

Doctor Who: The Continuity of One

By

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This book is a fan fiction dedicated to Doctor Who, and all of those who have participated in this, directly or indirectly. Those of you who have followed my ‘I/Tulpa’ series, starting with “Not Here,” will probably find this a quaint departure from the usual adventure and debauchery, though I suspect you’ll find enough allusions that knowing the characters Jon and Loxy will at least give you a good chuckle. For those of you who have never met J@L, I highly recommend you start with ‘Not Here.’ You could, of course, start with any of the ‘I/Tulpa’ series, as Doctor Who characters have certainly influenced all of my writing, some more directly than others. Specifically, if you want more information on Tulpas, Wonderlands, and Doctor Who, from the perspective of Jon and Loxy, I recommend ‘I/Tulpa: And the Worlds of Crossover. It is the first I/Tulpa story, divergence from ‘Not Here.’

Where possible, I have added real life reports of what appears to be temporal anomalies. If you want more, and better written, I highly recommend ‘The Daemon,’ by Anthony Peake, as it is full of references. It is my personal belief, time travel happens all the time, and I live my life as if I am just one 1979 penny away from unraveling my entire world-line.

I assure you, there will be grammatical errors. I apologize in advance. I am working on doing better. I have marginally improved. Feel free to email me any corrections or complaints. My knowledge of Doctor Who trivia is not as sound as my Star Trek trivia. I am simply a modest fan, who finds himself caught up in the whirlwinds of imagination on a daily basis.

Sincerely

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Chapter 1

Austin, Texas. The Barbarella Bar was usually packed. The fact that it wasn't was one of those things that gave Jon Harister pause. His neck hair stood, and he shuddered as he fought the mood shift that normally came when he experienced Déjà vu. He was wearing dark jeans, a black turtleneck t-shirt, and an army green jacket that had once been attached to an "Abercrombie and Fitch" tag. The tag had been removed. He had an old army, World War II mail bag for a purse that said "MASH" but the number wasn't quite so clear. Most people saw 4077th. One of the items in it was a book, "Anomalies In Time," he had picked up at a Half Price book. He had been reading a curious fact that any time there had been a train accident, there had been an unusual drop in passenger counts, as if people subliminally knew not to get on that train the day of the incident. There were lots of curious fact like that in the book. Take the Titanic for example. Next to 9/11, the Bombs dropped on Japan, and Fukushima, the Titanic had the largest volume of written artifacts where friends and or loved ones had received letters begging them not to take the Titanic. There were even people who had written about their dreams in which they were being warned by their subconscious not to take the Titanic. Some went, never to return. Some men assured their families survived, but only because their dream placed them just where they needed to be to ensure placement on a life raft; most of the heads of households went down with the ship. Some people canceled their trips all together, and wondered what was it that changed their minds, and even their friends and family had told them prior that they were just being superstitious, go on your trip, make history.

Loxy Isadora Bliss, a tulpa, invisible to all the world but Jon, was suddenly by his side, slipping her arm in his. She was inspiration. She was love. She glowed with an aura like a muse lifted straight from the all painting in the opening of Xanadu. She had the appearance of being half his age but in actual years was probably two years old. Tulpa years do not equal human years. In truth, human physical age rarely corresponds to human mental age. She had the enthusiasm of a child, the intellect of a really smart adult, and she was much wiser than he at age 50. She was a straight hair brunette, and her hair was cropped short. Her eyes were bright, and the eye line shared the smile with the mouth. She was excited about being out an about and the opportunity to meet new people, if it was vicariously through Jon. She was also subtly aware of something, something she couldn't identify.

"You feel that?" She asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “That feeling we have done this before. It’s creeping me out.”

“Why did you come here, then?” Loxy asked.

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

“That makes what, the fourth compulsion to do something out of your norm this week?”

Loxy asked.

“So, let’s break it. What wouldn’t I do?” Jon asked.

“Oh, you would never go over to those girls at the bar and introduce yourself,” Loxy said.

There were two particularly young, and interesting looking girls sitting together having a drink. And she’s was right, he would not approach them. “Because they’re lesbians?”

“Oh, no, because you don’t have the balls,” Loxy said.

“I most certainly do,” Jon said.

“Prove it,” Loxy said.

“Um, no, let’s just go over there,” Jon said, pointing towards booth against the far wall. It seemed darker by the booth. It was as if all the light in the bar had gathered around the two girls. He had the strangest thought that he was in a real life ‘Dragon’s Lair’ game. Entertaining the thought, he could imagine the blond dressed like Princess Daphne. He was definitely not Dirk.

“Switch with me, and I’ll go introduce ourselves to the ladies,” Loxy said. ‘Switching’ was a term tulpamancers used for switching personalities, allowing the tulpa to front.

