

# Episode 1

## Far From Earth, Out Of Time

### Chapter 1 – Hammerhead Shark

'The Raston Capital!' the Doctor shouted when the TARDIS landed.

'The what capital?' Amy asked.

'The central city on the central planet of the Raston Empire!' the Doctor explained, while he was setting the TARDIS systems to parking mode. 'They were the greatest allies of the Second Human Empire in the Cyberwars. They are the only people in the universe who managed to create artificial life, and it didn't rebel against them. And their capital city is... simply magnificent.'

Amy saw that the Doctor couldn't wait to step through the threshold and start sightseeing. It was a big thing when he couldn't find the words.

'Okay! Let's take a look around!' she replied cheerfully.

The Doctor ran to the door and glanced back.

'Amy Pond! Welcome to Raston City.'

The Time Lord opened the door in front of the girl and waited for her mouth to fall open. But that didn't happen.

'Or not,' she noted with a sour grin.

The Doctor's face turned disappointed. He peeked out and instantly realised what the problem was.

'We're in a ship,' the Doctor stated as he strode out from the box, 'in the cargo hold.'

Amy followed the Doctor. They stood in a large, rectangular room. There was practically nothing in it, no cargo or furnishing. Only four stairs in the corners were leading to two galleries on the shorter walls. On both galleries, a door in the middle led away from the cargo hold.

'We are at the right place, at the right time, but on the wrong ship.'

The Doctor crouched down to examine the floor.

'It might be an Earth-ship,' Amy suggested. 'You said they were allies... are... will be...'

'No, it's not from your planet. Humans will never know this metal. The question is, if it's not from Earth, what's that doing here?' The Doctor pointed behind his back.

Amy turned around to see what else the Doctor noticed. She had to admit a basketball board is not among the usual furniture of an alien ship. Above it, the ship's name was painted on the wall: Hammerhead Shark.

'Those also shouldn't be here,' he pointed around the room.

Loudspeakers hung in the four corners of the hall. There was a slight chance these were alien tech, but as Amy took a closer look, she realised that's not the case.

'Also man-made. Unless alien sound system manufacturers came up with the same brand name.'

'So it must be an alien ship acquired by humans who will never ever meet a human being after they got on board.'

Amy would have preferred if the Doctor explained this with more details, but there was no time for it. A larger-than-a-truck-part of the wall in front of them shifted with a loud metallic boom. Then, accompanied by a hydraulic whir, it slowly descended, revealing the main gate of the ship and flooding the cargo hold with sunlight.

Directly in front of the ship spread a big green meadow. Only a few trees stood on it scattered across the field. In the distance, skyscrapers of a mighty city were stretching towards the sky. Only grey lines could be seen of the flying cars above the buildings in their designated air corridors.

'Now, that's the Raston capital. Look how beautiful it is..., while I find out what sort of ship is this and who is coming,' the Doctor said and ran down the ramp the door formed.

Amy did as she was told for a while with the joy of discovery on her face. She soon realised, though, the Doctor basically asked her to step off.

'What?' she yelled, offended.

By that time, the Doctor was already examining the exterior of the whole ship.

'Hammerhead Shark! Suitable name,' the Doctor stated when Amy stepped next to him. 'See, the cockpit looks just like a great sledgehammer, and that bar above could be like a very long fin.'

'Yeah, really marvellous. What makes you think that someone is coming?'

'The door opened. I suppose you too open your door only when you get home. But let's see who is coming.'

He turned around and pulled out tiny theatre binoculars from his pocket and checked the area in front of the ship. He quickly found what he was looking for, but it wasn't what he expected. He lowered the binoculars with a stunned expression on his face.

'Impossible! Bessie?'

'Who?' Amy grabbed the binoculars from the Doctor's hand. 'I'm not even surprised that you know the girl in that yellow old-timer.'

'What are you talking about? What girl?'

'Four blokes and one girl are sitting in that car. I assume she is Bessie.'

'Of course not! The car is Bessie. That's my car. Have you seen an old-timer speeding like this?'

'No,' Amy admitted.

Then the Doctor started to talk rapidly.

'Me neither. It's speeding because it's chased by Raston warrior robots. Back to the TARDIS!'

They both turned back and would have run back into the Shark, but they were forced to stop. Someone stood at the top of the ramp, and the sight of her made the Doctor turn white.

'Jenny? But..., you..., ' he stammered.

'Jenny? But..., you..., ' he stammered.

'Do we know each other?' the girl asked.

'Well... as a matter of fact...'

The dumbfounded Time Lord couldn't finish the sentence. A stray javelin interrupted him as it drilled into the hull of the ship.

'You discuss it later!' Amy said and pushed the Doctor upwards.

'How do you know my name?' Jenny asked inside the ship.

'How can you be alive? You died in my arms. I watched your funeral.'

The girl didn't seem to believe her ears.

'What?'

'It's me! I am the Do...'

A radio creaked into the conversation.

'Jenny! They are catching up very quickly, why aren't the engines running?'

'In a moment. I've got to go. When we are safe, I want answers.'

She hurried to the cockpit. Her father watched slightly frustrated as she ran off.

'Doctor, what was that?'

The Time Lord didn't say a word just strode towards the TARDIS. Amy drew the conclusion.

'So we skip this one. That's new. I guess we can see the city later.'

The two travellers disappeared in the TARDIS, but the capsule itself didn't vanish. It still remained when Bessie rolled in, and the cargo hold door closed. Its passengers were in such a hurry, they didn't notice the blue box in the corner. They jumped out of the car and did as they were commanded by the captain.

'Piotr, to radars. Frank, to the emergency manoeuvre controls. Gladys, hide the book. Sam, park the car then go to the cellar. Report every minute, when do we jump.' He shouted the last sentence. 'JENNY, WHY AREN'T THE ENGINES RUNNING?!'

The very next second, they rumbled up.

'THANK YOU!'

Everyone ran to their stations, and the ship started to elevate. The room emptied, but only for a short time.

'Doctor, what are we doing here exactly?' Amy asked as she came out from the TARDIS with a

spray can in her hand.

'We fix this leak caused by the javelin,' the Doctor replied behind the girl. 'If we don't patch it, the whole ship will blow out into the vacuum through that hole as soon as we reach space. You can already feel the wind blowing in here.'

The Doctor carried a shining silver cloth not bigger than an A4 paper, about as thick as a jumper. He covered the leak with that thing.

'Spray the edges!'

Amy obeyed, but she wasn't convinced about its effectiveness.

'Will it hold?'

The Doctor stepped to a nearby console, and after short browsing, the image of the rear camera appeared on its screen.

'It is already holding. See how far we are from the ground.'

Amy looked at the picture. The ship was high enough for the hole to make a hurricane in the cargo hold due to the pressure difference. But she also noticed something troubling.

'Erm... I think we are followed.'

'That would be the drones. This will keep us safe from decompression, let's warn the pilot about the other danger.'

Meanwhile, in the cockpit, someone else also noticed that theirs were not the only vehicle that had left the atmosphere.

'Ben! We're being chased!' Piotr reported to the captain.

'Of course, we are bloody chased,' the captain answered angrily. 'We stole the most valuable knowledge repository on the planet. Tell me when there is an immediate danger.'

'Well, they're catching up with us.'

'That's not what I meant.'

Then Captain Ben heard an unknown voice from behind.

'Raston drones are chasing the ship!' Amy said.

'I KNOW! Jenny, I told you already. Never pick up hitchhikers.'

'Unless, they have a towel,' Frank added.

'Don't worry. I read the Guide,' the Doctor said. 'I would never leave without a towel, but I think we should jump away. Now!'

Among the crew members, only Frank seemed to realise the magnitude of that statement.

'We can't jump yet,' Ben said. 'That reminds me.'

He hit a button on the console in front of him.

'Sam?'

'Twenty minutes to jump. And we are followed by...'

'I KNOW! Somebody, tell me something I don't know.'

'Incoming missile!' Piotr shouted.

'Thank you! Frank, prepare for evasion!'

Down in the '*cellar*', Gladys just entered the control room.

'How are we?' She asked Sam.

'Not good. The repo?'

'Safe with the other stuff.'

'Uh, this is gonna be a rough ride,' Sam said, seeing the rocket on the screen. 'Go to that console!'

'What must I do?'

'Press play on Deep Purple – Flight of the Rat!' He grinned.

'You're crazy,' the girl said, but she started the song anyway.

The very next moment, everything turned upside down. The ship took a neck-breaking manoeuvre to avoid the collision.

'What the hell was that?' the Doctor shouted after he helped Amy up from the floor. 'I've never seen a ship change course like this.'

'Because, you haven't seen our wings,' Ben said. 'Frank, we won't last for twenty minutes. Head to the moon, prepare for dead-duck.'

'Oh no!/Oh yes!' Piotr and Jenny said.

'What's the dead-duck?' Amy asked.

'You don't want to know,' Piotr answered, 'just hang on to something.'

'Oi! You two down there!' Ben said to the radio. 'Hold on tight! Dead-duck's coming up.'

'Not again!' Gladys sighed. 'I try not to throw up this time.'

'Hm. This music won't be fast enough,' Sam muttered.

There were two more near misses until the Shark reached the moon's gravity field. Meanwhile, the Doctor examined the strange controls in front of Frank. In the middle of it, there was a big red button. Next to that, two-two blue lines on each side, under each line a knob. Every time a manoeuvre was taken, Frank lit up one of the lines and set the knob to the maximum. When the time was right, he hit the middle button. Based on that information, the Doctor started to suspect how it works and that the fin must have separated into four wing-bars.

'Attention everyone,' Frank raised his voice, 'we're close enough. Preparing dead-duck. Ready the flares!'

The Doctor's face turned white when he saw the controls. Two lines were lit, but only on small segments.

'Amy, hang on! This is gonna be bad.'

'Incoming!' shouted Piotr.

'Release the flares!' replied the captain.

Tiny firework rockets were dropped off from the back of the ship. The drone's missile hit only these. When the blast wave shook them, Frank hit the red button. The Doctor realised how much the name suited. The ship started flipping in space while descending to the moon's surface, just like a wounded bird. Every chasing pilot would be almost certain that the target was hit and going to crash, but drones could be deceived completely.

'They are retreating!' Piotr announced.

'Wouldn't it be wise to turn the artificial gravity off?' the Doctor tried to shout over Amy's screaming.

'It already is,' Jenny answered. 'First step of the program. You feel the moon's gravity.'

'Don't even mention the centrifugal force,' the Doctor said ironically.

The ship slowly reached the surface. The braking engine suddenly stopped the fall and the flipping and just as a bonus it created a dust cloud to make the illusion of the crash more believable.

'Whoa! That was the roughest ride ever!' the Doctor said.

He stood up, but after a few steps, he fell again. The world was still spinning around him.

'Golden rule! The duck stays dead for at least two minutes before the resurrection,' Ben informed the guest. 'Until that passes, you could tell us who are you two?'

'And more importantly. Where are you from?' Frank added. 'When you said you read the guide, which guide did you mean?'

'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, of course. Why, what did you think?'

'So you are from Earth.'

'Just me!' Amy said. 'He's from erm... somewhere else.'

Everyone in the room got excited.

'What's the date?'

'26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2010.'

'Close enough. Ben, we must get back to their ship before we jump.'

'Don't worry! It's already on board,' the Doctor said.

'Impossible. How could you bring a whole ship with a hyperdrive inside?' Everyone of the crew knew what that really meant, but Ben needed a bit more assurance. 'Where are you from exactly?'

'Gallifrey.'



At that moment, Ben's eyes seemed to shoot sparks of rage. He didn't care about the dizziness. He jumped up and ran towards the Doctor - with a slight amplitude. He grabbed the Time Lord up from the floor and pushed him to the wall.

'You rat bastard! We've been drifting in time and space for five years because of you!'

Everyone tried to stand up to hold back the captain. The Doctor could hardly breathe. He didn't know what that was all about.

'Because of me?! How? We haven't even met. Who the hell are you people?' he asked squeaking.

Ben released himself from the grasp of the others and said, 'We are Torchwood!'

## Chapter 2 - Torchwood-4

It took some time for the Doctor to process what Ben said and, when he did, he still couldn't believe his ears.

'What did you say?'

'I said we are Torchwood!' Ben repeated.

'That's impossible. Torchwood failed. And the Torchwood Archive won't start...'

'What?' everyone shouted, except for Jenny.

'You wanna tell me Torchwood's gone by 2010?' Piotr said.

'Erm... what is Torchwood?' Amy asked.

'I'll explain later,' the Doctor replied and quickly continued. 'As far as I know, Torchwood ceased to exist. So how did you end up here exactly?'

Before anyone could answer, Sam's voice creaked from the radio.

'Guys, don't we want to take off? We're jumping in a minute.'

'You lot can handle this without me,' Ben answered then pointed at the Doctor and Amy. 'You two come with me!'

In a minute, the Hammerhead Shark was flying through time and space towards its new destination, where or whenever it would be. The crew went to the cargo hold where Gladys and Sam were climbing up from beneath a trapdoor.

'Hello, everyone!' Sam greeted the others. 'I proudly announce we got out from this mess too!'

'Did we really pick up hitchhikers?' Gladys asked.

'Oh yes,' Piotr answered, 'and not just any ones. The guy claims he's from Gallifrey. There aren't many of them. I think he is the Doctor.'

'But he can't be!' Jenny said, confused. 'He looks totally different.'

'Time Lords like you and him can repair their body when they're dying,' Frank explained. 'But other Time Lords, unlike you, also forced to change their appearance. A weird twist of evolution. You probably don't have to change because that terraforming thing triggered your first regeneration.'

'Other Time Lords?'

