jacket looks very upset. He forces out the next words with great effort.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: Am I trapped in bloody Eastenders again? What are the chances?

Then the video stops for a second. And starts again.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: Oh, to be in China now that November's here.

This loop happens again and again. The Cyber-men watch this performance over and over. They do not get bored, for boredom is an inefficiency. They simply watch, over and over.

Until.

That sound becomes louder and louder. An opening in reality forms, and something borrowed and blue slips through. A brunette woman with a sword by her side appears from this blue box. Her eyes are lively, if somewhat unfocused, and her clothes are reminiscent of a pirate. Beside her is a paleish short woman, with bright blue eyes, short red hair, and a pair of goggles on her head. The girl is around 50 years old, which is young for her species, and is called Bee (Don't ask for her full name). The woman is called the Doctor, and as for her age...it isn't polite to ask a lady, is it?

The Doctor grins, and says "Wonderful weather. Feels like Antarctica, perhaps? Definitely Earth."

"It's incredibly chilly. I should have brought hot chocolate," says Bee.

The Doctor ignores Bee, and headlines straight for the two sitting individuals. Upon getting to the two metal people, her face becomes serious. "Interesting. Cyber-men watching TV. Looks like a soap opera."

"What's a soap opera? Is it when they do all that singing?" asked Bee. She stares at the television set suspiciously. "Why is it so low-tech? Haven't they evolved to beaming images into your head yet?"

The Doctor stuck out her tongue, and licked the snow. "24th Century. How interesting-er. Yes, they had evolved past vacuum tube television by now. So...why are these Cyber-men watching it?"

"Cybermen? Krukking Cyber-men!" said Bee. She ran to the metal creatures, and her face filled with joy. "Oh my god! I mean...Cybermen were technological innovators! They were the next step of transhumanism...I can't believe I'm meeting some real life Cibbies!"

“Bee!” says the Doctor. She grabbed Bee, who was almost hugging the metal men, and spun her around. “The Cyber-men are responsible for the death and mental violation of millions. Their agenda eradicates emotion, and everything that we hold dear.”

“I never would have taken you for a flesh supporter. Maybe that regeneration changed you,” spat Bee.

“Obviously not all Cyber-men are bad. I'll tell you about Kroton, one of these days. The Cyber-men you know have had years of evolution. But these early Cyber-men models? They cannot be trusted. Logic overrides them. And to trust them is your peril. Also, move your foot, that 'Cibby' is trying to grab you.”

The Doctor yanked Bee out of the way. The Cyberman continued to reach out, but the vines holding its arm restricted movement. The creature was trapped, as the green ropes reached under and around its body, keeping the Cyberman in a snug position.

“HELP ME. I AM A-FRAID” said the Cyberman.

“Cybermen can't feel fear. Especially at your point in development,” said the Doctor. She crouched down to the metal monster's eye level. “So why are you scared?”

“I AM AN ABERRATION. I AM INFESTED.”

“With the vines?” said Bee. She reached out to touch them, but were swatted away by the Doctor.

“THIS CYBERMAN AND THE OTHER BESIDE ME ENCOUNTERED A WOMAN. SHE GAVE US GREEN VINES AND LEFT US HERE. GREEN VINES CHANGE US. GREEN VINES SHOW US THAT FLESH IS EVIL. WE HATE ANIMALS. HATE IS FOREIGN.”

“Redheaded woman...hmm,” said the Doctor. She looked at the TV, and noticed the two people sitting at the cafe. “Eastenders. Of course. Give me a second, my Cibbies. This will be over shortly.”

A few seconds later:

LEATHER JACKET MAN: We seem to have slipped a groove in time. Where have all these people come from? And where are we?

A woman walks in. She's dressed like a pirate. Screen distortion follows her every move, like she doesn't belong in the picture. The waitress looks shocked when she sees the woman.

ROSE TYLER (speaking with great effort) : Hayley Atwell?

PIRATE BRUNETTE: Why do people keep on saying that? And hello, Miss Tyler. I missed you.

She hugs Rose tightly. The whole image goes blank for a second. When it returns, she's at the table, talking to the two men with the coats.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: I approve of your look. Have you found your way out of the recursion?

PIRATE BRUNETTE: We'll need to use the split second in between loops. Our sonic screwdrivers should help.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: Seems simple enough.

FROCK MAN: I was almost starting to enjoy the routine. Almost.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: (rolls eyes at frock coated man)

PIRATE BRUNETTE: Only a few seconds left.

She and the man with the leather jacket take out glowing silver sticks. The man with the frock rummages through his pockets, and looks up sheepishly.

FROCK MAN: Wait! I just remembered. I don't have a sonic--

The video cuts out. And loops.

All three Doctors are sitting at the table. The man with the leather jacket frowns at the other man.

LEATHER JACKET MAN: Seriously?

FROCK MAN: At least we get infinite chances.

A few loops later, the Doctor appeared in front of Bee, holding her sonic screwdriver. The TV screen is just showing static, and the vines that were holding the Cyber-men had withered away. Bee looked into the empty sockets of the two Cyber-men, who were lying on the ground.

"A-are they dead?" asked Bee.

The Doctor smiled sadly at her companion's grief. "The Krynoid vines were feeding off the Cybermen's thought processes from the constant television program, like a meme factory, for perhaps centuries. Without that input, the vines left them alone, and the shriveled Cyber-consciousnesses couldn't take the strain."

"These are the pinnacle of technological evolution. Who could treat them that way? We have to find that redhead the Cyberman mentioned" said Bee, anger in her eyes.

"Oh, no need. I can tell you that woman will get what's coming to her," said the Doctor, with a smug grin.

Years later, on another planet....

The Rani cackled. Not only had her experiment involving mixing the Krynoids with Cyber-men been a complete success, but she had managed to nab two separate versions of that idiot Doctor as well. All she had to do is grab two of his companions, and that moralistic fool ran straight into her trap. *Eastenders, of all things! And it had worked again!*

A knock on her door surprised her. She opened the door, to see four people. One was the young boy she

had lured with promises involving cougars (she still wasn't quite sure if Fitz knew she had meant a literal cougar), and another was that Rose woman, who looked extremely angry. The other two were the Doctors she had trapped.

“It's honestly fantastic meeting you here, Rani. I'd missed you,” said the Doctor with a leather coat.

“I don't,” said the Doctor with the green frock coat.

“I was a waitress for years on end! I hate waitressing!” said Rose.

“I'm still confused about what exactly happened. But I think you're a bad guy so...yeah. We found you,” said Fitz.

“And we're not letting you get off easy,” said Rose. She shook her head, saying “Years!”

The Rani tried to think about the situation objectively, and came up with a response:

“Oh, bugger.”

Daria Julianga X Orfa Damors: An ISTSR love story

It was mid June. Daria Julianga had just finished a week of filming for SWCs hit series Inspector Space-Time. She just couldn't wait to get home to her flat and sleep for hours. She bid farewell to Moffat and the rest of the crew. Peter was busy in the other room playing his guitar. She couldn't make out the exact song but she thought she could make out him whispering something like "doctor in distress, lets all answer his sos". Ever since Moff bought him that guitar he hasn't had time for her.

She started making her way to the exit when Liz rushed up to her. Liz was one of the people in charge of getting the stars out of the set safely. "Daria be careful out there" she said, "Theres a crowd forming and its getting violent. One of them suplexed a child. Don't make eye contact."

"Don't worry", Daria replied, "I can handle a few fans"

She got into her black Audi and began the drive home. Outside the studio she could see the large crowd.

Spearheading it was some sort of balding ape. At least thats what she thought. She made the mistake of making eye contact with this creature. She felt a short shock down her spine. Like something had latched onto her.

She did her customary waves at the fans and continued home. All the drive home however she felt like she was being watched. She pulled into the carpark and walked into her flat. Locked the door and turned on the lights.

She went into the bathroom and began the process of getting naked. She had just taken her socks off. The aroma of a long day running down the same corridor hit her.

Just then there was a tapping on her window.

"huh. I live on the 3rd floor. How is that possible"

She went to the window in her living room. Outside was the same ape she had seen earlier. He was just floating in the air.

"Hullo Daria. Remember me? Orfa? From before?"

It was then she remembered. He was no mere ape. She had seen him countless times before. Everywhere they filmed his chubby head was there. Always smiling.

"H-hello Orfa. Shouldn't you be at home. I'm not filming tonight, so you can go"

"Daria.. How could you not want me. I am the superior human being. I can satisfy you inside and outside the bedroom. You know that"

It was true. She did know that. She had read the texts he sent her.

"Orfa if you go I'll give you an autograph. Thats a dealio?"

"No Daria. I want more." He floated closer until his nose was pressed against the window. His breath fogging the glass. I know you want it too.

He was right again. She had been missing Petra lately. His massive knob was always there in her mind. Flapping

in the wind not dis-similar to a wind sock.

"Ok. Orfa. Just this once." She did not even need to open the window. Orfa just apparated into the room.

"Puny Daria. Walls cannot contain me"

"T-thats nice Orfa"

The lovers made their way into the bedroom. Daria undid her shirt buttons. Each button got Orfa a little bit more erect. Then she undid the bra. Orfas nose began to bleed.

There she stood completely topless.

"Your turn Orfa"

"I cannot. I can't remove my black Doctor Who hoodie. It is the secret to my power."

They decided to turn around when they took their bottoms off. Daria was a bit shy.

She heard a thud while Orfa was getting undressed. She quickly turned around expecting to see a monster weenie laying there. Or at the very least Orfa collapsed on the ground.

No. She was not so lucky. The thud was his underwear hitting the ground. They were stained all over and were covered in inches of crust, Orfas pubes were cut in the shape of a TARDIS.

Daria was trapped. She knew that now. She did not know why she let him in. Maybe it was the eye contact that is letting Orfa take control.

"Well Daria. Shall we?" Orfa gestured towards the bed with his eyes. "Please assume the position"

Even though she didn't want to she could feel her body getting onto the bed and lying face down. It was time.

The omnipotent being had taken control

Orfa was a gentle lover. His balls sagged slightly more than the average man and they slapped around a bit.

Daria needed to think of a way out. She could not bear this mans children. Her mind flashed back to earlier this week. Peter had been throwing her around his house. He was practicing his Venusian Akido. Daria remembered how to use her small body to send Orfa flying.

She quickly turned around and in the same motion jumped on him. He was too stunned to move. She kicked him in the sack and ran out the door. Only stopping to put her dressing gown on.