'Well, as far as we know, the only other Time Lord is the Doctor,' Piotr answered.

'But that could only belong to him,' Sam pointed to the corner.

Everyone turned around and noticed the big blue police box in the corner.

'Oh. That decides it.'

'How can you tell it's *"the"* TARDIS?' Gladys asked.

'Yeah, it could be any old box,' Sam said sarcastically. 'It is a tradition in the Raston Empire, to leave police boxes from Earth in the visitor thieves' ship. But, if you have doubts.'

Sam disappeared under the trapdoor. In a minute he returned with a huge axe.

'You should take cover, in case I'm right.'

The others stepped back, and Sam ran towards the box to strike it. After the tool hit the door, there wasn't a scratch on it, but the old axe snapped. His sour expression suggested he expected something more spectacular, but it was convincing enough.

'It is the TARDIS,' Piotr stated and turned to Jenny. 'Looks like daddy's home.'

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Ben led the time travellers into the common room above the cargo bay. It seemed half the size of the hold. In the opposite wall, a door was leading to a kitchen, a bathroom, and the crew dorms. The walls on the side were almost entirely windows made of some kind of transparent metal. The furnishing was quite simple. There were two dining tables to the left, and to the right two armchairs, a sofa and a coffee table. All of them were welded to the floor. Besides those, there were about a dozen chairs, lying all around the room because of the last dead-duck.

'Sit!' Ben nodded towards the sofa.

The Doctor and Amy took a seat on it. Ben hurled himself into the armchair facing them.

'Let's begin with the introductions. My name is Ben Foreman. We can say I command this wrecked ark. Now, who the hell are you two?'

'Based on your reaction for my home planet, I assume you already know who I am. But to be fair, I am the Doctor.'

'Amy Pond,' she raised her hand, waving hi.

'Let me ask you something. Basically, how did you become captain of this... ark?'

'Well, that's an interesting story. I was the leader of Torchwood-4.'

'Torchwood-4? Captain Jack said it was lost,' the Doctor stated.

'Well, you've found it!' Ben replied then he raised his voice. 'By the way, that name is taboo on this ship.'

'Why? Who is this Captain Jack?' Amy said the name anyway.

'An utter jackass. I will shoot the bastard's brain out if I ever meet him again.'

'You know that you can't kill him, right?' the Doctor said.

'Sure. That's why I can shoot him dead as many times I'd like, without committing murder.'

'You're not the first with that notion.' the Doctor grimaced.

'But, returning to the original topic. Torchwood-4's job was to examine a ship. This ship. But its batteries were depleted. We couldn't even open the door. We found where can we recharge it, we even made a compatible plug, but we couldn't find an energy source big enough. Until one day...'

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The ship was discovered two years earlier in 2004. No one knew how it got to Earth. One day it just appeared on the satellite images on the tarmac of an abandoned RAF base. Then, the race began. Torchwood won against UNIT. As soon as they reached the site, they hid it with a perception filter field and retconned every witness in the area. Then they covered the vehicle with an alien-tech mobile hangar that became Torchwood HQ nr. 4.

At first, a smaller army worked there, but the personnel headcount got reduced quickly. After we realised that getting inside would require the energy supply of the whole UK, very few of us remained on the site. I shall tell you about the others.

Frank Adams, our accountant, was responsible for the finances of the base. Gladys Molyneux was the system administrator; she maintained the computers, the software and the databases we used. Piotr Kerensky, the Armenian engineer and former UNIT corporal, made several clever gadgets, among many others the plug for the charger. Sam Flannigan programmer, was helping Piotr with the software for his gadgets and trying to get his head around the ship's systems after we eventually got in.

So there we were, only the five of us. Abandoned in our shiny hangar with the Hammerhead Shark. Now we are drifting in time and space.

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'Sorry, did you say time and space?'

'Patience, Doctor! We will get to that.'

'Okay. I will try not to interrupt.'

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The moment of the breakthrough came on the 4th of May, 2006. That day passed just like any other. I was sitting in my office, writing reports about what we didn't do that week. Sam and Piotr were playing basketball on the free part of the hangar. Frank was looking through the costs of the gadgets we ordered in hope of somehow getting in. Gladys updated the database or played with some video game. Honestly, I don't even wanna know. Then, our so-called "*big red phone*" rang. (It was green, in fact.) It was such a rare event in our bunker that Sam dropped the ball and accidentally crushed the coffee maker. Everyone else looked up from their work excitedly. I picked up the phone.

'Hello! Ianto Jones is speaking from Torchwood London. The first experiments are a success. We're sending you power.'

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'Let me guess! Void energy.'

'Let me guess! You were there in London.'

'I saved your world from two alien armies that day.'

'Two armies? We left too early. But we had to.'

'Two armies? When was that?' Amy asked. 'I don't remember that.'

'Because of the cracks,' The Doctor replied.

'What cracks?' Ben asked.

'Please! Just focus on the original story!' The Doctor insisted on knowing the details about the ship.

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We finally managed to open the cargo bay door. As soon as we connected the ship to the charger, a green button lit up near it. Sam was over the moon, seeing every little gadget turning on in the cockpit and the engine room. He wanted to tear the whole place apart on the spot and see how it works.

'Hold your horses, Sam. We approach this systematically and carefully. Don't rush to push possibly dangerous buttons. You already wrecked the coffee machine. I want this in one piece and operational.'

'Fine. We do it your way, slowly.' he sighed, but his foot drummed a fast rhythm. I can imagine how hard it must have been for him to hold himself back.

'Now, that we are taking it slow,' Piotr said, 'and only an hour is left of work time, I have an idea. That cargo hold seems to lack anything we could break.'

We installed the board in the hold and spent the rest of the day playing basketball.

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The next morning, Sam was the first in. And something was wrong. I expected him to be running around the place, finding what he should examine first. Instead, I found him in the cockpit staring at a laptop with a piece of paper in his hand. He didn't seem to be working. It looked like something was bothering him.

'Morning! Are you all right?' He shivered when I greeted him.

'Hi! I'm fine. I just... Nothing.'

'Any progress?'

'Oh, yes. I'll go and report soon.'

A few minutes later, I was about to phone London about the initial results, when Sam strode in.

'Who are you calling?'

'Yvonne. Why?'

'I think we should wait with that.'

I put down the phone and asked him.

'What makes you say that?'

'Well, this is Torchwood's greatest asset. If you think of what happened with the previous greatest assets...'

'They were used for killing.'

'Yes! Just consider the Sycorax, that sun-glider, even that small alien expedition. If they knew we have an operational spaceship, they would swarm this place, take the ship away, and shoot to bits everything that comes near the Solar System.'

I didn't understand what he wanted. Sam usually appreciates his guitar more than any form of life. Sometimes though, a weird kind of protectiveness emerges from him. Like when Torchwood exiled me here when the ship turned out to be useless without power.

When I found out, TW-1 wanted to shoot down the Sycorax even when they were leaving, I tried to sabotage the pulse cannon. I was stopped before I could do anything. Sam and Gladys tried to help me hack the security system. We quickly found ourselves babysitting a few tonnes of metal trash.

Because of this quite controversial personality, I was a bit suspicious about his reasons. But I had to admit, there was truth in what he said. So I picked up the phone again, while I kept staring at him.

'Yvonne?... We managed to get into the ship. All bad news. It's a wreck. There is barely a system working. We can manage this on our own... Ok. Bye.' I put down the phone.

'Thank you,' Sam said.

'They will inspect us, you know.'

'By the time they get here, Piotr and I assemble something. I just need few things.'

'For instance?'

'Well, there's that big alien 3D printer thingy in the London warehouse, that works with all kinds of metal. You should get that. In secret, of course.'

My eyebrows jumped.

'Quite a start.'

'Then we need a truckload of scrap metal to feed it.'

'That shouldn't be a problem.'

'Given that we have a tight schedule, a new coffee machine.'

'Anything else?' I cast a pitying look at him, hearing the latest item.

'Yes! Piotr's hobby.'

Piotr's hobby was collecting every broken alien gizmo, that was considered useless for Torchwood. He thought he could use the alien materials and some strange way of the schematics to create something amazing.

He was right. While I went on this errand, they grabbed our EMF meter and measured the whole ship. By the time I got back, they had a map of every spot of detectable electromagnetic radiation. On top of these, they could build a shipwreck in two days with the tools I brought. Then we haven't heard of the inspector for a week.

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'Ah, they were busy...'

'We're getting there, Doctor.'

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That week was the most annoying of all that time we spent in the hangar. We had an operational alien ship, but we couldn't lay a finger on it. If we moved one inch on the decoration, we risked getting busted. But finally, after a week of excruciating wait, the big green phone rang.

'Foreman! This is Yvonne Hartmann. We discovered something troubling. We will send a team to investigate a couple of things.'

To my '*greatest pleasure*', they sent Torchwood-3 from Cardiff.

'Did you find everything all right, Miss Sato?' I asked the Asian woman in the cargo hold.

'It seems you were right. The system's dead. Burned out circuits, no electromagnetic radiation. At some parts, I even found mixed wiring. I don't even know how it was ever operational.'

A possible explanation to this was that Sam and Piotr rushed a bit, when they composed the fake panels, coming on top of the EM shielding.

Outside, Gladys was looking up at the Shark's fin. To be precise, she was looking at someone who was on the top of the ship looking at the fin.

'Who's that?' Frank asked next to her.

'Captain Jack Harkness!' she said enthusiastically.

'And who would that be?'

'Current leader of Torchwood-3, but, according to the archives, he has been working for them for more than a century. I even found an original daguerreotype of him. Rumour says he can't be killed.'

'Oh, it's a bit more than a rumour,' I said when I saw them. 'What I'm interested in is what's that jackass doing on the roof of my ship.'

'Is it already your ship?' Frank looked at me, glumly.

'I'm the boss. Of course, it's mine. Hey, you!' I shouted up at Harkness. 'What are you looking at?'

'Can someone pass me a screwdriver?' came the answer.

'Sure,' Frank said and grabbed one from Piotr's toolbox, laying near the storage room door.

He threw it up to Captain Jack, and just as soon as he grabbed the tool, he threw it further at the fin. No one expected what happened next. Over it, the screwdriver became parallel with the bar, flew all along the ship. At the end of the fin, it started to drop. Still, it sped up so much that it flew out through the hangar gate and landed somewhere outside.

'So, how was that it is not working?' Jack asked accusingly.

'We must have missed that,' I said innocently.

'Sure, you did,' he replied.

He didn't seem convinced. He dropped to his side, sledged down on the nose of the ship and jumped off it right to in front of me.

'What are you up to this time, Foreman?'

'Wow. Was that superhero entry supposed to intimidate me?' I taunted him.

'We really don't have time for your usual fake-righteous games,' he said, raising his voice. 'Knowing what's coming this way, we need to know what you're hiding about this ship.'

'You're right.' I nodded grimacing. 'We don't have time for this.'

I grabbed my gun, and within the fraction of a second, I shot Jack Harkness in the head. Gladys shrieked, Frank shouted, even Sam and Piotr woke up for the sound of the shot. The Armenian was stunned, but Sam just hummed.

'That's something you don't see every day,' he said calmly.

'What have you done?' Piotr yelled.

I didn't answer. I quickly started to search the pockets of his RAF coat.

'Correction,' Sam said, 'what are you doing?'

'He's the greatest retcon supplier at the whole institute. He gives the pills away like candy.'

'Shouldn't we hear him out about the *what's-coming-this-way-part* first?' Frank raised concerns.

'Just give it a rest. He always has some world-ending crisis up in his sleeve to serve his agenda. I saw quite a few turn out to be bullshit. Ah, here it is.' I found a phial of pills in his top pocket. 'So,



while he's sleeping, tell him a nice story about us.' Then I saw Jack's wound started to heal. 'Erm... Piotr, knock him out then tell the story.'

Then I went out to the SUV and forced a pill down Miss Sato's throat. We gave them really strong sleeping pills, and finally, we drove them home.

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The next morning, we went to Cardiff. Frank and Gladys were sitting on the terrace of the Millennium Centre's bar, sipping coffee. I was sitting in the café across the plaza wearing a baseball cap and shades, watching them. Yeah, I know. Basically, I shouted to the world I was in incognito.

'What are we doing here?' Gladys asked via radio.

'Waiting. Before you ask, for what, you will see.'

'Where are Sam and Piotr?' she asked.

'They are working on the ship,' Frank informed her. 'But it's not clear to me either, what's our business here? On this spot, particularly.'

'They met you two yesterday and, on that spot, they can easily notice you.'

'Do we really want them to notice us?' Gladys asked worriedly.

'Yes. Now, shut up. Here they come.'

Part of Torchwood-3, including Jack Harness and Toshiko Sato, appeared. They were chatting about something starting soon and just walk past them.

'Damn.'

'What is it?' Gladys asked.

'They didn't recognize you. When they think of yesterday, they will know something is wrong. Keep checking the database. If they ask for a blood test, intervene!'

'OK. I'll do.'

'Now, let's go.'

I stood up, and my phone started to ring. It was Piotr.

'Hello!'

'I've just got a weird call from London. They said the examination committee found everything as we described, so they don't understand why a pack of ghosts are marching towards us.'

'What? What kind...of... ghosts?'

My voice faded. The ghosts appeared. The ghosts we didn't know about since that hangar practically walled us off the rest of the world.

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Ben paused a bit, then continued.

'So, we found out what caused the delay.'

'They were busy with the ghosts,' the Doctor smiled.

'Yes!' Ben pressed the word.

'What then?'

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We kept watching the ghosts slowly closing in on us and started to examine the ship. And Sam discovered some odd things.

'What is it, Sam?' I asked when he entered my office.

'I discovered some odd things.'