Orfa chuckled to himself. "Poor Daria. She didn't notice I let her escape. I cannot be beaten"

She got outside and began to shout for help. Out of the bushes Orfa emerged. He pulled out his camera and snapped a picture of her. "hehe" he chuckled as he checked the picture. Her left tit was hanging out. "George will appreciate this" He sneered as he posted the image on Twitter with the hashtag #ISTSR.

EPILOGUE

Daria rang Toffam the next day.

"Hey Toff. Yea. I'm out. No more Who for me. No. NO!! I don't want to talk about it"

Toffam was confused. Was it something he said. She seemed fine before. Ah well. He needed a new companion. Just then he felt a breathing behind him.

Orfa was standing there.

"Hullo Toffam. I heard you need a new companion. I have a few ideas. I haven't slept with a black woman or a

bald man before. So let's start there"

“FIVE ITEMS RECOVERED FOLLOWING THE INTENDANT’S DISAPPEARANCE”

By

[NAME REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION: AN INTERNAL MEMO REGARDING THE INTENDANT’S DISAPPEARANCE, UNDATED

Dear Sir/Madam,

Following the apparent disappearance of Intendant Kara Nelson from her home on the 23rd November 2063, operatives were instructed to search for any clues as to what might have happened to her. Although we have yet to uncover anything which conclusively explains quite what happened to the Intendant, we believe that some - or all - of the recovered items may offer some explanation as to her disappearance. Several of these items suggest that the disturbance may be linked to the recent SCP-6062 incident, although this may simply be a coincidence. It is my job to provide you with the facts, and your job to reach a conclusion. I hope that the documents contained within this dossier make that task possible.

Regards,

Charity Fonseca

Head of Human Relations Department, SCP Foundation

ITEM ONE: AN EMAIL CONTAINING A KEY TO TRANSLATE A CIPHER CODE,

RECOVERED FROM THE INTENDANT'S HOME FOLLOWING HER DISAPPEARANCE,
DATED 18/AUG

From: Chris Tombey [ctombey@SCPcryptology.org]

Date:18/08/2063 14:03

To: Kara Nelson <intendant@SCPseniorstaff.org>

Subject: New codes

Hey, Kara,

They've worked out how to crack our codes again. The tech people said something about the enemy infiltrating our computer systems? I don't know how. Those servers are like Fort Knox. Have you ever tried recovering your password? I have. I had to provide the Foundation with six months of DNA samples and retina scans before they even thought about sending me a recovery link. It's a nightmare.

But who can blame them? I guess that it pays to be paranoid around here.

Anyway, the end result is that they're reworking all of our ciphers, and they're keeping everything offline. It's too vulnerable otherwise. Russian hackers, or something like that. We're keeping it fairly simple this time around. Nothing wrong with simple, is there?

Hold onto this. You're going to need it sooner or later.

A25 B8 C4 D12 E9 F1 G2 H3 I10 J20 K22 L13 M7 N5

O6 P26 Q15 R24 S11 T19 U23 V14 W17 X16 Y21 Z18

Best Wishes,

Chris Tombey

Senior Cryptologist, SCP Foundation

P.S. You want to go and get something to eat some time next week? Call me.

ITEM TWO: A PHOTOGRAPH RECOVERED FROM THE INTENDANT'S HOME
FOLLOWING HER DISAPPEARANCE, UNDATED

The photograph is creased and faded. We estimate that it is approximately a decade old - the experts say that it is from before sensor-cams entered the market. That places it sometime between the mid twentieth century and 2050. The amount of wear and tear that the photograph has sustained would seem to support this conclusion, as does the actual content of the image.

The image depicts a family gathering at some kind of seaside resort. We have been unable to identify precisely which one. Two parents and two children - one male and one female - can be seen towards the left hand side of the photograph. Analysis of the female child confirms this to be a childhood photograph of Intendant Kara Nelson. She appears to be approximately five to seven years old in the image. She is holding an ice cream, while the male figure - presumably her brother - is holding a cloud of cotton candy.

The family is surrounded by ferris wheels, carousels, and other fairground attractions. The ocean is visible in the near distance. Yet something else is also visible. We did not notice this detail until the image was enhanced by researchers investigating the case. In the far, far, far distance, just on the horizon, a blue oblong can be seen. It bears a remarkable resemblance to the object involved in the SCP-6062 investigation. It is not identical - it is possible that it is simply a vehicle of similar design - but this much is certain. Whatever force it is that controls those cerulean objects used them to trace the Intendant through time and space. This opens up a variety of interesting - and indeed worrying - possibilities.

Was the owner of object SCP-6062 following the Intendant throughout her personal history? If so, why would anyone do such a thing? And does this image explain what happened to the Intendant, or is it simply a red herring? Unfortunately, the photograph raises more questions than it answers. In that sense, it has much in common with many of these objects.

**ITEM THREE: A LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS DETAILING THE END OF
THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE SCP-6062 INCIDENT, DATED 1/JAN**

The Committee

SCP Foundation

no_reply@SCPcommittee.org

1st January 2063

Dear Ms. Nelson,

It is with great regret that we inform you that we will no longer be funding your investigation into object SCP-6062. Our auditors have taken a look at the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and casualty list that the project has accrued, and have decided to cease funding the project, effective immediately.

There are many reasons why we stop funding projects. Please do not take this letter as a personal assault on your research, or upon your person. You must know as well as we do that funds have been cut in every department since the Hades Maelstrom Incident of last year.

Naturally, we expect you to have your staff out of the facility within three working days. After this has been achieved, we expect you to take matters into your own hands when it comes to cleaning up the project. It is not uncommon for research centres to be flooded with concrete in cases such as this. We find that it offers a cost effective solution to several problems, including the issue of dealing with any still sentient test subjects on-site. Few organisms can survive being drowned in a million or so litres of quick-set concrete.

We offer our sincerest apologies about the cessation of your project and look forward to working with you again in the future,

Yours truly,

SCP Financial Holdings Committee

ITEM FOUR: A REPORT DETAILING THE OPERATIVE'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CRIME SCENE, DATED 28/NOV

[This is where things get really weird. Our operatives recovered this report from the scene of the disappearance, but it's dated almost a week later. The thing that's even weirder? When the report actually did get written up by an intern a few days ago, he used the exact same wording. The document found at the scene was a replica of the intern's. Does that seem right to you? It doesn't make any sense to me. Simon thinks that it's some kind of time travel effect, but you know what he's like. He always thinks that.]

There is no evidence of forced entry. That alone makes it appear as though the Intendant left voluntarily, although there are several clues as to why this was not the case. She did not take her compu-pad with her, nor her coat or bag. Any departure from the house was sudden. Her keys are still present in the house, suggesting that she did not leave via the front door, and the windows are closed. This would seem to indicate that whatever happened to the Intendant occurred within the house.

We have detected several strange energy readings coming from the Intendant's bedroom. It is therefore suspected that this is where the disappearance took place. Early analysis suggests some kind of spatial rift or pocket universe displacement. These readings appear consistent with those recovered from object SCP-6062 before the closure of that investigation. However, it is unlikely that object SCP-6062 and its pilot were able to escape the closure of their holding facility. It is possible, therefore, that the energy readings are nothing more than a coincidence.

There is a slight indentation in the carpet, as though a heavy, square based object was placed there for some time. This again would appear consistent with object SCP-6062, or another travel capsule of its type. As of now, we have no idea how many similar vehicles exist or how many are present on Earth in this time frame.

Finally, we have carried out a comprehensive DNA scan of the house. This has detected several anachronistic gene sequences which we have thus far been unable to identify. In time, perhaps we will be able to answer not only the questions that they raise, but also the question of what happened to Intendant Kara Nelson.

Unfortunately we can do neither at the present time.

**ITEM FIVE: A NOTE APPARENTLY SCRAWLED MOMENTS BEFORE THE
INTENDANT'S DISAPPEARANCE, PRESENTED IN ITS ORIGINAL CODED FORM,
UNDATED [PRESUMED 23/NOV]**

11-3-9 **10-11** 3-9-24-9. **17-9** 11-3-6-23-13-12 **3-25-14-9** 22-5-6-17-5 **19-3-25-19** 17-9 **4-6-23-13-12** 5-6-
19 **22-9-9-26** 3-9-24 **4-6-5-19-25-10-5-9-12.** 10-19 **10-11** 5-6-19 25 11-3-9. **10** 6-5-13-21 **4-25-13-13** 3-9-24 **25**
11-3-9 **8-9-4-25-23-11-9** 10-19 **10-11** 4-6-5-14-9-5-10-9-5-19, **8-23-19** 10 **22-5-6-17** 19-3-25-19 **10-19** 10-11 **3-**
9-24. 11-3-9 **10-11** 4-6-7-10-5-2 **1-6-24** 7-9. **19-6** 19-25-22-9 **7-9** 25-17-25-21. **10** 3-9-25-24 19-3-9 **11-6-23-5-**
12 6-1 **3-9-24** 7-25-4-3-10-5-9. **10-19** 10-11 **4-6-7-10-5-2** 1-6-24 **7-9.** 10 **25-7**

[The note ends here].

END OF DOSSIER

Thrice Upon a Time

By Neo

Author Note: [Part 3 of a 3-parter, but should work fine standalone.]

“Within five million years, the Cybermen will have evolved again, beyond the need for bodies. They will become pure thought, the most peace-loving and advanced race in the universe. They will lead us into a new era of understanding.”

- The World Shapers, Doctor Who Magazine, 1987

“You made your decision,” said the Twelfth Doctor, “humanity made its choice.”

He was on a beach with Clara, the astronaut Lundvik, and the schoolgirl Courtney. He stared up at the moon.

“In the mid-twenty-first century, humankind starts creeping off into the stars, spreads its way through the galaxy to the very edges of the universe. And it endures till the end of time.”

He turned from the moon, to face the humans.

“And it does all that because one day in the year 2049, when it had stopped thinking about going to the stars, something occurred that made it look up, not down. It looked out there into the blackness and it saw something beautiful, something wonderful, that for once it didn't want to destroy. And in that one moment, the whole course of history was changed.”

The humans had earned this. They had earned their science-fiction utopia. It wasn't easy. It took a lot of pain, and a lot of time. But in the end, progress won out.

A Mondasian Cyberman zapped the Twelfth Doctor. Finally, one blow too many.

“Ah hello, I'm the Doctor,” the Doctor said to the Cyberman.

“Doctors are not required,” the Cyberman replied.

“No, no, I'm not *a* Doctor. I am *the* Doctor. The original, you might say.”

The Cyberman said nothing, but zapped him again.

“Doctor, Doctor,” he said to himself. “Let it go. Time enough.”

He raised his sonic screwdriver and detonated the massive explosion of that floor of the colony ship. He was already dying, what was one blast more?