'What would they be?'

'First, it seems this ship doesn't have a hyperdrive.'

'So, it's an interplanetary ship, not interstellar.'

'Yes, but despite this fact, it is using a tremendous amount of energy. Now, the really weird thing is that the ship doesn't even touch the void energy we provide it.'

'Where does the power come from then?'

'Piotr worked it out. There's a big battery in the engine room. From there, the energy goes to the bar on top of the ship. It sustains a very strong magnetic field. I haven't figured out yet the purpose of that. What I have figured out, from that bar, much greater energy comes back.'

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

'What? How is that possible?'

'No clue.'

'And where does that power go?'

'A small part to the computer consoles, navigation, life support, other systems. A bigger part even goes back to charge the battery.'

'You're kidding me! You realise you're describing a Perpetuum mobile? An eternal machine?'

'Exactly,' Sam grinned, 'we only needed the great energy from the void to turn it on. And that's not even the most curious part. Most of that energy seems to go nowhere.'

'Energy can't just vanish.'

'Looks like, it does. Maybe that's what the ghosts are coming for.'

In the next moment, Gladys stormed into the office.

'Ben! They asked for the blood test.'

'So? You know what to do. Change the test results before it reaches them.'

'OK!'

During the next weeks, we tried to figure out where does all the energy go, but we couldn't get any results. And in a month the ghosts arrived. It was really weird. One day, at the time of the ghost shift, twenty blurry figures appeared, out of nowhere, forming a circle around the ship.

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'What are they doing?' Frank wondered.

'I have no idea,' I said.

'Me neither, and that's more troubling.'

Someone else appeared out of nowhere.

'Whoa! Jack!' I yelled. 'What are you doing here?'

'Did you really think that you can retcon me and I wouldn't find out? Seriously, modifying the database is really amateur. Even from you lot.'

'Erm...what do you want to do now?'

'Find out what you're hiding in this ship. I guess they are here for that also,' he poked towards the ghosts with his head.

'Guys!' Piotr shouted from the other side of the Shark.

We all gathered around, but we already could see what he noticed.

'Doesn't their image look sharper to you?'

'Captain Harkness? What are you doing here?' Sam noticed Jack. And after that, everyone else did. But he didn't care about the others. He watched the figures with a dark expression on his face.

'We've got to get out of here immediately,' Jack said.

'Why, what are these?'

'Cyberman.' Now, Sam looked glum at him.

'Out!' I gave the order, and everyone rushed towards the exit.

'Wait!' Sam shouted. 'We should get inside the ship.'

We all turned back. His voice was decided, but his face was confused.

'Why?'

'Trust me. We can seal the door. We will be safe in there. Also, I think whatever the big secret this ship holds we don't want it in the hands of the cybermen.'

I looked around. The cybermen were almost through. I had to choose quickly. I still curse the moment when I made up my mind.

'Get inside.'

In a few seconds, all the team was inside the ship. Sam was the last, and he turned back to Jack.

'Sorry, but you can't die, and you're not on the passenger list, so...'

He pushed Jack out of the ship and hit the door-close button. We could see through the narrowing gap Harkness's surprised face and the cybermen coming alive. In the end, only red flashes reached our eyes, but we could hear Jack's death scream and the cybermen's '*Delete*' battle cry.

'Why did you do that?!' I yelled at Sam.

'He's not on the passenger list.'

He said calmly. He was even smiling like he didn't just witness someone's death and alien invasion force breaking into our world. Then the ship shook.

'What was that?' Gladys asked.

'Cybermen must have done something,' Frank said. 'We should see it from the cockpit.'

We all ran up and wanted to hurry to the window, but we halted immediately after entering the cockpit. The sight in front of us made our jaws drop.

'What the hell?'

Even Sam looked surprised. A bit. We were in space.

### Chapter 3 - Far, far away

'Hang on a minute!' the Doctor stopped Ben telling the story. 'I must see the engine room because there is no way this ship got into space just like that without a hyperdrive. You must have missed something.'

'Oh yes, we did, but we found it on our first trip. Just wait till you find out what it is.'

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'Okay, guys! Who knows how to fly this thing?' I asked the big question.

'Well, Sam and I worked out a few things,' Piotr said. 'Those handles are for the steering. Rough steering. You can enter more precise course settings on the screen in the arm of the chair. Those are there the radar consoles,' as he showed it, Sam turned them on. 'Well, what else...'

'That back there is a manual to the ship,' Frank pointed at a screen near the cockpit entrance. 'There's even a flight simulator. And it is all in English.'

'What? Why didn't you tell this before?'

'I just found it yesterday.'

'Great, that's a start.'

'But, if we just get back to the radar for a bit,' Sam interrupted, 'we can see a big planet nearby, and, of course, a ship is approaching.'

'What?!'

'If we risk the steering we could even see it.'

'Can anyone speak alien?' Gladys asked. 'I think we have to talk to them.'

She was right. Soon another console lit up, and a voice sounded from a speaker.

'Unknown ship, this is Nacron planetary patrol. Identify yourself and state your intentions.'

'They seem to be speaking English. Don't you wanna answer them, Ben?' Sam said.

'ME? Why?'

'You were our boss,' Frank said. 'Now, you are the captain. After all, it's your ship, isn't it?'

I sighed and stepped to the communications desk. One of the buttons was blinking. I guessed that would be some sort of reply button. I pushed it and started to talk.

'Erm... planetary patrol. This is the erm... erm...'

'Hammerhead Shark,' Sam whispered.

'This is the Hammerhead Shark. Our intention is to get home, but we have no idea how we got here

in the first place.'

They replied with a little delay.

'Follow us to the nearby berth station.'

'We would be happy to, but no one knows how to fly this thing.'

Another pause.

'Then we tow you in.'

The ship quivered a bit then smoothly started to move. Now, the mostly green and on small parts blue globe and the patrol became visible, and there were tiny black spots in the distant. We headed to one of them, the berth station. The flight time was about 20 minutes. In that time, I had to ask Sam.

'Hammerhead Shark? Really?'

'Yeah. The head is just obvious, and the bar on the top is like a shark's back-fin.'

'Fair enough.'

Soon, the Shark arrived, and we went back to the cargo hold. I took a deep breath and opened the gate. Two squat, but in a way, human-like creatures stood in front of us, with guns pointed at us. I slowly raised my arms, and the others followed my example.

'We're not hostile. We are...' I took my gun from its holster and threw it away '...unarmed. Please, lower your guns.'

They did so.

'You will come with us.'

'If you allow, two of the crew would stay here.'

'Fine. Come to the teleport pod!'

Gladys, Frank and I were escorted to a transporter station leading to the planet. As I stepped off the ramp, I felt lighter. I considered, the ship must have earth-like artificial gravity, and the station's rotation generated a bit smaller. After five minutes walk, we reached a pedestal about six square meters big.

'Step on the teleport pad! You're expected.'

That was surprising. They were already waiting for us. I was looking forward to meeting the one whoever may know about our visit. So we stepped onto the pedestal, and in a few moments, the station vanished from our eyes.

I ordered Piotr and Sam to stay and find out what happened while we were away.

'Okay, the tutorial is yours, the sensors are mine,' Sam said.

'Fine. What shall I start with?'

'Taking off.'

They both went to a console. Piotr's job wasn't that easy. The guide to the ship was huge. Sam, on the other hand, navigated easily among the radar functions.

'This is great! This must be some quantum-entanglement radar. It detects the objects in a million miles, categorises them, and collects as many data as possible. It does this instantly, not giving a damn about the limitations set by lightspeed. And surprisingly, it's all in English. Hm. That's interesting... Now I go and play some basketball.'

'What? Why?'

'I found out almost everything I wanted to know. The others will have some trouble down there.'

'What kind of trouble?'

'That planet is 1.6 times heavier than the Earth.'

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'Argh! Damn it!' I shouted.

As soon as we materialised, I felt as if a heavy cement bag would have fallen onto my back. We all dropped to the floor. Standing up was quite painful, and I could barely remain on my feet. Based on groans behind me, the others had similar difficulties. But I also heard a cheerful laugh. I looked up to see its source.

We were in a building probably reserved for receiving the travellers arriving by teleport. Three of the aliens stood in front of us. Two of them were wearing the same uniform as the ones on the space stations. The third was laughing.

'Captain! Have you already forgot how heavy is the situation on our planet?'

'Clearly!' I growled. I tried to straighten and step to the alien. 'You know me?'

'Ha-ha-ha! Captain, you're funny as always. I kept your package safe.'

'My package?'

'Yes. Follow me.'

\*\*\*

Up in the ship, Piotr became annoyed by the constant banging of the basketball. He went down to the cargo hold and shouted at Sam.

'What if you stop playing and do something useful?'

'I am. Practising.'

It was hard to tell that moment what he was doing exactly. He was pacing along the wall and kept throwing the ball at it.

'Great! Because your rubbish basketball technique is our greatest problem at the moment.'

When he walked a full circle around the room, he started to run up and down, hitting each square meter of the floor with the ball.

'It could be.'

'Why do I have a feeling that you're up to something?'

'Because I am.'

'Of course, don't mind the cybermen invasion force on our home planet.'

'Earth is fine!'

'What? How do you know that?'

'Because this lot on this station speak English.'

Suddenly, a loud and deep boom sounded when the ball hit the floor, right in the middle of the hold.

'What was that?' Piotr asked.

'Possibly an answer to everything that happened to us.' Sam grinned.

'Hang on. That key and the keyhole by your foot. Were those always there?'

'I think they were. We just didn't notice it.'

Piotr ran down, while Sam turned the key in the hole. There was a door on the floor and under it...

'Stairs.' The Armenian stated. 'I thought we are at the bottom of this ship.'

'We are. I think I know what this is and where the excess energy went.'

They went down the stairs. In a minute, they were already running up, Sam in the front and Piotr after him.

'Sam! Stop!'

'Why? We got less than 15 minutes to get back with the others.'

'Yes, and they left less than ten minutes ago. It's more than enough simply to jog. If you're right and we exhaust ourselves before we get down the planet, we won't be even able to move.'

'I'm not risking it,' Sam said and started to run like hell.



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It took another couple of painful minutes to walk to a garage of the alien who seemed to know quite a lot about us.

'Oh, captain! I almost forgot,' he said, 'I also kept the letter for you.'

'What letter?'

'Here it is.'

The alien handed me over an envelope addressed to me. But with my own handwriting! The letter said:

*"Hello Ben,*

*I'm sending this to you to confirm what you already suspect. Grendel next to you will give you something in a minute. We nicked it from a UNIT warehouse. I think you will have better use of it than us.*

*PS: Wait for the Armenian with the engines running."*

I couldn't believe my eyes. But it definitely confirmed what I was thinking. We didn't just move in space. We also travelled through time. I handed the letter to Gladys and turned to the alien.

'Erm... Grendel.'

'Yes?' More proof.

'How far is it where we are going?'

'We are already here.'

We stood in front of a garage. He pulled a remote controller out of his pocket and pushed a button on it. We expected a lot of things but certainly not this. Frank and I said simultaneously:

'I'll drive!'

There was a yellow old-timer in the garage in perfect condition. We tried to decide the right of driving with rock-paper-scissors, but it is a bit difficult when you feel there is a heavy barbell on your hand.

'You said before, it needs this to work.'

The key was in Grendel's hand. Frank and I both tried to seize it, but he was quicker.

'OK. Then start the engine.'

Frank got in the car and turned the key. Right at that moment, Piotr appeared next to us, wheezing.

'Ah... great... we have... transport. Ben... we have... less than five... minutes... to get... back.'

'What? Why?'

'Don't ask... just go.'

'Grendel, thank you! We will try to be in touch.'

'I'm sure you will. Safe journey!'

I had a feeling he knew about our future more than we did. We got into the car as fast as our weight allowed and drove off at full throttle. Sam stood a corner away from the teleport and tried to catch his breath. We picked him up and drove on. Luckily, Grendel told the uniforms at the station to open the gate for us, so we didn't lose time.

'I told you not to sprint,' Piotr said to Sam.

'I know. But lucky, I did. I spoke to one of the aliens. We have definitely travelled through time.'

'We already know about it.'

'Oh, great! And I've also got good news. Earth is fine. These aliens are trading with humans.'

'So what?' Gladys asked.

'So they survived the cybermen,' I said. 'All we have to worry about is us.'

We reached a teleport. We lost about a minute until the personnel of the platform engaged the machine for us. When it activated, suddenly all of us felt lighter.

'Finally! Bearable gravity!' Frank sighed and tried to unhook the speedometer.

'Why are we in such a hurry?' Gladys asked.

'You will see,' Piotr said. 'Now, just hurry.'

The Shark was in sight when Sam looked at his phone and started to count down.

'30.'

Almost there.

'20.'

We rolled into the ship. I got out and hit the door closing button. As the gate slowly closed, Sam counted back from ten.

'...9, 8, 7,...'

It was clear it can not close in time.

'...6, 5, 4,...'

Just a bit more.

'...3, 2, ...'

'Hold on tight!' I shouted.

'1!'

Suddenly, a sharp, blue light streamed into the ship through the gap, and the decompression began to pull the car towards the gate. But only for a moment. The door shut, and we were safe.

'I guess we are in hyperspace,' I said. 'Now, show me what the hell got us here.'

\*\*\*

'Can I guess?' The Doctor grinned.

'I would be disappointed if you haven't figured it out by now.'

'Why? What is it?' Amy asked excitedly. 'What makes this ship go?'

'Come on, I show you.'

\*\*\*

The others were sitting on the stairs in the corner of the cargo bay opposite the TARDIS.

'Attention everyone!' The crew stood up as Ben and the time travellers appeared on the gallery. 'Let me introduce our guests. Amy Pond and the Doctor!'

'Hello, everyone! Where is it?' the Doctor hurried Ben.

'Down on the floor, in the middle.'

'Sam, where is the cellar key?' Gladys asked silently in the back.

She didn't get any reply. Sam was staring right at Amy with an odd look on his face. His expression was halfway between amazement and bewilderment. Luckily, she didn't notice this weird attention.

'Great!' Gladys sighed. 'Well, we are real time travellers. Our history repeats itself.'

'Sorry, what?' Sam was back. 'Oh, yes, key.' He stepped out from the corner. 'Here it is.'

'Don't worry, I don't need one,' the Doctor said. He pulled a gadget out of his pocket. A green light, a humming noise, and the trapdoor opened wide.

'Now look at that!'

'How did you do that?' Sam asked.

'Sonic screwdriver. If you excuse me,' the Doctor said and ran down the stairs. Amy followed.

Down there, they saw the ship's real engine. The Doctor just smiled, but Amy looked totally baffled.

'It's a TARDIS.'

'Yes, it is! The Hammerhead shark's basement is a living TARDIS.'

## Chapter 4 - The Cellar

'How could this be here?' Amy wondered. 'You said yours is the only one left in the universe.'

'Yes, I did. It seems I was wrong.'

'How is this possible?'

'I don't know. But I want to find out.'

The cellar-TARDIS made the whirring noise of the landing. The ship shook a bit, and the time-rotor column stopped.

'We have arrived,' Ben stated. 'Frank, to the steering wheel. Sam, radars. Find out where are we, while I give our guests a tour.'

'But I want to know more about that screwdriver thing.'

'To the radars!'

\*\*\*

After Frank and Sam left, the others went down to the cellar.

'So what do you think?' Ben asked the Doctor.

'I don't know yet. I tell you as soon as I found something,' the Time Lord replied.

Piotr pulled down a flat-screen. On it, a clock was counting down from 7 days and 13 hours.

'That's what we found on our first trip. When the counter reaches zero, we jump to a random place in a random time.'

'And you do what?'

'Get supplies and information.'

'Information?'

'Yes. Every bit of information about space and time travel, about where are we, when are we. We are constantly trying to find out how to locate our home and how to get there. We learned to drive the ship with the sublight engines, to dock, to land on a planet, but navigating in the wide universe, without knowing where the hell we are, is a completely different thing. We were trying to make a space-time map, but we hardly managed to do a thing, since most of the people's measurement system was unknown to us. We found it strange this counter here is counting in Earth time units.'

'The TARDIS must have sensed humans are aboard. But there are still many things which don't add up. Humans will never even hear about a ship like this, but it was clearly made for human use. And this TARDIS is young. Impossibly young.'

'Say that again,' Amy chuckled. 'I've only heard impossibly old.'

'How can you tell?' Gladys asked.

'TARDISes aren't built. They're grown. They're living beings. The youngest ones the Time Lords used weren't younger than 20-30 years. It was said they attached to other ships all around the universe and hid there to learn about travelling among the stars. Like this one. You are very lucky. Very few were discovered. So this TARDIS can't be older than 20 years, but the only planet they can be found on is gone for a lot more time. This TARDIS was grown after the Time War.'

'With a time machine, it's hard to talk about after something,' Ben said.

'These machines are four-dimensional creatures. They sense the fifth dimension as we do the fourth, and in that dimension, the Time War is in the past and us, tiny 3D creatures can do nothing to change it. Why do you think it was called Time War?'

'Never heard of it.'

'Good for you. But these are problems for another time. Now I want to know what you are doing here? With pirates.'

The Doctor turned to Jenny. Until that time, she stood in the background and wondered if that newcomer was really her father. Her shock even increased when the Doctor talked to her.

'Erm...Well...'

The way he said the word pirate made her clear who was she standing in front of. She could hear the same disgust in his voice as he talked about the soldiers who made her. But that word pissed off someone else.

'Whoa, whoa, whoa!' Ben shouted. 'Who said anything about pirates?'

'Not directly, but you did. You are hunting for alien technology. Most people in the universe don't like to share this kind of information, so you have to take it by force.'

'Of course not. We take it by... erm... stratagem.'

'It's still stealing. Very Torchwood!'

'We are only trying to get home, which wouldn't be even necessary if you haven't made Queen Victoria angry.'

'What have you done with Queen Victoria?' Amy asked phlegmatically.

'Saved her from a werewolf, then she banished me and founded this alien hunter Torchwood gang.'

'Okay, then!' Gladys said angrily. 'Stop us doing so! Take us home!'

'I can do that,' the Doctor said confidently and turned back to Jenny with a rigid face, 'right after you finally told me why you are with pirates.'

'They broke me out from a UNIT prison. The soldiers wanted to experiment on me because I'm a Time Lord.'

'And why did you sprung her?' the Doctor's voice remained strict as he asked Ben.

'Because...' Jenny would start explaining, but the Doctor yelled at the captain.

'I'm asking you!'

'Same reason,' There was no point in lying. 'We have a TARDIS, she was another hope of getting home.'

'I see. So you kidnapped her!'

Now, Jenny started to have enough of her father.

'Why do you keep insulting them? Do you think I've forgotten everything you taught me? Do you think I would have stayed here for a minute if they weren't good people? Do you think they could have kept me? No. I wanted to see the stars as you do, and they offered me a ride.'

Then she ran up the stairs offended. The rest of the crew took a look at the Doctor as if they defeated him and slowly walked after Jenny. The Doctor was stunned. Jenny's monologue really made him feel beaten. As coup de grace, Amy also had a mocking remark.

'Doctor, Doctor. I keep telling you. Don't get so emotional or you will miss something obvious!'

'Sometimes, I think I should listen to you. ... Sometimes! ...On rare occasions.'

'Like this one?'

'Shut up!'

\*\*\*

Frank and Sam came down from the cockpit when the others came up from the cellar. Frank wanted to report as soon as he saw the captain.

'We dropped out near a...'

'I don't care. We are going home.'

'What? Really?' Frank asked, hoping.

'Already?' Sam's voice was a bit scared.

'Immediately. Jenny, as I promised you can visit Earth. Doctor!'

'Coming.'

In a minute, everyone was in the blue box. The Doctor just started to set the coordinates when Sam stepped next to him.

'So, this sonic thing, how does it work?' this question surprised the Time Lord. He took a quick look around at the others. Everyone's face was excited about getting home. Sam's was too, but his excitement was about rather the screwdriver.

'Are you kidding me? You're about to go home after five years of drifting, and you want to know about a screwdriver.'

'Earth is just another planet, which I've already seen. Besides, I have a plan.'

'A plan? A plan for what?' the Doctor asked and released the handbrake. Nothing happened. No sounds, no movement, nothing.

'This is not my plan,' Sam said defensively and pointed at the standing central column.

'What is it?' Amy asked. 'Why aren't we going?'

The Doctor pulled the take-off lever, but nothing. He pulled it a couple times again, angrier and angrier.

'Aaargh! Why don't you move? We've got power, everything's working, but we don't dematerialize.'

'It was too good to be true.' Ben crossed his arms and buried his face in one palm. 'What did you say, Frank, where are we going?'

'I show you.'

Frank and Ben strode towards the door the rest after them, except for Sam.

'Khm..., khm...' he pretended a cough.

'Oh, yes. Sam, you should stay with our guests and help the Doctor find out why we can't leave.'

'Will do.'

'I stay as well,' Gladys said with a frown face.

'Fine. Jenny? Do you want to stay? After all, he is your...'

'He insulted my friends.'

Ben smiled and stepped out from the TARDIS. Frank, Jenny and Piotr followed, Gladys and Sam stayed inside. As soon as the door shut, Sam turned to the Doctor again.

'So, the screwdriver. How does it work?'

\*\*\*

Up in the cockpit, Frank showed the others their destination.

'We dropped out near a solar system. There is one planet which supports life, and it's populated. By whom? We will find out when we get there. Sensors indicate there's no sign of technology on the planet. On the other hand, there is a space station in orbit. Seems to be abandoned. It looks like we can get both food and information. Question is, do we need it?'

'We shall know soon if the TARDIS can be fixed,' Ben said. 'Until then, recon. Two teams. Piotr, Jenny, you go to the station, I go to the surface with some volunteers. Frank, it's your turn to stay



with the ship.'

'Fine.'

'OK! Tool up and go!'

\*\*\*

In the TARDIS, the Doctor was pushing all the buttons on the console to find out what's keeping the ship in place. The others just stood at the stairs bored, watching the Doctor running around and waiting for something to happen.

'Do you need help?' Amy tried to do something against boredom.

'No, thanks. Just look impressed when I find the cause.'

'Does he often do this?' Gladys asked Amy.

'What? Showing off? All the time.'

'A-ha!' The Doctor shouted. 'Got it!'

'Great!' Sam stepped forward. 'So you have some time to tell me about the sonic.'

'You're obsessed with that screwdriver. Why?'

'Because it's useful and cool.'

'True. But after how many no answers will you finally realise that I don't want to tell you?'

'After you finally realise, I'm not giving up until you give me a proper answer.'

'You want a proper answer? Fine. Have you heard of the Tacoma-bridge?'

'Yes.' The Doctor didn't expect that, and even less what happened next. 'The Tacoma bridge! Of course!' Sam shouted. 'Thank you, Doctor!'

'What? You worked it out from that? You're bluffing.'

'Why would I? So, the TARDIS! Why can't it move?' The change of topic was a bit sudden for everyone.

'Erm...they are...' the Doctor just stammered, 'yours and mine... they are communicating.'

'Well, we could have told you that,' Gladys said.

'What?'

'Come and see,' Sam said, 'I mean hear.'

He waved towards the door. They all strode towards the exit. The Doctor didn't take his suspicious eyes off Sam until the human walked past him. When everyone was in front of him, Sam took his

phone and started pushing buttons. When they all stood over the cellar door, he pressed record.

'Doctor, would you be so kind? Can't find the key.'

The Time Lord grimaced but opened the trapdoor with the screwdriver.

'Go ahead! I'll be going in a second.'

He pushed down the others and closed the door behind them. Then he played the recorded screwdriver sound, but the door didn't even move. He shook his head and grabbed the key. Behind the door, the Doctor was waiting.

'Found the key?'

Sam defended himself with an innocent smile.

'Little bugger hid in my pocket.'

'Is it just me, or Sam is really a bit of a nutter?' Amy asked Gladys.

'Oh, no. Nutter doesn't cover it. He is totally crazy. But he could be incredibly smart at the same time.'

'Hm,' Amy stifled a laugh, 'reminds me of someone.'

'Gladys, you're closer.' Sam shouted down. 'Could you show our guests some samples of our Doctor-archives?'

'Here is my favourite.'

Gladys said and pressed some buttons, then the Doctor's voice sounded from a speaker.

*'Who takes the Pandorica, takes the universe, but bad news everyone, 'cause guess who. Listen you lot, you're all whizzing about, it's really very distracting. Could you all just stay still a minute becau...'*

Gladys stopped the record.

'Why did you stop? I was talking,' the Doctor moaned.

'I don't know,' Sam told. 'This didn't seem to be too powerful. I think a glorious covering music, some sort of march would do the trick.'

'Oi! Those words win wars.'

'Thank you, Amy. So, this one spies on mine. Great! What else do you have in there?'

'Every single communication, which went through your TARDIS.'

'Our crown jewel is when the Daleks threw the Earth to the other side of the universe. Something must have been left turned on because we heard everything,' Sam explained. 'We didn't care about discovering that day. We all clung to the console like football maniacs to the telly during the

Champion's League final.'

'Interesting.' That fact made the Doctor thinking.

'That reminds me, what made you almost regenerate that day?'

'A dalek shot me. But I was running; it didn't hit properly.'

'How come it didn't finish you after you were down?'

'Captain Jack killed it.' The Doctor's tone became threatening all of a sudden. 'He saved me. Do you remember him? The one you threw to the Cybermen, like a bone to the dogs.'

'Really?' It didn't affect Sam. He was even smiling. 'That's nice. If I didn't toss him out, then he couldn't be there to save you. So you couldn't have stopped Davros and the reality bomb. It seems I indirectly saved the universe.'

That made the Doctor really cross. He stepped in front of Sam and pointed at him, like he was wanting to say something really scary, but he didn't in the end. He rather talked about the real reason, why the time machine stopped.

'What I was talking about is another sort of communication. It's deeper. As if the two TARDISes were communicating at a subconscious level.'

The Doctor might have wanted to continue, but Ben entered the console room.

'Hey guys! We are setting up two exploration teams. If you...'

'I would like to go space station, please. I want to know why it is deserted,' the Doctor said smiling. And his smile turned into a grin when he saw Ben's surprised face.

'I haven't said anything about a space station. How did you know that?'

The Doctor didn't answer just kept smiling, but the grin melted down from his face, when Sam gave a perfectly simple explanation.

'What do you think? He checked the coordinates in his TARDIS, and unlike ours I think it can match them with some information.'

'You have to do this!' the Doctor shouted at Sam. 'You have to spoil it. You are really pissing me off!'

'Then stop showing off,' Ben said. 'Tell us, what else you know of this planet!'

'Well, I can do that.'

'Great. Start talking.'

## Chapter 5 - Further away

Everybody gathered in the cockpit to listen to the Doctor's lecture about the planet and the station. In the window, the globe could already be seen. It was still only a not-twinkling-star, but it was growing by the minute.