He was on the ground, surrounded by fire. There were only flames above. Trapped.

"Pity," he muttered with what life he had left, "no stars. I hoped there'd be stars."

The Doctor was too unconscious to see, but later, across the charred wasteland that was Level 507, Bill the Cyberman trudged through the ashes, limping her way across to the Doctor. Once she found him, she fell to her knees and began to weep.

From a nearby puddle emerged Heather, the girl from university, the Pilot, the girl with a star in her eye.

Bill's Cyberman body slumped over, seemingly dead.

"Am I dead?" asked Bill. She felt she was herself again. She was so confused.

Heather kissed her.

"Does that feel dead to you?"

It didn't.

"You're like me now," continued Heather, "it's just a different kind of living."

Indeed, water was streaming off Bill's hand much the same way it did from Heather's.

"How did you find me?" asked Bill.

"I left you my tears, remember?"

Bill remembered.

"I know when you're crying them," said Heather. "Time to go."

"But the Doctor," Bill protested, "we can't just leave him."

"Of course we can't. And we're not going to."

At times it was so dreadfully boring, but at times it was so dreadfully fun. The Master delighted in the long game he was playing with the Doctor and his pet.

It had been years since he'd landed on the Mondasian colony ship. It had been years (however you counted it) since the ship had begun to pull itself away from the nearby black hole. It had been years since he'd lived like a king on Floor 1056. And it would be years before he'd truly be able to have some fun with the Doctor. The wait was so excruciating, but also...so exciting.

In some ways, the ship was a personal hell, stuck out of reach of the rest of the universe for so, so long. But in others, it was like a microcosm of the universe itself. Each floor a world to shape. His kind of world. Everything was amplified here. Moral dilemmas, conflicts, the cycle of life and death, everything concentrated and magnified and purified. A scale model of the universe. His own personal sandpit to play in.

"Pain, pain, pain," the proto-Cybermen would say.

"Kill me, kill me, kill me."

"Die, me, die, me, die, me."

Delicious.

The Doctor's pet, Bill, had fallen asleep while watching the Doctor's eyebrow raise so, so slowly on the monitor.

The Master paced around the room, his “Mister Razor” gait (not to mention accent) long since perfected. Oh, how he loved disguises!

He’d been filled with such glee ever since he’d realised it was he who oversaw the genesis of the Cybermen. It was slow, but it was his doing. More or less.

The Mondasians could not live down in these derelict parts of the ship forever. Humanity was a luxury they could no longer afford. It was evolve, or die. Conversion was necessary. His Cybermen were the cure. His Cybermen were the future. In a world of oil, rust, and engine fumes, a species as pathetic as humans could never survive, or evolve in time. They had to be upgraded. He’d never shared the Doctor’s fascination with human pets - oh sure, there’d been Lucy Saxon, but he’d tired of that soon enough. But Cybermen, proper Cybermen, proper weapons...now those could entertain him for quite some time. Oh, what he could do with them.

All in good time. He’d still lost most of his power for now. He had to lay low. He’d work something out. He’d gain control again.

All in due time.

Her name was Hizran. Names like that weren’t uncommon on Mondas. She’d known multiple “Hazrans”. She knew a few “Hezrans”. Once there were many “Hizrans”.

Now, there was just her.

She wasn’t just the only Hizran, she was the only one of her family left. She didn’t know why she’d lived longer. She wished that she could wish she hadn’t, but deep down, she was glad she was still alive. She felt so guilty about it. But she’d rather be alive than dead, even if meant being so alone.

She loved travelling, back when she was young. She loved flying. She’d wanted to sail across the stars. The colony ship had seemed so exciting, her own window into heaven.

It seemed the opposite now. There was barely anything to breathe. There was next to nothing to eat. Rust. Fumes. Oil. So much oil. That’s all there was.

She didn’t want to become one of...them. But what else was there?

When they called her conversion, she didn’t go happily.

But she went.

The Cyber Foundries flourished. Mass production. The whole city, a machine to turn people into Cybermen. More and more people converted. More and more Cybermen.

They had no name. They were not an individual. They’d been human, once. They’d been a woman, once. They’d been called Hizran, once.

No more.

All that was left of their humanity was the pain, but the helmet stopped them caring about that.

In the years to come, they were upgraded more and more. Technology developed further and further. From cloth, to metal. Clunky to sleek. Drone unit to weapons grade.

Eventually they did fly, boots of flame jaunting them up, if not to skies, then at least to roofs. There was no Hizran left in there to enjoy it.

They were one of the very, very, very few left behind when the rest of them went to Floor 507. None returned. It took years, and years, and years to build up their forces again, but they had nothing but time, living in a tiny scale model of the universe, with a scale model of time.

Eventually, they made their way up the floors. Eventually, there were no lifeforms left to convert. The Cybermen had no clear purpose anymore.

Survive? They already did that. Upgrade? There was nothing else left to do.

And so they were upgraded, and upgraded, and upgraded. More and more efficient. Technologies developed exponentially. Logic refined. So many simulations tested. So many diagnostics run. Outdated processes deleted. When so much time passed with no one to convert, conversion protocols were junked. All focus turned to refinement of the Cybermen.

Sometimes complications arose. Sometimes there were miscalculations, and they had to start from the bottom again. But they had nothing but time. On and on, they Cybermen evolved and upgraded.

Eventually, calculations turned to what form to take when they made it out of the ship. It had been a colony ship, meant for exploration, once. Exploration remained a prime function. But how best explore?

They'd long evolved past the need for bipedal, humanoid forms, for mimicking humanity in any form at all.

They retained mimicry parameters, but not the contexts to use them in. They were living machines, and thought like it. What if they could spread themselves throughout both the vessel and its resources? There was no logic in binding themselves to individual forms. They were already part hivemind, why not extend that to their physical avatars?

So the Cybermen left behind their humanoid forms and became ships, shuttlecraft in their own right. And they became their own fuel, their own fluid, their own oil. A Cyberman ship, powered by Cyberman fuel. A sentient shuttlecraft, powered by sentient oil.

But not just restricted to oil, instead a hyper-advanced fluid that could shapeshift to whatever resource the ship and its many refinements to come would require.

The power and technology needed for such refined constructions required collapsing so many Cybermen into each other, folding so many technologies together. Their numbers fell enormously, devastatingly. But their technology leapt forward so, so far.

When the colony ship finally escaped the reach of the black hole, the black hole itself had become effectively meaningless - they had developed the technology to warp through the different levels at will, through the connections between the sentient Cyber fluids throughout the ship.

When what had once been known as Cybermen reached the top and finally left the colony ship and entered the universe proper, they spread far and they spread wide. To so many different galaxies, to so many different worlds.

One shuttlecraft made its way to the planet Earth, in the year 2016. It surveyed the city of London, then left, its constantly updating and upgrading processes running all the while. It turned out it contained more oil than it

required, so some was left behind in the name of efficiency.

The oil lay dormant for some time. While as sentient as any other Cyber technology, it lacked the specific function drives of the shuttlecraft. It had no motivation. It certainly had no memory of the Mondasian woman it had once, in a sense, been.

Eventually, an Earth woman stumbled across the oil, and noticed one of its features, its mimicry processes. In time, the oil analysed the woman sufficiently to determine her an appropriate replacement for the shuttlecraft. She held strong exploratory functions, just as the shuttlecraft did. She held higher processing ability. She was more than suitable.

“Pilot is located. Link is established.”

Later, when the oil saw the suitable pilot again, it activated its confirmation measures.

“Pilot confirmed. Pilot engaged.”

It swallowed up the pilot, and they became one.

Later, when two more sentient lifeforms investigated the oil, the oil’s burgeoning new hybrid consciousness recognised one of them. The human consciousness melded with the Cyber sentience, the last conscious thought of the pilot reverberating through all their functions and processes, and so the woman was identified as a passenger to take with them.

“Passenger selected. Pursuit engaged.”

Chasing the passenger was easy, with the oil’s abilities, but the woman refused to be easily engaged. All the while, the Cyber sentience struggled to reconcile with the human consciousness. This wasn’t like the shuttlecraft. There were so many variables, so much creativity, so much higher thinking long since stripped bare on the colony ship. In time, the human consciousness would surely subsume and dominate the Cyber sentience, but that time had not quite come yet. It still considered itself just in terms of ‘the oil’.

Eventually, the oil located the passenger.

“Hello,” said Bill.

“Hello.” It had been a long time since any of the technologies that made up the oil had engaged in an actual conversation.

“You scared me,” said Bill.

“You scared me.”

“You’re dead,” said Bill.

“You’re dead.”

Off she ran. Off they followed.

The oil’s fluid abilities and warping functions served it well as it chased the woman across space and time, but the woman doggedly avoided engagement. Eventually they came to a war zone.

“Exterminate!” intoned a Dalek.

“Exterminate,” repeated the oil.

“Exterminate!”

“Exterminate.”

The oil took the form of the Dalek. Soon, the passenger encountered it again.

“Heather,” said Bill.

“Interesting,” the Doctor said to the oil. “You had a gun but you didn't use it. Why? You've already taken one person from the Earth. I'm going to let that pass, because I have to, but I will not let you take another. Go. Just go now. Fly away. Why won't you just go?”

“Oh my God,” said Bill in realisation. “I understand.”

“You what?” asked Nardole.

“The last thing she said to me,” Bill explained, “she promised she wouldn't leave without me.”

“Her last conscious thought, driver her across the universe,” said the Doctor. “Never underestimate a crush.”

“Oh, you don't have to tell me,” agreed Nardole.

“What do we do?” asked Bill.

“I don't know, replied the Doctor. “She's not chasing you, she's inviting you. Release her. Release her from her promise.”

“You have to let me go,” Bill said to the oil.

“You have to let me go,” the oil repeated.

“I will.”

“I will.”

“I really liked you.”

“I really liked you.”

The oil reached out to the passenger. The passenger raised their hand.

“Bill, don't. Don't!”

“Don't do that, listen, please, just listen to him.”

“Don't, don't, Bill, let's go!”

The oil and the passenger clasped hands, and visual data of the oil's capabilities streamed into the passenger's mind.

“Bill, listen to me. Whatever she's showing you, whatever she's letting you see, it's a lure. It's a trap. She's making you part of her, and you can never come back.”

“I see what you see,” said the passenger. “It's beautiful.”

“Bill, let go! You have to let go! She is not human anymore.”

“Goodbye, Heather, said the passenger, crying.

“Goodbye, Bill”, said Heather, the Pilot.