'So, that planet,' the Doctor started. 'It is very similar to Earth. It is in a similar position relative to a star similar to the Sun. It went through similar steps of evolution. It's got good soil, full of resources. Perfect for human colonisation. And they do colonise it. Problem is, it is inhabited. The people down there look like humans but have slightly different physiology, and they are still in the dark ages. So what to do with them? Annihilate them? No that's just inhuman. What then? Merge them into the human race. But to do that, you have to know them. How they behave, what are their problems, what are their desires. If you know this stuff, you can manipulate anyone into anything. So the human empire installs a station around the planet to observe. Once they gathered enough information, they send in their operatives and let the manipulation begin. The most gentle way to conquer.'

'Human station. Great. It will make the search easier,' Ben assumed. 'Any chance of...'

'You won't find anything about time travel.'

'But we can find a lot of useful gadgets!' Piotr stated.

'Exactly!' Sam agreed. 'I'd like to take a look at the station.'

'I don't think that's a good idea,' the Doctor said.

'Why?'

'Because I talked about you.' Ben answered and quickly continued. 'Don't worry, he won't set foot on the satellite.'

'Why?!' Sam asked again slightly louder. Ben explained.

'Where we are going is a village in the dark ages, so we can't really park in the middle of the market square. The way from the safest spot to land leads through a canyon.'

'Hm...' That fact got Sam thinking. 'As I think of it, maybe I should go to the planet. I definitely should go to the planet. I just get my hiking boots.' He said and headed for the door.

'If he's got to choose between technology and treasures of nature, let it be a star cluster or nice valley, nature always wins,' Ben told the Doctor silently.

'Sam,' Jenny stopped him, 'it's still two hours until we get there.'

'Fine. Then I get something else and have a little chat with your daddy.'

'Wonder what that will be about,' the Doctor whispered suspiciously. 'Amy, do me a favour. Keep an eye on Sam down the planet.'

She silently nodded.

After two hours, the Shark docked to the station. Its exploration party gathered in the hold, where the TARDIS was hovering with opened doors, and it wasn't really stable. Amy stared at the box with widened eyes when Jenny appeared next to her.

'What is he doing?' she asked Amy.

'I'm not really sure.'

When the TARDIS looked the most stable (but still in the air), the Doctor aimed for the cargo hold door with his screwdriver. The gate slowly opened, and the phone box floated outside and landed on the satellite's floor. Finally, the Doctor stepped out of it.

'There it is. She can still fly. She just can't enter the time vortex. Now both teams have transport.'

'Shall we go then?' Jenny asked.

'All right. Move out!' Piotr shouted.

Before everyone went exploring, they heard banging of boots on a metal floor. In a minute, Sam came up from the Cellar with a box in his hands. He placed it near the cargo bay door and deployed it. It was an LP recorder.

'Hello, Doctor!' Sam grinned. 'Could you open the hatch again?'

The Time Lord looked at the recorder with surprise-mixed-suspicion on his face.

'Since the phone recording didn't work, I thought the sound wave is too fine. Even digitalisation causes data loss.'

'Hm. Clever.'

He pointed at the recorder with the screwdriver. He bleeped it for a while, then it blew up. Then he closed the hold door with the sonic tool. The Doctor and Sam kept looking in each other's eyes like angry wolves right until the gate shut.

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When the Shark left the dock, the Doctor's mood changed. He was smiling again all of a sudden.

'Let's go and find out what happened here,' he said to Piotr and Jenny, then the small team started the exploring.

'Isn't Gladys coming?' the Doctor asked.

'No, she chooses to stay in the Cellar,' Piotr said. 'She's probably playing with a video game.'

'What? Doesn't she care about this?'

'I don't know if she cares about anything.'

'She cares about people,' Jenny corrected. 'People she finds interesting.'

Piotr didn't fully understand something.

'The last of the Time Lords is with us. Some would think he is interesting enough.'

'Actually, next to last. I'm also here.'

'Sorry. True.'

'And I think she already knows someone with a similar attitude.'

The Doctor pretended to not even hear this statement.

'Do you know what I find interesting? Your ship. It is amazing, and I can't see the point of it.'

'Why? What have you learned about it?' Piotr asked.

'Based on the design, I would say it is a short-range transport ship. It carries the goods from the inner planets at high speed to a huge, interstellar cargo ship on the edge of the solar system. Like trucks, which bring containers from all over the mainland to the ships waiting in the ocean harbour. What I don't get why does it need such an advanced steering system. For just space trucking, some cheap thrusters are enough. Yet, you pulled off neck-breaking manoeuvres that would shame a fighter. For that, you need an antimatter drive.'

'Antimatter drive?'

'Yes. The laws of quantum physics are incredible. They allow defying the conservation of energy for a short time. That means particles can pop out from nowhere for a very-very small fragment of a microsecond. The bigger are the particles, the shorter is the time. Total vacuum is not total vacuum at all. It's teeming with particles. Well, particle-antiparticle pairs, to be precise. They are travelling between universes. Your ship, the bars collect the positrons and lead them through it in a strong magnetic field. It forces them to stay in our universe. Normally, they go through the field and vanish. But when you want to steer, electrons are injected into the positron stream at the specified points. The opposite particles collide, great energy releases to the proper directions, and the ship instantly gets a big push.'

Jenny finished the description.

'The gamma radiation from the collision split into electron-positron pairs again, positrons disappear, the universe stays as it was. Brilliant! Sam will be happy. He and Piotr tried to work this out for years.'

'And we suspected something like that,' the Armenian said strictly. 'I'm gonna tell him right now.' He turned on his radio. 'Hey, Sam. The Doctor says our idea about the wings is correct.'

'What?! Seriously? So, they are actually using antimatter?'

'That's what the Doctor said.'

'Cool! It was about time to get an expert's view on that theory. Thank him for me, please!'

'I told you, Sam, you were right,' it was Frank from the background. 'You should trust yourself more.'

'Oh, Frank! Have you already forgot what happened the last time I trusted myself? Anyway, got to go. We're about to land. Over and out.'

'Over and out!' Piotr said and turned off the radio. 'See? We suspected it, we just couldn't prove it.'

'Well, I can't prove it either, but my experience says that's a highly likely explanation.'

'But I still can't understand how it can force breaking the symmetry. How does it keep the anti-particles in our universe.'

'When we have a week nothing to do, I'll explain.'

Suddenly, Piotr's communicator started beeping.

'The Shark landed safe and sound.'

'Great! If you excuse me, I've got to make a phone call. Be back in a minute,' the Doctor said and ran off.

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, on the planet, the other expedition team also took off. The ship landed at the foot of a sierra. On the other side was a small village. The only way to it led through a narrow canyon carved by a small, fast creek during thousands of years.

While Amy, Ben, and Sam walked through the two-mile-long valley, Sam was smiling all along. He just couldn't not to when he looked up at the hundred feet high rocks at arms distance on both sides.

'This is beautiful,' he said, and then he shouted. 'This is great!'

'I have to admit, you've got a taste for looking for places like this.'

'I like it here too,' Amy said. 'The Doctor took me to all sorts of places, but we never had hikes like this. Wonder why.'

'I think it's too simple for his style,' Ben said. 'Plus, many glens like this can be found on Earth at any time you're on that planet. You've just got to look at the right place. The flood was busy.'

'What flood?' Amy asked frowning.

Sam and Ben answered simultaneously.

'The Great Flood of '99.'

This answer made Amy even more confused. As she stopped and tried to understand the meaning of it, she was nearly left behind. She quickly ran after them and asked what she really wanted to know.

'So Sam, did you really work it out how the sonic screwdriver works?'

'Yes.'

'And?'

'I think, it emits a sound wave. No. It rather does a scan before. It reads the resonance frequency of the lock. Then emits a sound wave at that frequency. Not a constant one, just small, repeated bursts. This way, the resonance catastrophe won't occur, but the latch slowly moves until the lock opens.'

Amy didn't answer right away. Before she did, Sam could have sworn he heard her whisper.

'But I saw the Doctor doing all sorts of things with it, like handling computers, or scanning... things, not just for its resonance frequency.'

'Hm...Interesting. Scanning? Easy. It could work as a sonar. But dealing with computers also? So it must be messing with electrons too. In that case, it can't be sound waves. Those need air, too big for electrons. It must be something much more delicate. Some sort of radiation. Gamma or something. I'm starting to think that noise is only for deception.'

'Gamma radiation? Isn't that dangerous?' Amy's voice became a bit worried.

'Yes it is, but it's not necessarily that. It could be...'

'You can stop guessing right now.'

Sam and Ben turned back surprised. It was the Doctor's voice coming from a mobile phone in Amy's hand.

'What the hell?'

'The human race doesn't know that kind of radiation, and it's perfectly safe, Amy.'

'Good to know,' she sighed.

'And it indeed uses sound waves for opening doors, that's why I blew up the recorder. But true that most of the humming is a jamming signal. Still, it was absolutely amazing. No one ever worked this out yet. Well, no one tried to. But still, great job. Of course, it doesn't change the fact I don't trust you.'

'Never thought you would. You still need to keep an eye on me. Well, ear.'

'Of course, but now I've got to go. Bye!'

The Doctor hung up, and Amy put away her phone and asked:

'You really figured it out only from Tacoma-bridge?'

'Yes.'

'Wow! You're like Sherlock Holmes, coming to that conclusion from that.'

'Not really. I don't really deduct, I don't have all the steps. I just imagine a solution to a problem what seems to be logical, and it often turns out to be correct. But not always.'

'And of course, unlike Sherlock Holmes, you miss even the biggest things in front of you,' Ben completed the description.



'Well, yeah. Frank's the one who notices everything.'

\*\*\*

And Frank did notice something. He was just bringing up a book from the Cellar to the bridge. He was already on the stairs when he heard steps and whispers behind his back. He turned back to see what it is. He saw Amy and Sam, and strangely, Sam carried a ladder.

'I can't believe you messed that up,' she told him off.

'Sorry, sorry, and again, sorry. Anyway, timer set?' he asked.

'Yes. Are you sure it will do what it should?'

'Don't worry. I ran the calculations four times. It will work.'

'What calculations? You just had to check the log. Which clearly said it's not supposed to be here.'

'I know,' he sighed. 'It just sounded good.'

'Hey!' Frank said. 'I thought you went hiking.'

'Erm... Hello...' Sam got uneasy.

'Another miscalculation?' Amy mocked him.

'Tiny bit. Yes, we were. Amy just accidentally left her phone in the Cellar. She finds the valley so beautiful, she wants to take pictures.'

'And what's with the ladder?'

'Erm..., we also came across a cliff we couldn't climb.'

They turned around and went to the ramp. The reason Sam gave seemed to be believable, but something didn't add up, and not just the ladder. And Frank suddenly noticed. Sam was wearing...

'And no! It is deliberate,' Sam shouted back, and they left the Shark.

That confused Frank totally. He slowly turned around, shaking his head and stepped up the stairs to the cockpit where Gladys was playing solitaire.

'I see you're busy.'

'After the last heist, I want to rest a bit.'

'I understand. I also don't mind a bit of sitting and watching events from here. Do you know what shoes was Sam wearing when he left?'

'No. Why?'

'Nothing. Amy left her phone in the Cellar. She and Sam came back for it, and Sam was..., then his eyes caught something on the sensors. 'Never mind. It's nothing.'

He leaned closer to the console to check the details.

'Now, that isn't nothing.'

\*\*\*

Up, on the station, Jenny and Piotr were discussing the Doctor.

'Your dad is bit weird. I mean, I heard all the stories, but I expected something different.'

'I don't even know if I can look at him as my father. His previous regeneration was different. The stories you've heard are about that man, not this kid.'

'Can't believe the two are the same?' Piotr said and pulled a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket.

'Do you really have to?'

'Fine!' he sighed and put the pack away.

'I thought you quit the last time when you ran out of stock.'

They reached a door. Nothing suggested it would be different from any other door, but as soon as it started to open, the wind arose like a storm. Piotr and Jenny could grab on the door frame the last millisecond to avoid falling out into space.

The Doctor wasn't fast enough. He was flying towards the other door as soon as he entered the corridor. He didn't panic, though. He took his screwdriver and pointed it at the door-handling-computer. In a second, all three of them fell on the ground, but the door remained open.

When they stood up and saw the corridor behind the door, they could also see what caused the sudden decompression.

'Those are rather big holes!' Piotr said. 'What did you do Doctor?'

'I extended the air shield around the base. There won't be any more unpleasant surprises like this.'

'Shouldn't there be some sort of safety protocols to avoid this?' Jenny wondered.

'Yes, it should. Some of the equipment must be damaged too. Now, let see what's wrong with this picture,' the Doctor stepped closer to examine the edges of the hole.

'I don't know,' Piotr shrugged, 'but it certainly explains why the station is abandoned. Holes in the hull, systems damaged. This place is a wreck.'

'Yes, but what wrecked it? The metal didn't bend. It wasn't blown in or out. No scorch marks, it wasn't cut. Part of the hull simply vanished.'

'How?'

'I don't know.'

'Me neither,' Frank's voice crackled from the radio, 'but I found something, which might be a clue.'

'What is it?' the Time Lord got excited.

'Doctor, you said this station is supposed to examine the planet.'

'Yes.'

'Then why do all its sensors looking at a point in space?'

'Good question. We'll go and see it. We'll be in touch when we find something interesting. To the observation deck.'

## Chapter 6 - The Shades

Meanwhile, the others reached the other side of the mountain, but they found something different from what they've expected.

'Stop right there!'

Ben, Sam, and Amy weren't exactly expecting this kind of welcome and certainly not a dozen pitchforks an inch from their faces.

'Whoa! Easy,' Ben paced back. 'We don't want any trouble. We came from a distant town to...'

'Liar!' the village magistrate retorted.

'Excuse me?'

'You are travellers from a distant world. Half of our village was destroyed because of you.'

That stunned everyone.