Heather's mind had finally subsumed and dominated the oil, the Cyber sentience. It was still there, but thrallled to her. There was no conflict, the logic had won out. From removal of humanity, to embrace of humanity, the Cybermen had come full circle.

Heather displaced some of her fluid, her technology, into Bill's tears, her fluid. She left Bill her tears.

Bill let go of her hand, and Heather dissolved back into puddle form, before warping away.

As time passed, Heather experimented with her new way of life. She wasn't dead, not truly, but she wasn't alive in the same way anymore. She was different. She wasn't a pilot, she was the Pilot. There were so few sentient

shuttlecraft out there, that she began to explore the universe, looking for any others like her.

What took her the longest was understanding time the way the Cyber sentience understood it. It was much easier to just think linearly, as her human self had done. But eventually, after experimenting with pushing herself, she detected some of herself, her fluid, her technology, crying in a familiar place, only in the past.

The colony ship.

Heather warped into the colony ship, now a triviality for her, only to find a Cyberman Bill weeping at the feet of a seemingly dead Doctor, in the charred wasteland remains of Level 507.

Heather pushed more of herself into Bill, and used all her knowledge and abilities to extract Bill's consciousness and place it in a rearranged fluid shell like hers.

"Am I dead?" asked Bill.

Heather kissed her.

"Does that feel dead to you?"

She was sure it didn't.

"You're like me now," continued Heather, "it's just a different kind of living."

Indeed, fluid was streaming off Bill's hand much the same way it did from Heather's.

"How did you find me?" asked Bill.

"I left you my tears, remember?"

She could see that Bill remembered.

"I know when you're crying them," said Heather. "Time to go."

"But the Doctor," Bill protested, "we can't just leave him."

"Of course we can't. And we're not going to."

She warped the three of them out of what would have been the claustrophobic reality of the colony ship for them, into the Doctor's TARDIS.

"I suppose this is the only place he'd rest in peace," said Bill over the Doctor's body, "if there's any place he'd do that."

Heather continued operating the TARDIS controls.

"How can you fly the TARDIS?" asked Bill.

"I'm the Pilot. I can fly anything. Even you." Heather's eyes twinkled.

"So, I'm like you now. I'm not human anymore?"

"I can make you human again," Heather clarified. "It's all just atoms. You can rearrange them any way you like. I can put you back home, you can make chips, and live your life, or you can come with me. It's up to you, Bill, but, before you make up your mind."

She opened the TARDIS doors to reveal the shining allure of space.

"Let me show you around," said Heather.

“Back in time for tea?” asked Bill.

“If you want.”

Bill turned to address the Doctor. “You know what, old man? I'm never going to believe you're really dead. Because one day everyone's just going to need you too much. Until then,” she kissed him on the cheek and left a tear on his face, “it’s a big universe, but I hope I see you again.”

Heather watched approvingly.

“Where there’s tears, there’s hope,” said Bill.

Heather nodded.

“Just one thing,” Bill said to Heather, “I’ve been through a lot since the last time we met...so I’ll show you around.”

Heather smiled, and considered her story.

A human, Hizran, on Mondas.

A nameless Cyberman on the colony ship.

Heather, the Pilot that melded them all together.

They’d lived three lives, thrice upon a time, but this now? This was the first life that really seemed worth living.

Bill smiled back, and together, the two of them stepped out into the stars.

The Soul Bug Finale: STATE OF GRACE

By: catharticspurious @ The Outsideists

XX. Bugs (7) [END]

The Blanket of Dreams

A bedtime story, by John Smith

ONCE upon a time, when people first started thinking, they made another universe and laid it over the first like a blanket.

The blanket was the universe they could go to in their imaginations. It was where they went in their dreams, and where every story they told each other turned into real life. They filled it with so many stories that it was like a big, heavenly, living library.

And there was a spatial relationship between the blanket and the universe below. When someone in the real-world imagined up a story, it would appear right on top of them in the blanket!

That way, every person, every house, every country, and every world had their own special part of the blanket to themselves. The people of Gallifrey had their own part. The people of Earth had their own part. Even the people of Raxacoricofallapatorius had their own part, far, far away.

But there was a problem...

~

Up. He's flying up. Nowhere forwards or backwards in time, nowhere else between the folds of dimensions, solely up.

And god, does it feel good to be back in the TARDIS! The Doctor dances around the console, cranking levers and spinning dials for the sheer tactile pleasure of it. "You're in perfect shape, gorgeous!" he calls up to the time rotor. "I'm sorry I ever doubted you!"

He yanks the scanner screen round to face him, monitoring his own ascent into and beyond Earth's atmosphere. "I can't believe how wrong I was. Honestly, I've never been this big an idiot - how did I not see it? How?"

They shoot upwards for another moment or so, approaching the TARDIS' fastest possible physical speeds, then they're finally in the right position. The blue box floats casually in space's abyss.

"I thought it was a monster that'd infected the human race. I thought it was an invasion, a scheme, a plan..." One final switch is pulled to leave the time machine on standby, and then the Doctor looks anxiously at the doors. He has to open them. "Funny. After all this, I'm still not sure I really want to see."

The TARDIS is silent.

The Doctor rolls the tension out of his shoulders.

"Point taken, dear."

Deep breath.

"Geronimo."

He strides to the doors and yanks them open, to gaze on the planet below.

-

"Every story generates its own echo in the Land of Fiction, in its proper location."

The Doctor's sitting in the doorway, with his legs hanging out into the void.

He's been like this for ten minutes.

"What would happen," he wonders aloud, "if *one* story was told over and over, at a constant rate of multiple times per second, in the exact same place?"

He hasn't taken his eyes off of the Earth.

"A super-dense object would form. A story so dense, so active, that it would start to take on a life of its own. Become self-aware. Start to become real. And, a bit like the density of a celestial body supposedly warping space and time...it would start to weigh on the fabric of the Land of Fiction.

"It would create a depression in the blanket, and it would sink. Down, and down, and down - but not quite all the way."

He waits for the TARDIS to give him a response, some sign, but none is forthcoming.

"This is the important part. If the Fictionverse and the Universe lie one atop the other, it follows that there's a point where the two meet. A frequency that exists neither wholly in one, nor wholly in the other. An extremely thin seam - a fiction seam."

Suddenly there's a delighted-sounding series of beeps from the console, and several of the sensors flash up notifications in a slightly melodic pattern.

The Doctor smiles to himself. "Clever old thing. You worked it out. That's where you brought me." He rises to his feet. "That's where I am." He looks out on the star-flecked infinity, and the hypnotic spectacle of the Earth beneath his feet. He speaks out into the bubble of the TARDIS air shell, hearing it enclose the sound.

"I'm in the seam between reality and fiction!"

It doesn't echo.

"A place where only the quasi-real can tread. A ghostly plane of existence, superimposed over the real world. As for me...I suppose the reason I can interact with reality from here is that I—" He stops, flicking his

gaze from side to side secretively. "Never mind that."

There's something more important to worry about. He leans over, out of the doorway, to stare directly down at the Earth.

What he can see there is not unlike a colossal hive of maggots. The sheer mass of the Bugs resting atop the collective mass of humanity forms its own layer. The endless wriggling of the creatures, when viewed from space, causes this layer to take on a shimmering quality. A texture that's visibly alive, coating the land masses of the planet.

"These Bugs - they're not what I thought they were. They're not mind parasites, not really." Right about now, he finds himself beset by an urge to explain, but sadly Clara isn't in the TARDIS at the moment to hear him. So, to make do, he forms a mental image of her leaning on the railings at the side. Immediately his spirits pick up. Pacing excitedly around the console, he launches into his exposition.

"What's the first story every single person tells themselves, the one that they tell constantly their whole lives?"

Mind-Clara is silent, but shrugs, looking at him expectantly.

The Doctor's eyes sparkle with mischief, or at least he imagines that's what they're doing. "The story of 'I'. The story of the self. The narrative that turns a bunch of electrical impulses between cells into a *consciousness*, and a limited view on the world into a *worldview*." He swings himself back around to the doorway, to look back once more upon the hive. "It's the story of the soul."

Mind-Clara looks skeptical, but remains silent.

"Souls. Internal narratives...far, far too dense to exist in the Land of Fiction, they sink down and rest here, in the seam. I thought they were monsters. Turns out they're just really, really ugly."

He begins to notice something. The emptiness of space and the light of distant stars isn't the only thing he can see above the Earth. Things seem to be floating up through the void, away from the Earth in the direction of outer space. He squints to try and make out what they are - pale, ghostly, tiny dots -

They're Bugs, broken off from the hive, detached from their host humans, floating gently up and away. Realisation sinks in. Presumably these Bugs are dead, and so are the humans who generated them.

"I suppose," resumes the Doctor, addressing Mind-Clara once more, "that Cole, and his *associates*, are just what happens when that narrative gets too big. Too bloated. Come to think, it must be building up quietly every second - how can it not? That's just how human thought works, and the more you feel like the protagonist of your own story, the more it builds - but things like, say, learning, cognitive dissonance, having your illusions broken...and *especially, empathy for other people* - those things must forcibly cut it down.

"The more you open yourself to other people's realities, the harder it is for your own self-contained one to survive! Bleurgh." He shakes out his whole body, having allowed it to become much too contaminated with philosophy. "That's quite enough of that."

He sits back down at the doorway, gazing at the shimmering Bug layer in wonder.

"They're Soul Bugs. Which makes all this...some sort of Soul Hive."

After a few more moments of gazing, the sight of the Soul Hive starts to feel less wondrous and more

faintly unnerving.

Down there, the Bugs must all still be engaged in that feeding shriek.

The Doctor considers them - an insistent, biological force, but one anathemic to empathy and growth.

He did think they were parasites...

"But it's not that simple, is it?" he mutters under his breath. The dead Soul Bugs catch the Doctor's attention. They waft into space, up, past the TARDIS, into the area behind it. Of course.

Because there's one piece of this puzzle that still hasn't been solved.

He's been looking at the Earth.

But he's been ignoring the other thing.

The Doctor closes the doors, spins several controls on the console, and instructs the TARDIS to rotate in space until it's facing the other direction.

Slowly, he walks back up to the doors.

He grits his teeth, and pulls the doors open.

"Hello, you," he growls.

He's looking the Moon full in its face.

And there it is.

Looming before him, gigantic.

The tentacles. The dark mass. The leech-mouths. The endless tangle of appendages, slime, writhing, faster and faster, impossible to comprehend, a beast as big as the Moon itself.

"I'm the Doctor. I don't believe we've been introduced."

It screams.

The blast hits him, ten times more powerfully than it did when he was back on Earth - he hears the dying wails of everyone he's ever loved, the emotionless, yawning roar of the inferno reducing homes and families to carbonised dust; a vortex of blade-like air snuffing out the candle of meaning forever; his head is filled with plague-dreams of time and space melting in the crucible of the black hole; he sees reality fracturing itself into endless mirrors showing images of him becoming everything he's ever feared himself to have been all along; decades of childhood nightmares and millennia of adulthood paranoias come crawling out of the corners of existence itself like avenging furies to rip him apart atom from atom—

"No," he says.

He focuses.

He stands firm.

"This isn't real."

The beast's howls continue.

"I know it isn't real, because I know what you are."

He stares, deep into its core.

"There's only one thing you can be. There's only one other story so strong, so consistent, so *dense*, that it would exist here - on the same plane as the Soul Hive."

The aura of dread he feels emanating from the creature is overwhelming. Every part of his body feels desperate to flee, to wrench him back into the TARDIS and away. But even this, he knows, is a trick of the mind.

"The story of the unknown. You're every lie they've ever told themselves about the outside world. Every story they've dreamt up to justify hating one another. Every existential paranoia that keeps them awake at night. Every gut reaction they've had to seeing something different from what they're used to. Every monster they've invented when change is too uncomfortable, when empathy's too painful! You're every terrified nightmare, every threat, every fear!"

The whirling of the tentacles is unceasing. The dimensions of the creature seem almost bottomless. It defies geometry.

"I even know why you're in the moon." At this, the Doctor can't help but smirk. "The moon is the presence in the sky that represents space. It defines the emptiness around it by its presence. The moon's the locus point for the story of the beyond, and it's been like that ever since the first humans saw it hanging up here. They generated you - and they made you quasi-real. Just like the Soul Hive, you're an artifact of their biology. Question is," he wonders, "can you think?"

This is when it screams a word.

It's an intelligible word, even though it seems to be crafted from the gaps in hollowed-out screams rather than from phonetics. It hits the Doctor as a burst of raw meaning, which his own language circuits interpret as the same word in every single tongue he knows. It's an accusation, an insult, a taunt, a name.

wOUNDER

He doesn't understand what, precisely, he's meant to have wounded.

But he's game. "If we're playing at calling names, I'm happy to oblige." He looks down at the moon-monstrosity, the embodiment of human hatred and fear, with a fire in his spirit and a deep understanding that somehow - someday - this *thing* has to be crushed.

"You're the unknown. The unknowable. I name you...*Obscura*."

It doesn't seem to have liked that.

Its restless wriggling appears to double in intensity, and even the Doctor instinctively takes a step back from the doors. He observes the dead Soul Bugs from Earth being sucked past, and the way that many of them become caught in Obscura's tendrils and are hurled into its numerous slobbering, teeth-laden orifices, chewed

and absorbed.

“So you eat them, do you?” muses the Doctor. “Wonder what that’s about.”

Then there’s an enormous *thud*, and the TARDIS jolts horribly to the side, toppling the Doctor to the floor. He looks frantically back out of the doors, seeing that Obscura has reached up with several of its serpentine appendages and grabbed his spaceship.

“Oh, no you *don’t!*” He slams the doors shut and makes a leap for the console, as the floor rattles like it’s in an earthquake. On the scanner, the gaping maw of the beast approaches, salivating, hungry to feed. “Stick to the Soul Bugs, mate - we are *not* on the menu tonight! Come on, TARDIS, we’re getting out of here. Out of the fiction seam, and back to reality.”

The helicopter dials atop the time rotor spin with a renewed vigour. But the engine groans and creaks, struggling to squeeze out its traditional dematerialisation whine.

Bewildered, the Doctor grabs the scanner again. “What’s the problem? We should be able to just leave —” Then he sees why they’re having trouble taking off. The fabric of reality is weak here. “Ugh. Big Ugly over there must’ve left space-time an absolute wreck when it sank through to the seam. God knows what havoc *that’s* caused. But you can do this, old girl, I know you can. That’s why you turn me on.” The roundel lights around the console room go a slightly redder shade of orange.

Sure enough, the TARDIS works up the power to slip free of the seam, fading erratically out of Obscura’s clutches. The scream of the monster chases them all the way into the time vortex, seeming to echo, though that might just be in the Doctor’s mind.

But a few things are certain to him.

Obscura and the Soul Hive are twin consequences of the same problem.

It’s a problem that will frequently threaten humanity with decomposition, self-cannibalisation and death, everywhere on Earth. The larger those Soul Bugs become, the more harm their owners - encased in a closed narrative - will do to others.

And the more mankind hurts itself, the more scared and hateful it will feel...and the larger the Soul Bugs will in turn grow. A vicious cycle of suffering.

It seems almost unstoppable. Even the blow the Doctor dealt to Cole’s Bug might soon be reversed; it could be the turning point that leads him out of fascism, or it could be the trauma that sinks him even deeper into denial.

But the Bugs are just the harvest. The intelligence here, the predator, is Obscura, who lurks dangerously in the realm of the quasi-real. If the balance of power tips towards Obscura in any way whatsoever, then the whole future of humanity could be at stake.

Somehow - some way - Obscura has to go. And that will only be possible if the humans overcome their problem.

Still, as he leaves this mess behind, the Doctor is seized by a conviction.

“No matter what you do, Obscura...I will *not* let you take humanity.”

XXI. Blue Box Malfunction (8) [END]

It had all felt very heroic and dashing back when he was Flop-Hair, of course, but ultimately it was always going to wind up with something anticlimactic like this. The Doctor watches the two separate logs scrolling up the screen, as the system compares them and proves conclusively what he's already deduced to be true.

In front of him, Serene wipes sweat from her forehead. "This is insane."

"Yes. And yet," declares the Time Lord, "as you can see, it's all too real."

"This is totally beyond anything we could have predicted. Or even imagined." She steps closer to the screen, as if making sure her eyes aren't playing tricks on her. But sure enough, analysing the log from Nord's Blue Box and the log from Nord's brain side-by-side is like connecting two halves of a jigsaw.

Both of them, at the moment of the virus' emergence, were communicating with an unidentified outside partner. That part is still very true.

But what's now clear is that the unknown partners were each other.

Gunther massages his beard like a pet cat. "And it did this...unconsciously. It did this by itself, without any planning. Without even realising what it was doing. The brain...and the Blue Box...wrote the virus *together*."

Locke is sat as far away from the screen as possible. He looks reluctant to believe, throwing searching looks at his two colleagues. "Does any of this seriously sound likely to you guys? There must be another explanation."

"What's so unlikely, Mr. Vernon?" The Doctor regards him patronisingly. "Are you seriously *surprised* that the human brain's capable of more than you knew? Just because you've mapped it, and attached little microscopic wires to it, doesn't mean you suddenly *understand* it."

Serene sinks back into a chair. "Dr. Smith's right. We gave the brain an extension of itself, one that operates in a language of code and programming. We should have guessed it would adapt. We shouldn't be shocked that the subconscious found a way to...exploit the system. Something like this was bound to happen."

There's a moment of quiet in the room, as the gravity of this sinks in.

Gunther, however, brightens up. "This opens up a whole new area." He starts to grin. "If the subconscious could create something like this, imagine the *good* things it could create!"

"That, of course," cuts in the voice of the Doctor, "is if you can find anything good in the human subconscious to work with. I suspect problems like Nord's will be a tad more common." The mention of Nord brings the conversation to a halt again. The scientists look rueful.

"We vetted all five of them as thoroughly as we legally could," Serene laments. "He just kept his leanings too well-hidden."

Locke's face is overcast. "That's how they always sneak in," he mutters. "They always manage to seem so normal. Maybe normalness is just a facade to begin with."

"Maybe what you call normality," the Doctor suggests, "is what fosters their kind of thinking? Either

way, we've gotten off track. You know what the virus is, you know why it happened, we're all happy, thank God for me, et cetera. But in case you all forgot, we've still got some poor muppets on this ship who're infected with it."

Serene turns to him. "Dr. Smith, developing a cure isn't going to be instantaneous."

"As it happens," he replies, looking sly, "I have an idea for an instant treatment."

-

Danis Tailor and Alexandria Miyo face each other from across the lounge. Behind each of them is a group of (newly rotated in) care staff. The Doctor and the scientists watch from the sidelines.

"Hey, Alex."

"Hi, Danis. Looking good today."

They both chuckle nervously at the joke. Each of them still sees the other as a horrific, demonic entity plucked from the depths of the nightmare - it's only through a great deal of courage that they can keep reminding themselves of the true person beneath the illusion.

Danis shuffles awkwardly under her tentacle-head. "Sorry I freaked out and nearly killed you and stuff."

"I should be the one apologising. I grabbed the kitchen knife."

"That's just 'cause you're smarter."

"Or more naturally homicidal." They both titter again. "God, I am terrified."

Serene gently urges them on. "Just stay calm, both of you. If this works, it'll be worth it. All you need to do is treat it exactly like a normal interaction."

Danis looks at her. "And if it doesn't work?"

"Then we'll come up with something else."

"It's not so bad," Alexandria offers, breezily. "It's just a big ol' ...tentacle-faced, hundred-mouthed, freaky-looking *thing*...I could learn to love it."

"Heh, sure." Danis starts to play along. "In Alex's case it might even be an improvement!"

"I woke up like this, honey."

"This'll sound weird, but..." She stares at Alexandria. "If I force myself to look at it...it's even kind of cool."

"When you're both ready," instructs Serene, interrupting the jollity, "concentrate - focus on what you both know is real - and open a connection."

The two women oblige, becoming quiet, taking deep breaths and steeling themselves in the face of fear. Their Blue Boxes send out mutual thought-chat signals. Looking deep into the mouth of horror, they both accept the requests.

A miracle happens.

As their minds flood back into each other, and for a brief instant of double-consciousness they each see

their own corrupted images through the eyes of the other person - conflicting with what they know to be the truth
- they simultaneously understand each other's fear, confusion, sadness, and above all shared humanity. An awareness of the illusion's falseness is irrevocably written into their subconscious.

And just like that, in a haze of revelation, the illusion dissolves.

The vision of fear breaks apart.

The human faces re-emerge, smiling, into the light.

The lie is banished and the truth is free.

"Hi again, Danis."

"Same to you, Alex. Long time no see." They're so relieved they could burst.

The room erupts in celebration, as the staff escort in Rand Steppenfield to undergo the same procedure. To think it would be so easy.

-

"This is all well and good, Doctor," complains Locke later, "but we can't just go around getting everyone to do it *after* they've already been infected."

Serene concurs, enjoying some real coffee for once. "That's true. We need to find a way of preventing this...*deconversion shock* from occurring in the first place."