'What do you mean?'

'We were told on the day when half the village vanished that strangers will come from the stars. They said the other half remains if we capture the aliens for them.'

'Great!' Amy said. 'We could have landed in the town square after all.'

'And miss that valley? Not a chance,' Sam protested.

'Don't mind that! What do you mean vanished?'

'Don't mind that!' Amy said. 'How do we avoid getting captured?'

'You won't,' the leader said. 'You come with us.'

'Fine!' Sam grinned. 'I also want to know more about that vanishing thing.'

'Just what I needed,' Amy sighed.

The villagers took the travellers to their settlement not 500 meters from the valley entrance. The sight they saw was a bit weird. It was true what the peasants said. Half of the village disappeared but not in the way they expected. Large parts of the houses, whole walls and rooms were just gone. In some places, the furniture was cut in half like they were simply erased. People on the street slowly gathered around the newcomers, some of them looked surprised, a few seemed curious, and most of them were angry.

'What happened here?' Amy wondered.

'As I said, half of our village was destroyed,' the magistrate told them.

'By what?'

'The Shades.'

'What are the Shades?' Sam asked.

'I don't know,' Ben said, 'but they have some fearsome weapons. Have you noticed something strange?'

'I can see something is odd, but...' Sam took a look around and realised. 'Hold on.'

'There are no ruins!' Amy also saw what was wrong.

'Excellent point!' someone shouted behind them.

They all turned back and saw a weird man in bow tie striding towards them.

'Doctor!' Amy shouted happily. 'How did you get here?'

'We found the bridge of the station. It was also a communication centre.'

'You're a hologram.'

'Correct. And you should also see what we have found. There is an explanation for this.' He raised his hands and turned around to show what's left of the village. 'So come on.'

The picture changed instantly in front of their eyes. They found themselves aboard the station with the others and looking at a window or screen. It couldn't be decided at first glance, but the view was filled with twinkling stars.

'Hello, guys!' Jenny greeted them. 'See what we found.' She stepped closer and pointed at the screen. The area she selected magnified, and a peculiar object appeared. From the distant, it looked just like a star, but from closer, it was something else. It looked like a black paper was stabbed through with a pencil and lit with a lamp from behind.

'What the hell is that?' Sam asked and stepped through a console. Everyone gave him a weird look for this action. 'Sorry. I always wanted to do that.'

Well, everyone except for Amy. She was rather scared.

'Doctor, tell me it's not...'

'No, Amy, it's not like the crack on your bedroom wall. It doesn't suck in things. It's the opposite. It is also rapture on the fabric of reality, but it spits out stuff.'

'Stuff like what?' Ben asked.

'I don't know. It is a very rare phenomenon. Some say what was taken by a black hole a white hole like this gives it back. But that's just a legend. No one knows for sure what comes out of these. Through that, something devastating came. A matter that erased parts of that village and this station, and probably some other parts of the planet. But it won't cause any more trouble, the TARDIS can close it.'

'Oh, Doctor, I'm not that sure it is that simple,' Ben said. 'Not just matter came to this world.'

Something very alive, very conscious and very angry with us.'

'That's impossible. What makes you say that?'

'The villagers on the planet said that something came and destroyed their village. And that something is waiting for travellers from a distant world. I think they meant us.'

The spark of fear lit in the Doctor's eyes. He searched his bottomless pockets in haste, then he pulled out a pair of 3D glasses. He looked at the monitor and turned white.

'You three, go back to the planet and wait for me there. I'll be there in ten minutes,' the Doctor pressed the button, and the holograms vanished. 'You two. Jenny, I hope you still love the running part.'

'Now I can believe it's you,' she smiled.

'Yeah. It's me,' the Doctor said bluntly, 'but no smiling this time. Just run!'

\*\*\*

Amy, Ben and Sam found themselves in the middle of a circle of terrified faces.

'What's going on?' Sam looked around.

'It is passed!' Shouted the magistrate. 'Catch them.'

Villagers ran over the time travellers and tied them up.

'Hey! Get off me!' Amy struggled against their attackers. 'Why are you doing this?'

'When the demon disappeared, you became possessed.'

'Demon? He's not a demon. He will save your world.'

'Possessed? What do you mean possessed?' Ben yelled at them. Sam just laughed.

'Ha-ha-ha. It must have looked funny while we were the holograms at the station.'

\*\*\*

The Doctor, Jenny, and Piotr ran like hell through the station. At the dock, they ran into the TARDIS. The Doctor went to the consoles and started to take off. Jenny and Piotr turned back and froze of fright. The corridor they were running on just a second ago was slowly disappearing.

'Doctor, get us out of here!!' Piotr shouted.

The TARDIS flew off like a bullet from a pistol. When the ship was on course, the Time Lord stepped behind the others. They watched from the door as the station was consumed by the nothing. Only a few bright lights shone for a second.

'You were right,' Jenny exhaled aflutter. 'I don't want to smile this time.'

'What the bloody hell was that?' Piotr asked, trembling.

'I show you,' the Doctor closed the door and led the others to the scanner. 'I set this to sense what the naked eye can't see and recorded the whole thing.'

The Doctor played the recording. It seemed like a great black cloud ate the whole station up. That cloud emitted the tiny glows. When the station completely vanished, the blinking stopped, and the cloud was gone.

'What just happened? What was that?' Jenny asked.

'Creatures from the void,' the Doctor replied. 'Creatures covered in a cloud of void. They melted the satellite into the cloud. Then they sealed themselves off from the rest of this world in a bubble universe.'

'Creatures from the void?' Piotr asked like he wouldn't want to believe this version. 'What creatures? What void?'

'What creatures? I don't know. What void? The void is the space between the universes. With physics completely different from ours. Until now, I didn't think any form of life could exist there. But the laws of that wilderness obviously allow life to be created and evolved. This conversion, making and destroying bubble universes can only be work of highly advanced technology. And if it wouldn't be enough, there must be a bunch of bad guys in there I pissed up.'

'So what do we do?' Jenny asked.

'We run. Hold on we're landing. Just have to do one thing before we do.'

\*\*\*

In the village, the townsfolk just tied up the aliens when one of them saw something falling. Something blue.

'There! In the sky!'

'It is the Doctor-demon,' the magistrate said. 'Prepare!'

The TARDIS hit the ground like a meteorite. It raised a big dust cloud. The people inside ran out to get the others, but they had to stop immediately because they could hardly breathe in the dust.

'Amy...khh...' the Doctor coughed, 'where...khh... are...'

It was a bit rushed act. They were all hit from behind.

'Doctor!' Amy shouted desperately, when she saw it happen, and they were silenced too.

\*\*\*

When they woke up they were lying on rock and surrounded by the thickest darkness they were ever in. Literally, pitch black.

'Where are we?' Jenny asked whispering.

'I don't know,' the Doctor was also speaking silently. 'We are on rock, and we can't see a thing. Not a photon at all. I would say we're in a cave.'

'Why are you whispering?' Amy asked. Also silently.

'I don't know. It sort of comes with the darkness.'

'Ah, great!' she spoke up with normal loudness and tried to get up.

'No, Amy! Stay where you are! It's not safe to move around. And listen!'

They all shut up. Noises came from all around. Eerie whispers, the crackle of huge rocks tearing apart.

'I don't like the sound of this,' Piotr said. 'What's making that?'

'The Shades at work, I presume,' Ben suggested.

'Yes, that would be a good guess,' the Doctor agreed.

Those noises terrified all of them. Nobody could tell where they were coming from, or how far were they. Some seemed to be miles away, but powerful enough to reach them. Some appeared to murmur right next to them. It was impossible to identify their source. Only the throbbing pain the voices caused in the back of their head, suggested that those are not friendly and ready to strike.

'Doctor, can't you make some light with that screwdriver of yours?' Ben asked.

The Time Lord activated the device, and a tiny green light blinked in the blackness. It was equal to nothing.

'That's all.'

'Can it ionise the air, like in a thunderstorm?' Sam asked.

'Sure, it can. But what good would that do?'

'Great! Then we only need some pointy metal objects. Ben, Piotr your knives. Bullets in your pistols.'

'I see!' The Doctor said, impressed. 'Brilliant! Amy, your hairpins, as many you have.'

'Why do you need it?' she asked.

'Just watch.'

All the objects were thrown to the ground.

'Why didn't they take our guns?' Ben wondered while he emptied the magazine.

'Because you wouldn't have any use of it,' the Doctor said and activated the screwdriver.

Soon, light-blue glow surrounded the objects. It wasn't much, but it was more than enough to light



an area of a few square meters.

'What is it, Doctor? How did you do that?' Amy admired the phenomenon.

'You should read more, Amy. This is St. Elmo's fire. Well, something like that.'

The next sound startled everyone for a moment.

'JOHN BONHAM, MOBY DICK!' Sam shouted as his throat bore.

'No, it's Herman Melville!' the Doctor said angrily. 'And why did you do that?'

'You should watch more concert DVD-s, Doctor. And you should just simply listen. No echo, though I was counting on it. We're not in a cave.'

'I know. Look, over there. The light just stops. It doesn't fade away. We're covered by the void.'

'At least it looks like they need us alive,' Ben sighed.

Suddenly, all the voices stopped. The only remaining sound was a deep, evil laugh.

'Your companions are brighter this time. Brighter than the lost girl who died in battle. They managed to come over my domain much faster.'

'Now who's voice would that be?' Piotr asked.

The area of light widened a bit, but it didn't disappear completely. But it made visible two pillars with amphoras on top of them. Both made of stone. Most likely carved of the rock they were standing on.

'Oh, guys!' The Doctor sighed. 'I think you're about to meet the devil.'

## Chapter 7 - Return of the Beast

When Frank woke up, he also saw some disturbing things. As a matter of fact, he thought he was still dreaming when he looked out the window. And his heart almost stopped when he noticed someone outside.

'Oh, no!' he muttered and ran out from the cockpit.

He ran down to the hangar, out through the opened door, to the front of the ship, and he shouted.

'Gladys, stop!!!'

The girl didn't move any further, just slowly turned around. Frank ran to her and grabbed her gently. She was white as a sheet and shaking.

'Don't you remember the instructions? Stay inside the ship.'

'Yes... but... the mountain. It is just...'

'I know. I know.'

He hugged Gladys and looked up. The picture was horrifying. A third of the sierra was like it has never been there. There was nothing just a chunk of rock.

'Come on!' Frank nudged her. 'He could signal at any time.'

\*\*\*

Around the others, the darkness started to dissolve, and they could see where they were. They stood on what was left of the mountain. Behind the pillars, the abyss gaped leading to the bottom of the valley. Over the chasm, a tall wall was reaching the sky as a monument of the cliffs once stood there. The Doctor put on his 3D-glasses and bleeped around with his screwdriver.

'Doctor, what did you mean the devil?' Amy asked nervously.

'I think you're about to see it.'

A moment later, a huge, grey cloud arose from the depth and slowly took the form of a great horned beast.

'You got to be kidding me!' Ben said. 'It's real! The devil really exists.'

'Don't fall for that! He is nothing more than a simple void creature sitting in a void-ship. Well..., counter-void-ship. Well..., reality-ship made in the void. Of its hull, we can only sense a strong and weird sort of magnetic field, sealing his bubble universe off this world. He only plays with that to form the iron dust of the mountain into this beastie.'

'All right then!' Sam smiled. 'Hi, Karellen!' He waved.

'Seriously?' Ben asked. 'You're facing Satan, and that's your reaction?'

'Not Satan. Karellen. You've got to know the classics.'

'Shut up, Sam!' The Doctor said strictly. 'It doesn't make him any less real, and we're still in mortal danger. I've met with his real form earlier, haven't I?' he turned to the cloud-beast and started smiling just like Sam. 'So, hello again!'

'Silence, Time Lord!' the beast roared. Everyone shivered for a moment, except for the Doctor.

'Silence? Me? I even talked to your empty shell. What makes you think, you can shut me up? Especially now, when we can talk face to... well... fake-face. So, why didn't you kill us so far? You had dozens of opportunities?'

The Doctor beeped again with the screwdriver.

'I want you to wish for death. You will suffer for what you did to me!'

'If I got a penny every time I hear that! You got angry a bit over me throwing you into that black hole, I get it. How did you get out?'

'Over the event horizon, the gravity is so great that I was pressed through the dimensions until I reached the void.'

'This can't be right,' Ben said. 'The gravity is really gigantic, but it is increasing on every fraction of a nanometre. You would have been ripped apart. You would be pressed through atom-by-atom.'

'Only if I consisted of matter. From the void, it was quite easy to open a doorway to this universe. I just had to find a proper place and time. And the view from outside is quite splendid. I know every step you took and will take Doctor.'

He beeped once more.

'Oh, I don't think so. You might see everything from the outside, but as soon as you entered you changed that everything, otherwise you would know that Rose is just lost but she didn't die in battle. And you were so eager to find me you forgot to look properly around,' he turned back and shouted. 'Run!'

Everyone turned their backs to the beast and ran away. But after twenty meters another surprise came. One second, they were running on the mountainside, the next, they were inside the Shark where the TARDIS stood. They only heard the devil's angry roar and Gladys's voice.

'They are on board!'

The Doctor hit the door-close-button, the ship shook a bit and started to elevate.

'How did you get here?' Ben asked Gladys dumbfounded.

'I called them,' the Doctor replied.