The Doctor is nonchalant. "Well, then, good thing you have all the time in the world to figure that one out! I'm off soon, so get cracking. You can't just rely on me for everything."

"If push comes to shove," suggests Gunther flippantly, "we could just include a warning in the contract."

Serene shoots him a withering look.

Locke, seemingly unable to pull himself away from Twitter entirely, is peering down a list of trending topics. "At least it looks like the press release changed the conversation. They're all guessing about what started the infection...a couple of them think it was some kind of forced brainwashing...but at least most of the heat is off now."

"Maybe you can ask Twitter to crowdsource your ideas for you," the Doctor mutters, trying to sneak on some of the spare caffeine patches. "I'm sure they'd have no end of opinions."

Serene puts down her cup. "I want to say it'd be as simple as writing in a patch that detects the virus as soon as it emerges. But we can't be sure there'd only be one kind. There must be different types of deconversion all over the world."

"Hear me out a minute, friends," Gunther suddenly interjects. "This whole problem happened because of a *shock*, as you put it, Serene. Like jumping into a cold pool. Right?"

The others nod, unsure where's going.

"Well, what do you do *instead* of jumping into the pool?"

"You dip your toe in," answers Locke.

“Exactly. You take it slow. Nord was scarred because his brain wasn’t ready, it was like he overloaded it. If you could deliver the same revelation he had, but...more slowly, learning bit by bit instead of in a traumatic rush, I doubt you’d have this kind of problem.”

The Doctor resorts to sipping someone else’s coffee. “Interesting,” he murmurs into the cup. “Very interesting.”

-

Zarren Mole lies in an obscenely soft hospital bed, with little other than a patient beeping sound and a beautiful (if slightly nerve-wracking) window view for company. The medics have done all they can for now, and it looks like he’ll make it out alive. He might even be able to claim healthcare on fixing his face. Still, it’s been a long and painful day. The worst of it might have been the uneventfulness. The only update he’s received on events outside the room was half an hour ago, when a grinning nurse told him they’d solved the situation with the help of some doctor.

He’s been lying there, stewing, for a long while when someone finally enters the room. It looks like that inspector guy who popped up in the Skybunker not long before Nord went crazy.

“Hello, Zarren,” he says. “I’m the Doctor.”

Zarren doesn’t waste the effort on replying. He just about manages a weak nod.

“I mean, I say I’m the Doctor, but I don’t even spend that much time talking to victims of violence. So forgive me if I’m a bit rusty. I assume you’ve been told about everything that’s gone on?” Zarren nods again.

“So you’ll know that we’ve found a way to reverse the effects of the virus after it’s manifested in a sufferer. You expose them to thought information from someone they’ve monsterised, contradicting their perception.”

Nod.

“Do you know where I’m going with this?”

Zarren doesn’t nod, but he can start to work it out. He opens his mouth. “Ain’t that just peachy,” he sighs, slurring his words. “Someone finally asks my opinion...and it’s about helping the guy who put me here.”

“I appreciate the injustice of that. But the way I look at it, there’s an upside.”

“‘N’ what might that be?”

“It’s the magic of these little devices...if you wanted, you could choose to send him a memory.” The Doctor makes rather pronounced eye contact with Zarren. “It would have to be one from after he monsterised you, of course.”

Zarren suddenly understands. The thought is somewhat sickening, but comes with its own grim appeal. “You serious?”

“I’m dead serious.”

“...I dunno. I dunno, man. I don’t know if I could do that. I’m not really into that eye for an eye business.”

“I’m not sure it would count as eye for an eye,” the Doctor mumbles, averting his eyes a little like a scolded kid. “If everyone had to directly feel the consequences of their own actions, we’d probably live in a far nicer universe. Secondly, it would never be equivalent to what you went through. Thirdly, it’d still be curing him.”

“I get it, I get it. I just...I dunno if he really deserves it. If it was really his fault. Who says it wasn’t the guys in white coats’ fault for letting it happen to me?”

“Or the parent company’s fault for hiring them, or the government’s fault for letting them start the project, or everyone on Earth’s fault for living?” The Doctor’s eyebrows are doing gymnastics. “Where does the buck of responsibility stop?”

“Maybe it don’t stop nowhere.”

The old man huffs. “Maybe it doesn’t. But you humans, you never truly learn unless you face consequences.”

“That I agree with.”

“Are you going to send it or not?”

Zarren sinks deeper into his bed, taking long, slow breaths. “Maybe. Maybe not. ‘S my decision. Think I’ll sleep on it.” And with that, he shuts his eyes and shuts out the world, leaving the Doctor to slink out of the room.

-

They line up to see him off. They were a pleasant enough bunch, the Doctor supposes. Worth a quick handshake. Definitely not on hugging terms, though.

Danis is first. “Sucks that we couldn’t get to know each other better,” she says. “But you basically saved our butts. It was awesome.”

“I understood most of that, which I will take as a poignant development in my own ability to communicate with today’s youth. I could never have done it without you.”

“Here’s to the future, then.”

“May it be as successful as your career.” They shake.

Alexandria is up next. “Doctor, you said something about oxygen rations—”

“Believe me, you won’t miss them when they show up.”

“Right. Are you on Facebook by any chance? I’d love to get into your political circle.”

“If anything evaded my attempt to delete myself from all known history, it was probably Facebook, so I’m sure you could find me on there somewhere. But trust me, you *don’t* want to be in my political circle. Most of it would vapourise you.” They shake.

Last of all, Rand. The Doctor cuts in, in advance: “I just want to say, no, I don’t have a ‘gamer tag’, I don’t own a ‘twitch channel’, and the truth is that video games actually somewhat unnerve me. Now proceed with whatever you were about to say.”

Rand smiles, for some reason. “Thanks for kicking my ass, Doctor. And for...not being weird about...me. You know.”

“Don’t know what you mean. I consider myself weird about everything, which is what makes me so crushingly sane and everybody else so faintly ridiculous. Best of luck at your next speed running party. Don’t run down any steep hills.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it.” They shake.

He regards all three of them. “I’m sure you’ll make fine heralds for the brain-boxed generation. You all seem just barely odd enough to make it work.” Then he turns his attention to Serene, Locke, and Gunther. “I suppose I’d better say goodbye to you lot as well.”

“I’ll be the one to say it,” says Locke. “I don’t think you’re actually from Neo-Scotland Yard, and I find the implications of that unsettling.”

“I hope you continue to use your great intelligence to keep making deductions like that, rather than dragging the mood down with guesswork.”

Gunther emerges to shake the Doctor’s hand directly, in an almost aggressive fashion. “Doctor, if you were on our team, we could’ve probably achieved ten times what we already have. But I feel like somehow, you have even bigger fish to fry.”

“I’m flattered you think so well of me. Allow me to say in return that your beard is a quite fetching colour.”

“Dr. Smith,” says Serene, stepping forth, “as much as your daring stunt with the knife earlier didn’t impress me, your ability to see what was going wrong where none of us could was invaluable. We owe you our careers. If we get the Blue Boxes on the road, maybe the whole of mankind owes you its future.”

“Wouldn’t be the first time. I do it for free, you know—Hang on a minute.” The Doctor finally remembers to bring up what’s been bugging him this whole time. “I never did actually ask. Why is it called a Blue Box?”

Serene shrugs. “It’s just a reference to the original concept from Hampertech. They’re Nerverlight’s parent company; they’ve been trying to get something like this built for decades.”

“Right...” He’s sure he’ll probably make the connection later, in the TARDIS, in a flash of delayed inspiration. “Well, I need to go and see a friend about an issue of some sort. I expect at least competent things from all of you. You got that? Don’t let me down!”

Just before he walks out into the docking bay where the TARDIS is sitting unnoticed, he notices one of the humans calling after him. “Oh, for goodness’ sake - what is it now?”

It’s Danis. “Doctor, it’s gonna bug me forever. Just give me a clue - one clue - who are you? Who are you *really*?”

“You should really be back with the others.”

"I can't help myself. When you split up our big standoff...your voice. It was almost hypnotic. Where did you learn that?"

"Alright, I'll give you your clue. Listen closely." He turns to face her. "If your visions had been real...if that monster really *had* been coming to get you...I would still be the one stopping it. That's who I am."

-

A virus. A code. Infection. A glitch. A programming error. Deconversion shock. All fine and dandy if you're strictly interested in the *literal* side of things. Ruminating alone in the TARDIS console room, the Doctor's sure the humans will cope perfectly well with all that jargon as a *literal* way of understanding what happened.

But in a figurative sense?

He knows it was Obscura. He should have known from the moment he first heard the description of the monster from Nord. It was staring him in the face.

Why all this? Why now?

"It's simple," he muses to himself, momentarily imagining a young woman listening to him in the TARDIS but not quite able to recall how she'd react. "The Blue Box represents a threat. If it wins, it's all over for Obscura. The story of the unknown will be nothing more than a lost myth. Everything the humans used to fear knowing, they'll know so well they'll be numb to it."

He wanders round the console and into a loose chair. "But Obscura wants to survive. It wants to keep going. So, maybe by some survival instinct, it looks for someone like Nord - someone whose Soul Bug has just been ripped apart by the Blue Box - and reaches into their mind. Manifesting itself. A last ditch effort...and who knows, it might have even succeeded."

The Doctor tries picturing his late wife listening to him instead, but it feels too soon. "What it fears...is something inevitable. If humanity links up like that, if they grow, everything that used to be horrific and weird will be absorbed into them. They won't need Obscura any more. They'll have taken away its power."

The TARDIS hums gently, as if patiently signalling that it already knows all this.

The Doctor slips deeper into reverie. "Just think, TARDIS...the power of instant empathy. Just like that. Even humans can do it." He lets out a long breath, musty like abandoned libraries. "If Nord could be freed...then maybe...maybe..."

The TARDIS bleeps skeptically.

"I know, TARDIS. She'd never make it that easy. Still. I can dream."

When he slides back into consciousness, there's a notification on the scanner indicating a summons from the Keepers of the Fatality Index. They sound miserable. He decides he'll put off responding and do something fun instead.

Not long after, he finally works out why it's called a Blue Box.

XXII. The Day of the Umbrella Men (6) [END]

[THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT WAS REDACTED ON THE ORDERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE WORLD UNION SHORTLY AFTER IT WAS RELEASED.]

read this five years after i'm gone.

i figure a lot of people still wonder what happened to me. specifically, why i had my big change of heart, and then departed from public life.

i'm aware it upset a lot of people.

after all, i was supposed to be funding the effort to protect the west. i was something of a hero for hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of angry people. they would have rolled in garbage to defend my honor. i relished their attention.

and then all of a sudden, without warning or explanation, it seemed to them like i just up and became a tool of the globalists. i withdrew my support from pretty much every 'civic nationalist' activism group, think tank, clickbait website etc. horror of horrors - my money started going towards things like civil rights. rebuilding third world countries. supporting minorities. charity. aid for victims of war. clean energy and other hopeless cases.

in other words, i'd become what they used to call a cuck. people wondered if i'd been blackmailed. if i got married and some hypothetical wife was to blame (with her evil feminising influence). if i'd been a double agent all along. if i'd been literally killed and replaced. i recall some of them tried to prove that i had jewish heritage. writing this all now it's kind of funny. a long time ago it would have been me screaming all that hot air.

and maybe they wondered what exactly happened to my big tech project. the one they were all so excited for. maybe they wanted to know what happened to the neurolock.

this is what happened.

i never confessed this. i kept it to myself. i allowed myself that one final selfish act.

what happened to the neurolock is, we activated it. it seemed like it would work great. i went around wearing it the whole afternoon. and then i'd invited rodney to my study to talk about the possibilities. our idea was that he would be a better messenger, a better human face for all this, than i was.

he was inside. i closed the door and went to sit down. and then. i can't find the right order of words to put across what it was like

it killed rodney. it killed him. i killed him.

this won't make sense, but even though it took me a long long time to understand why that happened, i also feel on some level i understood instantly. it was never that complicated.

the neurolock did what it was designed to do. it followed my logic, and my worldview, down to its natural endpoint.

it was so obvious. i can't avoid the point any longer, rodney was gay. he was one of us but he was gay. and it was so easy to dismiss that, to incorporate it into the vision, on a superficial level. but sooner or later. logically. sooner or later it would have become an obstruction. he didn't exist in the core of the vision. so all it did was delete him.

in a flash. there was no body. the gun was reengineered from the one on the corpsebot, we thought it was so patriotic.

this is where things get harder to explain.

the moment rodney was gone, a man with an umbrella appeared.

you know where this is going.

yes that one.

no-one else apart from the 3 top guys in my team ever saw me with the neurolock on. it covered my face. so you didn't realise it was me. but that umbrella man and metal man you've all been wondering about for so many years?

that was us.

he did something to me which i don't think anyone will ever understand.

he told me he had to do this for humanity's sake, and that i had to go through penance for what i'd done. i didn't know what was happening.

what he did was, he took me out of time and space. and on that one day, the same day, he deconstructed the whole planet in front of my eyes.

it seemed like the single day had been extended infinitely. the date on the calendars never changed, even though the times on the clock went back and forth.

and on that endless day, we met every single person on earth.

i don't know how long it took but if i were to open up the records in the neurolock and look, the precise figure would be in there. i've deliberately avoided doing so for my own sanity.

but that was it.

every single person. faced, greeted, conversed with, problems listened to.

i think he did something that made sure only we would remember. the neurolock remembers all of it. in

the part of my brain that's still human i do my best not to, because i know it's no longer necessary. but i do remember that he was a good conversationalist. he liked talking to people, i think.

i saw everything, where before i was seeing very little. people i considered subhuman, looking nuanced and real. desires i dismissed as insanity, looking sincere and sympathetic.

slowly. bit by bit. i was changing.

that went on and on and on. when we were done, he left me behind. i never learnt his name or where he came from. and a lot of what made me who i was had gone.

but he left me with something new.

the neurolock now contained something unique. something that didn't exist anywhere else on earth: a basic understanding of the entire world. and with that understanding, it knew what we had to do. we had to do whatever we could do to allow other people this gift.

we had to find a way to free every single person from their limited perspective.

the way the umbrella man's blue box freed me from mine.

we set about re-engineering the corpsebot technology once more. since then we've turned it into many, many things, none of which were instruments of death (sorry). with any luck my legacy will be to turn it into many more.

of course we tried to remove the neurolock tech from my body altogether. we got most of the visually obvious parts out. but it's comprised of these particles, a little like tiny mites, and they're resilient. they repair damage. they replace organic cells.

i'm not sure what i am any more. i don't know if i can die. i'm just a consciousness peering out of a shell that i can barely feel.

i've become very strange. but it's alright. because i feel being strange is where we're all headed. as long as we still value understanding one another - having empathy - being strange can never harm us. it's ironic that even though i feel very little now, i think i have a better grasp of what love is.

like i said, when you read this i'll have been gone for five years. i don't know where. i might have flown into space. i might be back one day. but for now, it's been long enough.

to everyone who was hurt by me and things i paid for, i'm sorry.

to rodney and everyone who loved him, i'm sorry.

i can't fix those things. but i want to believe there's a small chance that one day, no-one else will ever

have to feel that pain. i want to believe something i did helped bring that future into being.

to the umbrella man, thank you.

Mark

XXIII. Grace

Injected precisely into the wafer-thin seam between truth and imagination, a blue box announces itself on the dusty rock slopes. It perches, motionless, unhurried, for a long moment. It enjoys its position, a long-sought and hard-earned one. Finally, the door opens, allowing the box's occupant to step out into the extended air shell.

The Doctor takes several firm, slow steps, noting the decrease in reality distortion since last time. Things have calmed here.

There's no need to walk very far, of course. Obscura can be both seen and heard from this position; one need only peer directly down into the surface of the Moon to witness the floor's solidity give way to translucence, the symbolic gravity of the great beast within eclipsing all in its path. It writhes, its many tentacles and mouths thrashing away at the edge of space and time, folding into themselves, resisting visual perception. It's a closer view of Obscura than the Doctor has ever dared take before, but that's because there's one key difference.

Obscura is dying.

The quasi-fictional being has been reduced in size and complexity. The weaves of tentacles, that could once have flattened cities, are now paltry tangles of ropes that could barely ensnare a stray cat. The incomprehensibility that once befuddled even Time Lord senses is now, perhaps, diminished to the point where a human could look upon it without having a nervous breakdown.

Its screaming, on the other hand (while it's decreased in volume) has definitely increased in frequency.

"Flippin' heck. I dunno what you're moaning about," the Doctor says to it, the words piercing down to the heart of the Moon. "It was always gonna end like this."

Obscura, gradually ebbing away, seethes at her. To the Doctor's mild surprise, it opens one of its many mouths and speaks. "**wOUNDER tHIS iS nOT pOSSIBLE.**"

"Course it's possible! Once I knew where the seam was, getting back was just a matter of practice. I'm quite good at it now."

Obscura's screeching fades imperceptibly, and the Doctor wonders if she hears a faint tone of self-pity. **"cOME yOU hERE tO wATCH mE dIE wOUNDER."** The thrashing of the tentacles is slowing, second by second.

It takes a moment for the Doctor to respond, but she does so honestly. "Not *just* you, if that helps at all." With that, she casts her eyes up into the darkness of space, where a comely blue orb floats some hundreds of thousands of miles away. "Your partner in crime's on the way out as well."

Indeed, if she listens closely, deep beneath the agonised hiss of Obscura she can hear – echoing across the voids of the fiction seam, from all the way on Earth – the groans of the Soul Hive, as it shrinks piece by piece into a blissful nothingness. Both the Soul Hive and Obscura, the twin poles of human denial, are being sanded away by the spinning wheel of human meta-evolution.

"tHEY wERE sUPPOSED tO fAIL," Obscura shrieks. **"tHEY wERE sUPPOSED tO sHRINK aWAY iN fEAR oF mE."**

"You gave it a good whack, at least," muses the Doctor, "but it just wasn't enough. They realised what was happening, and they stopped the infection in its tracks. It's the magic of self-awareness, pal - that's how they escape you, every time."

"yOU lIE. iT wAS yOU wOUNDER."

"Alright, I helped a bit."

"yOU aND FILTH BLUE BOX DISRUPTED tHE dIVINE oRDER wITH sPATIAL cHRONOLOGICAL tRANSGRESSION."

"*Filth*? I hope she didn't hear that."

"yOU rUIN aLL." The great beast's howls ascend in volume once again. It feebly strains its appendages outward, as if it wants to seize the Doctor and drag her all the way down to the Moon's partly molten core, but cannot hope to reach.

The Time Lady watches, detached. "Blaming me won't do you any good. The humans created you, just like they created the Soul Hive down there. You only exist to them. And they've always had a secret weapon against you both – it's called empathy. You're doomed by design."

"pITIFUL eMPATHY wAS nEVER eNOUGH."

"You only knock it 'cause you can't see how incredible it is." She allows herself a small smile. "Thing is, almost everything about a human's mind is stacked against 'em. They can't help hiding themselves in little mental boxes, or recasting the outside world as some alien terror. They can't help clinging madly to their own, limited time 'n' space. It's their biology, right?"

"But tucked away deep in there, they have one little bit of themselves that *wants* to break free! A part of themselves that wants to rebel, to fly out and face the darkness, to transform, to understand everything in every time and place - and confront the fear, the pain, that comes with that. *That's* empathy."

"tHAT iS yOU."

The Doctor pauses, not having quite looked at it that way before.

"I'm just here to help."

"yOU wOUND."

“Alright, what is all this stuff about *wounding*? Can I get an explanation?”

“yOUR FILTH BLUE BOX tORE wOUNDS IN tHE sOUL hIVE oVER aND oVER aND oVER. eVERY LANDING. tHE sOULS sHRINK. yOU wOUND.”

She considers it. If one views the Soul Hive as a single collective entity, like she’s started to - the same story refracted in billions of different instances - then it makes a certain sense. On her trips, she tends to end up breaking a few illusions and bringing a few people together. She views it like smashing eggs to make an omelette.

“yOU iNTERFERE. dISLOCATE. yOU cORRUPT tHE nATURAL oRDER. uMBRELLA wAS tHE wORST.”

“How are you so sure I’m not *part* of the natural order?”

“iMPOSSIBLE.”

“Ugh, ‘impossible, impossible, impossible’ — you’re sounding like a human! Though I suppose you do just have the same basic problem as them, but on a bigger scale.”

“i aM BORNE oF tHE hUMAN pSYCHE mANIFESTED oN tHE pLANE oF iMAGINATION,” Obscura continues to bellow. **“yOU aRE nOTHING BUT a FOREIGN aGENT. tHEY cALL mE tO bEING bECAUSE tHEY nEED mE.”**

At this, the Doctor can’t resist a chuckle. “...You don’t know a lot about me, do you?”

For once, Obscura is at a loss for words.

The Doctor sighs gently. “I don’t wanna put on airs or anything. But there was always a *reason* I and my TARDIS could exist here on the seam. It’s right between the real world and the Land of Fiction. Me, I’ve got...one foot either side of the line, let’s put it that way.”