\*\*\*

*'We run. Hold on, we're landing. Just have to do one thing before we do.' The Time Lord picked up the TARDIS phone. 'This is the Doctor, calling the Hammerhead Shark. Come in!'*

*'We're here!' Frank said.*

*'Listen! We're about to crash in a minute. When it happens, we will probably be taken captive and taken away. After that, you come, pick up the TARDIS, and go back where you are now. Wait for my signal. I send a little software to your TARDIS. Start it, and the whole ship turns invisible.'*

*'Got it!'*

*'Great! Bye!' Then the TARDIS crashed.*

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*The Doctor put on his 3D-glasses to see where the void was. Big clouds waved over the valley, but there was none on their side. So he beeped around with his screwdriver.*

*'We received the signal!' Gladys said.*

*'I see. It also contains a flight path. Uh, that's a bit narrow.'*

*'Can you do it?'*

*'Yes, I can. I just have to be really careful.'*

\*\*\*

*'Great! So we ran away from the devil!'*

*'Not just yet!' the Doctor said and hurried up to the cockpit.*

*As he ran, he took off the glasses, and he was already shouting from the corridor.*

*'Frank! You might want to put these on.'*

*By the time he finished the sentence, the glasses were already in front of Frank's eyes. The suddenly changed picture shocked the pilot.*

*'Whoooo!' he cried and fully turned the steering wheel.*

*The ship almost flew into a great, black, blurry claw. Frank diverted in the final moment. But it wasn't the last attack. Void tentacles came from behind the beast trying to catch the ship. The others tried to get up to the cockpit, but it was quite difficult since the Shark was thrown around, like a leaf in the wind. When all were on the bridge, Frank yelled back.*

*'Jenny, you're the best pilot. Don't you want to take the wheel?'*

*'No time for thaaaaat!' the Doctor screamed. At the last word came another turn. 'That's it. You can do it. I trust you, Frank.'*

*'What are you doing? What are we fleeing from?' Gladys asked while she was trying to hang onto a chair.*

*'From the void!' Jenny answered. 'See those tiny glows? If we hit those, we simply disappear.'*

*'But I can see them fully,' Frank wheezed. 'They are everywh... nowhere. They are gone. What*

happened?'

'By the element of surprise, we escaped,' the Doctor stated. 'Now, we need to get to space and to lightspeed immediately.'

'Right then! Everybody strap in. Frank, head for the sky and floor it!' Ben said strictly.

'Wha', wait just a minute, cap!'' stopped Piotr. 'Doctor, sure it would be great to run away that fast, but I don't plan to spend the upcoming weeks under shit-loads-of-Gs thrust. We have inertial dampeners, but not that good.'

'Me neither. I said immediately,' replied the Doctor.

'Besides the fact that the Shark is not capable of that, or even if the TARDIS is, getting squashed by the G-forces is not on my agenda either.'

'The TARDIS could do something better. If internal dimensions would expand beyond the police box, then, in theory, it could warp space.'

'What?!' freaked out Ben. 'Are you telling me the Cellar could have warp-drive us home all along?'

'If only we had a direction,' Sam said sarcastically.

'Of course, not!' spoke up the Doctor. 'This isn't Star Trek. It couldn't maintain a warped-space bubble to push the ship through interstellar space. If the TARDIS's internal dimensions leaked for that long, it would unravel the fabric of the cosmos. But for a very short time, it could form a sort of space-time-chute. Driving the Shark down it could propel us to lightspeed in a minute without actual G thrust. Or at least close to it.'

Very, very confused looks made the Doctor's audience after that presentation. Sam pretended to draw in the air, then mimed squashing, then dropped his hand disappointedly.

'Nope! I can't imagine how that works.'

'No need! Just cross your fingers it works,' the Doctor said and ran off to the TARDIS.

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In a minute, the Hammerhead Shark was storming through the blackness of space, and the crew had a moment for brainstorming.

'Okay! How do we fight him?' Ben asked the basic question. 'Ideas?'

'We don't!' the Doctor said. 'We run. We can't fight.'

'What? We will run for the next seven days until we jump?'

'No! We will run for the next two hours. After that, they catch up with us.'

'How could they possibly do that! I thought we are flying at light speed!' Sam protested.

'Only almost light speed. Since their laws of physics is a bit different from our own, practically

anything would be possible. But they have to adapt at some level to be here, so I would guess they could come after us exactly at light speed. When we ran away, we had the element of surprise. We gained some advantage, but I think they will catch up in two hours.'

'So that's the great plan? Sit here and wait for death?' Ben asked with disappointed.

'No, the great plan is to cut the communication between the two TARDISEs and escape with mine.'

For a few moments, the crew remained quiet like they were waiting for the Doctor to think of a better solution, but that didn't happen. Sam finally broke the silence.

'I'm a bit disappointed, you know. The legends we heard at Torchwood told us about a mighty Time Lord, who would defeat even the most fearsome monsters, not a runner.'

'What do you expect me to do?!' the Doctor shouted fiercely at Sam. 'These creatures came from beyond this universe. They are out of the limits of my knowledge. They literally don't exist in our universe, and how do you kill something that doesn't even exist?'

'How do you get killed by something doesn't even exist?' Sam replied.

'It makes you equal with itself.'

'Oh,' Sam swallowed, 'I see.'

'Actually, I think we can kill it,' Frank said.

'How?' the Doctor suddenly turned to him.

'Have you noticed the glows in the void?'

'Yes,' the Doctor said, 'it is a light phenomenon indicating the real-matter becoming void-matter.'

'Was it only familiar to me? I mean we are usually inside the ship while it's flying, but that wasn't the first time we separated. Once or twice, we all saw the ship from outside in flight. So, you've got to recognise those lights.'

It seemed like it would ring a bell to Piotr and Jenny, but still very silently. The Doctor's eyes, on the other hand, widened.

'That's it! Frank, you're a genius.'

'I'm not sure I get it,' Amy said, confused.

'The only thing in this universe what can cause them harm is what's came from another universe. Particles, travelling between the universes right across the void, affect the void. And the antiparticles...'

'Neutralise them,' Ben said. 'Nice! Why aren't these particles affect us?'

'They appear in total vacuum. The void in our universe is basically total vacuum. They can appear right on top of the void particles. And this ship just happens to be collecting these come-and-go antiparticles. All we have to do is collect enough and shove it down their throat.'

'Brilliant. How do we do that?'

'I knew reversed psychology would work somehow.' Sam said happily.

The Doctor just waved him off and started telling the plan.

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*First, we need to collect the antimatter to a proper container. For that, we must divert them at the end of the Shark's wings. I need a volunteering engineer, say, Piotr, who will build three devices for that after I showed him how with the first.*

'So tell me, Doctor,' Piotr said while the Time Lord was assembling the first device, 'when we pump the antimatter into the void-creatures, won't that cause a huge explosion?'

'I don't really know what will happen, but there is a chance for something bad for health. Explosion, implosion, rapture in space-time. Something, but don't worry. The TARDIS's extended shield will protect us. I'm rather worried about that planet.'

'We will be two billion kilometres away. It must be enough.'

'Let's hope. Plus, I have a plan for minimising the radius.'

\*\*\*

*I'm going to need a crew on the bridge. Until the confrontation, you will need to keep an eye on everything.*

'Speed and course?' Ben asked.

'Speed is 99.8 % light speed, we are maintaining course,' Amy read up the data. 'According to the calculations, we will be in the most deserted area of the system.'

'Great! Status of the void ship?'

'They are approaching at 100% light speed. They'll catch us in 82 minutes,' Gladys got the readings from the sonic-screwdriver-boosted radar.

'I'm gonna kill the Doctor for assigning me this boring job.'

'Amy, in 82 minutes, we will cry for a bit of boredom,' Ben sighed.

\*\*\*

*Of course, the collectors have to be placed to the end of the wings. Piotr put proper clamps on them so it shouldn't be a problem. Getting to the bars, on the other hand, will be a bit tricky. But don't worry. Those hooks, on the top, for the space trucking worker's safety ropes can keep you safe as well.*

'I love this TARDIS and its extendable air shield!' Sam said happily as he was walking from the blue box to the top-left wing across the hull of the Hammerhead Shark. 'We are taking a spacewalk on a ship flying almost at lightspeed without any kind of protective clothing. This is great!'

'Yeah! It is! I think I'm the first who actually smokes in space,' Piotr said.

He was really nervous. He was breathing in the smoke like an industrial vacuum cleaner. If Frank was worried, he didn't show it at all. Jenny just laughed. She probably enjoyed this work even more than Sam. Meanwhile, the Doctor was working on a bigger device inside the TARDIS.

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*Finally, my TARDIS will be busy defeating the enemy, your wings will help her with that. But the Shark must remain nimble when it comes to manoeuvring, and its original turning nozzles will make it sluggish. The Cellar, however, could deal with it. I will need a pilot for her. The obvious choice is another Time Lord.*

The crew in the Cellar couldn't hear anything but Jenny's screaming with the Chameleon Arch on her head.

'What are you doing to her?' Ben shouted angrily.

'Chameleon arch,' the Doctor said, 'it is designed to transform a Time Lord to a different life form. But if we focus the transformation on the brain; it can make certain connections between the brain cells, which will give you the impression that you've learned to fly a TARDIS. Basically a memory implant.'

The arch finally turned off. Jenny fell to her knees, wheezing. Ben knelt next to her.

'Are you all right?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I just need to catch my breath.'

'And?'

'I can't fly this thing.' She stood up and looked at the Doctor resentfully.

'What? Why?' The Time Lord was quite surprised. 'It should have worked.'

'It did. But the TARDIS should be flown by six pilots. You only gave me the instructions, but not your centuries of experience. I can't fly it on my own.'

'Doctor, actually...'

'Forget it, Sam!'

'You don't even know what I want to say.'

'You want to say you want to be Jenny's co-pilot.'

'Hm. It seems you really don't know. I want Jenny to be my co-pilot.'

'No, no, no. Definitely, you will be the co-pilot,' Jenny protested.

'Taking turns?' Sam suggested.



'Kids, stop!' The Doctor cut the argument. 'Jenny, you can do this on your own.'

'Why can't you trust me?'

The Doctor struggled to keep in a loud outburst. Instead, he grabbed Sam's arm and dragged him away from the others.

'Because you're a psychopath and obsessed with alien technology. Highly dangerous combination. And you killed my friend. That's why.'

'Borderline autistic, maybe, but that's not the point. First, I have a very good reason to bury my emotions for anything human, but I still think alien tech is cool. Second, Ben shot Jack Harkness first, I knew he won't really die, plus..., plus...' It was clear that a big battle was going on in Sam's head. He finally gave a surrendering sigh and took a letter from his pocket. 'Plus this. Damn it, I didn't want to show this to anyone.'

The Doctor took the letter. First, he just examined it. It was obvious to him that the paper and the writing were at least five years old. But its content was rather odd.

*"This ship and everything on it belongs to you and you only. You five and the two more, who will join you later on your journey."*

*PS: Meaning, when the time comes, and you escape into the ship from the cybermen, toss Captain Jack Harkness out."*

'What is this?'

'I found this the morning when we began to work with the ship. The postscript is my handwriting. That's why I was calm during this whole adventure. I still have to write these lines, and if anything serious would come up on the road, I think I would warn myself. This has to happen, and I can promise you won't be disappointed in me. Are we okay?'

The Doctor couldn't say a word. He only sighed a silent 'yes' and nodded.

'Great!' Sam said and headed back to the console.

'One more thing! What's the Great Flood of '99?'

That question surprised both Ben and Sam. They looked at each other, then loud laughter burst out of them. The Doctor couldn't be more confused.

'Did I say something funny?'

'Never mind that, Doctor!' Ben said. 'Just make me another pilot!'

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*When it's all done, we can prepare for battle.*

'How are we with time?' the Doctor asked on the Shark's bridge.

'Still got 19 minutes,' Gladys said.

'No time to lose then. It probably will be enough. I will be in the TARDIS blowing up a balloon, we will communicate via radio.'

'Good luck, Doctor!' Ben said.

'You too!'

The Time Lord turned around and walked out from the cockpit. Amy immediately jumped up and followed him.

'Hey! Wait for me!'

'Where are you going?'

'To the TARDIS.'

'Amy, you can't come now,' the Doctor said sadly.

'Why?' She was quite disappointed.

'We are about to explode the biggest antimatter bomb the world has ever seen, inside a counter-voidship after crashing into it deliberately. And the TARDIS will be the absolute centre of the explosion. I don't even have the chance to predict the consequences, but we have to do this to stop one of the deadliest forces breaking into this universe. So it's not safe.'

'Nowhere will be safe!' she protested.

'The Cellar. It will be. That's the safest possible spot. Go and stay there. Trust me, I know.'

'Fine,' she sighed, 'I go just to comfort you. But I know all will be just fine.'

'Good,' the Doctor said and went towards the stairs. At halfway down, he stopped and turned back and ran to hug Amy. 'You will be okay. I promise. Take care!'

He held the girl for a couple seconds then ran down the stairs. Amy looked after him surprised and a bit suspicious. This emotional breakout was quite unusual for the situation. Pretty soon, she also went and climbed down into the Cellar.

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In a minute, the Doctor reported from the radio.

'Begin collecting.'

'I need to see this,' Ben said and ran out from the bridge. The others in the cockpit followed him.

They went up to the common room. After the Doctor turned on the collecting machine, four force-fields tubes were binding together the ship's wings and the TARDIS. A bigger one came out from the box, which just simply faded away. Their places were indicated by green arctic-light-like glows. It looked like if the Shark would have collided with a huge jellyfish. Quite soon after the light-tentacles appeared, Ben noticed something disturbing.

'Erm... Doctor? What's that grey membrane starting to cover my whole ship?'

'Oh, don't worry about that! That's our weapon, the antimatter. It's sealed between two layers of magnetic fields. Nothing can get in or out in that field from anywhere. Except for my machine. Elemental anti-particles from it will expand the field.'

'So it will be a great positron field.'

'Way cooler than that. I said elemental particles. The basic building blocks of every reality and, based on what we have seen, of the stuff between them. It is anti-quark-gluon-plasma.'

'What?!' Piotr shouted stunned, but Ben, Gladys and Frank didn't understand a word.

'What the hell is that?' Frank asked.

'The universe consisted of that in the first tiny fraction of a second of its life,' Piotr said. 'That won't just tear down electrons from the core. It will turn every form of matter into pure energy.'

'We will give the devil a taste of the power of Creation,' the Doctor's laugh sounded almost evil.

'Carpet bombing,' Ben translated it not calmly at all. 'Doctor, I know it is important but is there any chance of avoiding martyr death?'

'Technically, we will be inside a bubble universe, inside a bubble universe. God knows what will happen. Our chance of survival is 50 per cent.'

'Either we survive or not. Great to hear,' Ben replied ironically.

'Yes, but I have a reason to be optimistic.'

'What would that reason be?'

'I can't tell you that. Sorry.'

'Of course not,' the captain snorted and threw away the radio.

\*\*\*

After fifteen minutes, nothing could be seen from the Shark just a big grey egg ball. But the counter-void-ship was only a few hundred miles behind. On a cosmic scale, that's spitting distance. It was time to spring into action.

'Jenny, are you ready?' the Doctor radioed down to the Cellar.

'All set.'

'Ready for battle. It's amazing knowing the meaning of all these buttons and levers.' Sam almost exploded of joy.

'Then invert that chute, and let them crash into us.'

'Won't that obliterate us in a nanosecond?' Ben asked.

'Off-universe physics, Captain! Once they hit our balloon they will halt on the spot the same way they accelerated on the spot.'

'Just a sec,' Sam said. 'Jenny, press that one.'

'No, I won't. That's the co-pilot's job.'

'Which you are.'

'You are my co-pilot.'

'Oi!' Amy shouted. 'Stop it, you big babies.'

She pressed the button, and they could already hear [Emperor Ming's evil laugh](#) and the main riff right after that.

'Amy is the co-pilot,' Sam noted. Jenny agreed with a nod. He pressed a couple buttons, and the ship turned around. He radioed up to attic-TARDIS. 'Right then Flash Doctor! We are on. Give them he... something nasty!'

The inverse chute stopped the Shark. The hit followed so fast the crew couldn't even process it, they just all found themselves on the floor. The magnetic fields started to press against each other. In the battle of the elements, the contours of the void ship glared up. On that part of the covered Shark which got through the Doctor started to release the antimatter through tiny, quark-size holes. Due to the elimination of the void particles and the inter-dimensional antiparticles, the surface of the shield shined like magnesium fire. Soon the whole ship was through. The void creatures kept it under constant siege, but they couldn't get through. They simply turned into radiation.

Ben, Gladys and Frank watched the events from the cockpit. But there wasn't too much to see.

'Doctor, are you sure it is working?' Ben asked. 'We can't see a thing.'

'Sensors say it's working. We are good. ... That is not.'

'What's not?'

The next minute, the whole ship-formation shook just when the battle theme began.

'Oh, we are so in harmony with music?' Sam cheered.

'Cellar! What's happening?' the Doctor said on the radio. 'My sensor's gone blind.'

'Attic, I report the wine's about to be drinkable; you should get ham down here befo...'

'Stop this rubbish!' Amy yelled at him and stepped to the TARDIS's screen. 'He wants us to check your sensor.'

'Guess what! I already did.'

'There is nothing on the screen.'

Jenny helped Amy out. She pressed a couple buttons, and the image appeared on the monitor.

'There you go. The TARDIS extrapolated the picture from the... data... What the hell?'

'What?' Sam also asked, surprised, but he looked at another indicator.

He knew the TARDIS can show more than images. The girls looked at the screen, but they couldn't believe their eyes.

'Doctor, something grabbed your ship,' Jenny gulped.

'What? What do you mean grabbed?' the Time Lord asked.

'We are sending you the pictures.'

It looked like a giant invisible fist, in a raggedy glove made of light, would have taken hold the TARDIS and tried to crash it like a tin can. The antimatter kept burning it, but more and more void stuff came to feed it through a hole on the shield.

'Oh, grabbed, I see. That's not good.'

'HA...HA...HA... You can't defeat me, Doctor!'

'The mighty beast, I presume. Do you like the balloon I got for you?'

'Nice trick, but it won't help you for long. As you said, an idea can escape, but not only that. Plenty of your enemies wait inside the void to tear you apart. I'm going into that white hole, and you're coming with me.'

'Yeah, but I'm riding with you. If you want to quote me, be precise!'

On the lower levels, the others were listening to the conversation tensely. Amy was at the edge of desperation.

'No, Doctor. You can't go like that.'

'He won't,' Piotr said on the bridge and jumped up from his seat. He went to the wing controls and ripped up a panel.

'What are you doing?' Ben asked.

'Turning the safety off and set the antimatter collectors to maximum.'

'How do you know it will do that?' Frank wondered.

'I knew it would increase the wing acceleration dangerously, but now I know how. I always hoped I can avoid this, but since we won't move... Done. Doctor, turn on your machine!'

'Still can't tell what your plan is,' Ben said.

'Popping the balloon,' the Doctor said. 'Piotr are you mad? This will erase this whole system if we are lucky.'

'The beast included. Shall I remind you, our job is right now to stop him?' Piotr said.

'Meaning stop a war, the end of the universe, or worse,' Ben reasoned more. 'We don't have the luxury to worry about a barely habited solar system.'

'Aaargh, you're right!' the Doctor burst out. 'I hate these situations!'

The Time Lord slowly staggered to the door in the strongly shaking TARDIS. He opened it and fell to the ground. He rummaged out his screwdriver from his pocket and pointed at the machine.

'Taste this, Beasty!'

He activated the screwdriver and turned on the collector. The green force field appeared again, and anti-plasma torrent got pumped into the bulb. The outer magnetic field couldn't hold the fast increasing antimatter mass. It started to fade away, then disappeared. All the particles were free to annihilate anything in their way. Their collision with the void caused the biggest explosion man has ever seen. Its radius covered almost the whole star system. The three ships were shaking as if struck by an earthquake for minutes. All the crew fell to the ground and covered their eyes because blinding light flooded everything, even inside the areas without windows. Then, all of a sudden, the shaking stopped, and slowly the visibility normalised.

When everything seemed to have calmed down, Ben carefully opened his eyes and looked around. The others on the bridge fell out of their chairs, but they were OK and standing up. The captain was the only one who fastened his seatbelt, and he held tight to the arms of the chair.

'Is this it? Are we in hell yet?' he asked.

The Doctor raised his head but didn't stand up immediately.

'I doubt it. I don't really believe in that stuff, but if I would, I think it would hurt more than this.'

'Comforting. So what happened?'

The Doctor slowly got up and lurched to the consoles. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the data.

'Everything is in its place,' he said happily. 'The whole solar system is intact. Brilliant! The explosion happened only in the bubble universe. Only photons pressed onto the surface of this one. That's why there was light inside the ship. We were protected in normal space, but still the centre of the explosion, so the blast wave caught us a bit.'

'Are we okay then?' Gladys asked trustingly.

'No, we're not!' Sam ruined the moment while he and the others in the Cellar tried to stand up, hanging onto the console.

'What do you mean not?' the Doctor asked, surprised. 'We are perfectly okay. The explosion even closed the hole. We couldn't be more okay.'

'As I said, to your lovely companion, while I was talking absolute nonsense, I was checking the sensors. I mean the proper sensors, not that useless eye-candy up there and I found...'

'Sam, you should see this,' Jenny interrupted.

Sam checked the monitor. The countdown went crazy. It jumped between random values on a monthly scale.

'Still, think it's useless?'

'Yes. I think it's a side effect.'

'Of what?' the Doctor asked and activated the sensors, but he didn't have time to check the readings.

The counter hit zero, and the time rotor began to move. The TARDIS made the whirring takeoff-noise. Both of them.

'What's happening?' Amy asked, scared.

'That's what I wanted to tell you! For some time, the capsules aren't just simply talking to each other on a subconscious level. They are shouting. But not with...'

He couldn't finish the sentence. Everyone fell. The Hammerhead Shark and the blue box separated and flew towards different directions like they were rocks thrown away.

'I should have known if I mess with the safety I've definitely got to live through the worst dead duck.' Piotr whined.

'Only it's real this time,' Gladys said.

'Frank, can't you use the wings to stabilise us.'

'I'm on it.'

Meanwhile, in the Cellar, Amy was panicking.

'Doctor? What's happening?' she shouted.

'Amy, calm down. You have to be brave now. But trust me...'

The transmission suddenly ceased. The ships faded into the time vortex. All that could be heard was static noise on both ends.

'Oh, Amy, I'm so sorry,' the Time Lord sighed and sat down leaning to the corridor rail.

When the Shark stabilised, Amy jumped up from the floor and ran to the consoles. She started to push every button around the communication panel.

'Doctor! Come in! Say something!' her voice became desperate.

'I don't think we need this kind of music right now,' Jenny said.

'Yeah,' Sam nodded with a faint voice and turned off the player.

They could see something glint on Amy's face.

'Doctor, don't do this to me! Give me something!' She finally burst out in tears. 'Don't leave me

here!'

Amy collapsed and couldn't stop crying. Sam squatted next to her and placed his hand on her shoulder, to try comforting her.

'Get off me!' she yelled.

Sam shook, frightened and quickly got up.

'Come on!' Jenny said to him. 'She needs to be alone.' They went upstairs and left Amy on the TARDIS floor. When they were in the Shark, Sam concluded his letter.

'And thus we were seven. I didn't see that coming.'

'You couldn't have.'

'Yes, I could have. I should have.'

Far away in time and space inside the blue box TARDIS, the Doctor was also sitting on the ground with his head in his hands. He suspected this would happen. Sam's letter clearly said five plus two. He couldn't risk Amy's life, and he was definitely sure the Beast had plans for him and his ship. She couldn't be in there. If only he could...

Then he suddenly realised.

'The other one is listening in.' He jumped to the console and opened a random communication channel to anything but the Cellar.

'Amy!'

'Doctor!' Amy raised her head. 'Is that you?'

'I know you can hear me, but you can't answer. I just wanted to tell you that everything is gonna be fine, and whatever it takes I will find you. Wherever you are, whenever you are. I find you!'

In that exact moment when he finished the sentence, he almost frightened to death and jumped a few steps back. But the cause of his fright was only an envelope hanging from the roof on a string. It seemed it was attached to a timer, so it would drop exactly at the proper moment.

The Doctor took the envelope, opened it and read the message inside.

*Dear Doctor!*

*Thank you for your kind words. They kept me going in the first weeks. The others suggested writing to you. They like sending letters to each other and the past themselves. I just wanted you to know that you were right. I was fine. The crew turned out to be a good company, and we had great adventures together.*

*You don't have to worry about me. We will meet very soon.*

*Amy*



'He-he!' the Doctor giggled. Then he read the postscript, which was Sam's handwriting.

*P.S. I told you, you can trust me.*

'Sam, you cheeky...' he laughed relieved and put the letter away.

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When Frank entered the common room upstairs, he found Ben standing in front of the window staring at the way too distant stars. Behind him, on the desk, there was a bottle of whisky and a glass. When he noticed the door opening, he turned around, filled the glass and pushed it towards Frank.

'Don't you want to drink?' Frank asked and picked up the glass. 'You look like crap.'

'I feel like crap,' the captain answered and drank about a decilitre from the bottle. 'Situation?'

'After the jump, the clock went back to normal, so we still have six days till the next one. As you can see, we landed in no man's land. Between galaxies. Exploration teams are set.'

'Good. Did you put Amy on duty yet?'

'Not yet. Gladys had to give her tranquillizer to calm her down and make her sleep. I think she overreacted a bit. There must be a reason for this. When she gets better, I'll try to find it out.'

'Good.'

Ben nodded. He took the bottle and had another sip. Then he started shouting.

'Damn it, after five years roaming, we finally had the chance to go home, and it slipped away! And we don't even know why!'

'Well, Sam has a theory.'

'About what doesn't he have? Still, it might be correct.'

'The TARDISEs are under an outer influence. While we were happy about surviving the explosion, they were communicating with a third party.'

'So what?'

'Just look at the facts. The Doctor runs into the Beast an old foe of him, coming from the void with a smaller army. And he happens to find himself on a ship fuelled by anti-particles travelling between universes, the only weapon effective against void creatures. You think it's a coincidence?'

'Well, to think of it, given we can't find our home planet, and we live in a bloody big universe, it's a bit weird that in the whole space-time continuum we bump into each other at the right time and space. Your theory is...'

'I don't think we are jumping randomly. I think we are being controlled by someone, both TARDISEs. Don't know by whom. Every time we go somewhere, we do an awful lot a pirating in order to survive, I admit that. But while we are doing that, we quite often also end up saving some

folks and beating bad guys. As I heard the stories, the Doctor is the same. Do you think it's all just an accident? We can't be that unlucky.'

'Lovely idea. So our getting home would depend on the whim of terrible power, which can control TARDISEs. I think our chances got a lot worse.'

'I'm not so sure about that.'

'What do you mean?'

'When you went to the valley on the planet, Sam and Amy came back.'

'Really? I don't remember they left my sight.'

'Thought so. I believe they came from our future. They probably left a message for the Doctor or something like that. Sam worked it out quite well, they even dressed as they were today. But he wasn't careful enough.'

'What did he forget this time?'

'That you were hiking and he was wearing his boots. But the future Sam accidentally took his everyday shoes.' Then suddenly he realised something. 'No. Wait... It was deliberate,' he laughed. 'Sam, you cheeky bastard!'