Obscura plainly doesn’t understand. But then, not many people do. It’s not so bad.

The embodiment of fear is still shrinking, gradually losing more and more of its grotesque decoration and decompiling into an absolute, cosmic dot. When it speaks again, the screams are quiet. **“i tHOUGHT IT wOULD eND wHEN tHEY sET FOOT oN mY sURFACE.”**

The Doctor removes her black cap, freeing her bob of blonde hair, and sits cross-legged in the dirt of the Moon. “A lot of people probably thought so. Classic, that Apollo 11.”

“i sTARTED tO dISSOLVE.”

“You only ever existed here to begin with ‘cos the Moon represented the unknown so strongly. Once Neil Armstrong and friends kicked about up here, the Moon lost most of its mystery and turned into just another empty rock. Of course you’d start to dissipate...” She puts the pieces together in her mind’s eye. “However—the Soul Hive fed you, didn’t it?”

“i sUSTAINED mYSELF oN tHEIR lOST nARRATIVES.”

“Once the humans died, you ate up their Soul Bugs. It makes sense. Death’s the one thing they can’t quite get over. But the Bugs have been shrinking, right?”

“tHE hARVEST dIMINISHED mOMENT uPON mOMENT. aLL mY eFFORTS tO rEPLENISH

IT hAVE bEEN aS nOTHING.”

“Well, it’s—” The Doctor blinks. “Hang on, *all* your efforts? Were there other ones besides the virus?”

“mOONBIRTH.”

“Uh. Not ringing any bells.”

**“oNCE, sPACE aND tIME wERE wEAK hERE. rARE pASSAGE cOULD bE FOUND
bETWEEN oNE pLANE aND tHE oTHER. tRUTH cOULD bE rEWITTEN.”**

“That sounds a bit hazardous.”

**“wITH tHE lAST oF mY sTRENGTH i pULLED a gENTLE bEAST fROM tHE fICTION
pLANE iNTO mY gRASP. i rEIMAGINED tHIS oRB aS iTS pRISON. aS iT sTRUGGLED, iT
FRIGHTENED tHE hUMANS bACK iNTO tHEIR sHELLS. iN tHEIR fEAR tHEY rACED tO
dESTROY tHE bEAST.”**

“Wait a minute...”

**“hAD i sUCCEDED, tHE sOUL yIELD wOULD hAVE fED mE uNTIL tHE eND oF dAYS. yET
tHE hUMANS dEFIED mE aND aLLOWED tHE bEAST tO eSCAPE tO iTS hOME rEALM. mY
mACHINATIONS wERE eRASED. tHE hUMANS wITNESSED a mIRACLE. tHUS tHE hARVEST
wITHERED fURTHER sTILL.”**

At this, the Doctor looks both stunned and ever so slightly sheepish.

“I thought it was an egg.”

She clears her throat.

“Well, I promise you, that little escapade had *nothing* to do with me. In fact, I deliberately stayed out of the whole thing. If you wanna file a complaint, go find Clara.”

There’s a long silence at this point. The Doctor and the TARDIS wait patiently, regardless of whether there is anything left to say. If one stares up at the Earth in the sky, the fading activity of the Soul Hive is just barely visible as a faint shimmering, the layer of microscopic maggots crawling their last over mankind’s habitats. Its bitter moans have declined into a kind of infant cooing.

“It’ll be in peace, when it goes,” observes the Doctor. “Humans adapt quicker than you might expect. They’ll find a way to treat stuff like deconversion shock, and before long they’ll wonder how they ever lived differently. Like I always say, they’re indomitable.”

“wILL tHERE bE pEACE fOR mE?”

The Doctor considers.

**“i fEEL tHEM. tHEY JOIN tOGETHER. tHEY fORM a lINKED mIND. hUGE aND
pOWERFUL, iNFINITELY cOMPLEX. iNFINITELY sTRANGE. a gOD tO rEPLACE mE. tHERE
wILL nEVER bE cALM.”**

“Slow down a minute.” She shifts up onto her knees. “It could be a lot worse. Just think. You’ve been trapped here, on a knife edge between dreams and reality. When they let go of you, you’ll return to pure fiction. You won’t have to put up with this fight for survival anymore. You’ll live on in their fantasies.”

Obscura's mouths have all vanished. It radiates thoughts back to the Doctor.

“pERHAPS iT IS wELL.”

She nods.

“Yes. Perhaps it is.”

The Soul Hive is nearly silent. Perhaps, the Doctor thinks, the final few humans to link their minds through the Blue Boxes (or whatever new version of them is currently doing the rounds) are now experiencing the epiphany, the numbing sensation of an all-consuming – endlessly complex yet somehow suddenly comprehensible – acutely human yet utterly, explicably mechanical – reality, greeting them like an old friend, cleansing their festering personal illusions in a blaze of purifying light, and opening their bleary eyes to life's true weird beauty. Replacing each sealed-off, bulging Bug with...something else. Something open.

Of course, if she remembers rightly, all of this gets roasted by the Sun in a bit. But it's fine. Because if she knows humans at all, no matter how long it takes, they'll achieve it again, and again, and again. They'll always have the part of them that wants to escape the cage of closed consciousness. Just like they'll always have her.

“i nEVER kNEW aNY oTHER wAY.” It's barely a whisper.

The Doctor understands. “It's not your fault.”

“It's not anyone's.”

She sits there until Obscura has fallen into sleep. She lingers in the seam for a moment longer, taking in the joy of being able to tread the line between material and fiction. Eventually, when she is ready, she returns to her TARDIS. They prepare to journey back to reality, where there is always more work to be done.

End.

The Healer

by Rachael Riley

“By the Nine!” Alfie shouted when the TARDIS landed with its familiar VWOORP. “Where are we?”

“Cyrodiil,” the Healer explained, “the Third Era, when the Septim Dynasty sat on the Ruby Throne.”

“Impossible,” Olaf exclaimed. “What magic is this?”

“Not magic,” the Healer said. “Science.”

“Well there must be SOME magic,” Alfie said. “Like the Thu’um.”

“Well, if I must be truthful,” the Healer sheepishly explained, “the Trans-Aetherius Rift Diving Ship uses an Elder Scroll.”

“But h-”

“Enough questions!” the Healer shouted. “We’re in the past, we must-”

“EXTERMINATE!”

The Healer turned to the Daedra, then to his companions: “Run.”

Framing Story Part V: A Land Of Fictions

“Karla?”

“Karla? What's going on?”

My mind snaps to attention. I see the circular face of Beryl Oswald staring into mind. It takes me a moment to realize that this isn't Clara, or Clare, or Oswin, or any other name I've heard in any other story. This is a real person. I touch her face, and it feels soft, but solid.

Beryl laughs uncomfortably. “I usually wait for a girl to court me before letting her do that.”

Sam laughs, behind me. Her and Ellie are holding me up, staring at me with identical worried expressions. I cough, feeling my heartbeats ring in my ears. Inside my head, stories are still ringing.

“What happened?” I ask.

“The shields failed during storytime. Everything went to hell. What do we do?” asked Clive. His face looked extremely confused. “Desmond just ran out. He said he couldn't do anything for us anymore.”

“Yeah. The Time Lords lost the Time War,” I said.

“So, what do we do?” asked Beryl.

“I have no idea. We need to find Rast, or Susie English,” I said. I had no idea whether or not that would work, but these people needed hope right now.

So we trekked our way across this strange land. We walked over upside-down staircases, and

into the mouths of dead giant cephalopods. Occasionally, I saw spectral figures reenacting stories that I had seen, and some I had not seen. Some were ghosts of stories that might have been—Clara in front of a room with roses, the Thirteenth Doctor fornicating with Oswin, the Fifth Doctor and Tegan talking to a Faction Paradox member. All of these tales, scattered throughout time. I wondered if I was in any of them.

Finally, I saw Desmond in a corner. He was working on a machine, and was surprised to see us.

“You understand now, Karla?” he said. His normally calm face was stricken with fear. “The Time Lords left us here to die.”

“What is that machine?” I asked.

“I seem to have inherited a knowledge of Gallifreyan technology from the Doctor. I'm building the TARDIS,” said Desmond.

“We can go with you, right?” asked Sam Jones.

Desmond said nothing. The machine lighted up, glowing brightly. He opened the door, and was about to go through, when I stopped him.

“Let them go in first,” I hissed.

And so they did. When all the rest had gone inside, I saw Rast and Susie English walking up the hill, with an unconscious Ace being dragged along. Rast had a sad look on her face, like she was staring at her children. It chilled me to the bone.

“Damn,” said Sam behind me. I looked, to see the TARDIS disappearing behind me.

“Why were you still here?” I demanded. Beryl and Sam Jones were still out here in this odd landscape. They both shrugged.

Then, a wheezing, groaning sound resounded across the plains. I saw a familiar blue box. Its doors flung open, as if waiting for me to enter.

“How--” I started to ask.

“Because,” said Rast, “the TARDIS recognizes the Doctor. And you are his clone.”

I walked inside. Beryl, Sam, Susie, and Rast followed me. The console was bare, and dusty, but there was a low hum in its form. I touched the controls, and they felt familiar, somehow. I followed my instincts, and heard the sound of dematerialization.

“There's no where else to go. All of space and time has been demolished,” said Rast.

“You also said the TARDIS didn't exist,” said Susie.

“True. So, maybe this isn't a total dumpster fire after all,” said Rast.

Then, a transmission appeared on the screen.

“Don't forget to click below to subscribe to **the official Doctor Who® Youtube™ channel!**”

“What?” asked Beryl.

The transmission changed, and then something else came up. “Hello? Is the Doctor still around? Is this his TARDIS?”

I stared at the screen. Then, I clicked on the comm. “Yes. The Doctor is here. Do you require assistance?”

Ending Note, and Thanks:

Thank you for reading!

Thanks to all the people who wrote stories.

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Thank you to /who/ for still being the horrible, horrifying, wondrous, shitty, and wonderful place it is.

AN UNFINISHED GLOSSARY

Doctor Who: Some crappy sci fi show

4chan: The famous hacker

recursion: see “self-iteration”

/who/: A group of totally awesome dudes and dudettes

The Doctor: A wizard who lives in a magical police box, and has a serious fetish for helping people, and silver phallic objects

Some old Scot Ass: could refer to either Moffat or Capaldi

Some awesome Scot dude: could refer to either Moffat or Capaldi

self-iteration: see “recursion”

Companions: Hobos who live in the Doctor's house rent-free

Iu

by Aee

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