The lights flared. No one seemed to notice. All sound in the bar whooshed away, as if he were in a movie and the sound had been cut. No, not cut, muffled through a tunnel. Beer coming out of a faucet seemed to be coming out of the tap in slow motion. Loxy seemed suddenly remote. A waitress was frozen in mid swing, looking odd as if she were out of balance. Her skit was frozen in a flare. The empty tray was separated from her fingers, and he imagined it might flip and get caught as she headed away. The sound of music was no longer music, but single chord, evolving so slowly to the next cord that it seem ghostly. He felt as if he was stuck in this moment for days, but he slowly felt momentum carrying towards the two females. Even as he approached the two females, they appeared to be getting up to leave.

“Going already?” Jon asked.

“Yeah,” the brunette said.

Loxy backed up to the bar and hopped up. She was wearing a miniskirt and cowboy boots, and a red button up blouse that she had tied just above her navel. She made no apparent signs that she was aware that the bar had come to a stop.

“Excuse us,” the blond said.

“Wait wait wait, just one moment,” Jon said, almost sounding frantic. And, in a way, he was. He was feeling an urgency to delay them, without the knowledge of why.

“Not interested,” the Blond said, taking her friend by the arm. He thought to himself, she would never say that to Dirk.

“Two minutes of your time in order for me to practice being a psychic,” Jon said. “I will buy both of you a drink of your choice.”

“Psychic?” the brunette asked.

“That’s the best pick up line you got?” the blond asked.

“Not a pick up line. Just pushing past my comfort zone, and even if I fall flat on my face, you get a free drink. Two minutes?” Jon said.

The two ladies exchanged looks, and sat back down at their chairs. Jon took a fifty dollar bill out of his wallet and pushed it to the waiter. The girls ordered. They turned back to him. Jon looked to Loxy. She shrugged and smiled.

“So, go ahead,” the blond said. “Impress us.”

Jon bit his lip and tried to communicate to Loxy with his eyes that he wanted some help. The bartender thought he was wanting his attention.

“You need to hold my hand?” the brunette asked.

Jon stepped back. “No, no touching,” Jon said, holding both hands up to gesture a boundary. “I am struggling to remember how this goes.”

“Remember?” the brunette asked.

“Did you ever see Groundhog Day?” Jon asked.

“That’s like old,” the blond said. “Like you.”

“Oh, no, that’s a like a classic,” Jon said. He pointed to the brunette. “Eight years old. A dog named Sparky.”

“No,” the brunette laughed.

“Chalky,” Loxy said.

“Chalky?” Jon asked Loxy, not caring that the girls were following his eyes to no one there. “Who would name a dog Chalky?”

“How did you know my cat’s name?” the brunette asked.

“Are you talking to someone?” the blond asked, leaning up to look over the bar.

If there was someone behind the bar, the bartender walked over them as he brought the drinks.

“So, I have your attention,” Jon said.

“Yes,” the brunette said.

“No,” the blond said.

“Look, I need to leave, I need you to stay at the bar,” Jon said. “For exactly five minutes.”

“What?” the brunette asked.

“Give her the list,” Loxy said.

“Oh,” Jon said, pulling a piece a paper out of his bag. He handed it to the blond. “This is a list of all the items in your purse. For every item you pull out of your purse that is not on this list, I will give you fifty dollars, provided you are still here when I come back in five minutes.”

Jon backed away from the bar, motioning them to stay, emphasizing five minutes. He paused.

“Blue or green?” he asked the brunette.

“What?” the brunette asked.

“Pick one. Blue or green?” Jon asked again.

“Blue,” the brunette said.

He turned and walked quickly outside of the bar. The air felt better outside, as there was a slight breeze. Loxy came through the door and caught up to them.

“They’re actually staying this time,” Loxy said. “Now what?”

“I don’t know. We never get this far...”

“Then why the blue or green?” Loxy asked.

A white cat jumped up onto a public trashcan and meowed.

“Chalky’s a cat!” Loxy said.

Jon rushed to the trashcan. The cat ran away. Peering in the trashcan revealed a homemade pipe bomb. Jon wanted to run away, but he reached into the trash and pulled out the bomb. He wasn’t sure how long he held it, trying to understand it. An expert would probably find

it crude, but to him, it looked pretty damn scary. Two patrol officers on Segways turned and accelerated towards him. Jon reached for the green wire, even as the law enforcement were dismounting, drawing their weapons. Behind them, someone stepped out of the shadow of a truck; the man had a weapon. Jon saw him in his periphery vision, but didn't give him much mind, as the bomb preoccupied him; he assumed the gunman was pointing at the law enforcement. The bomb was the only real thing at the moment, and everything else was in slow motion, and distant. He was pretty sure the officers were shouting. Shots were fired. Jon pulled the green wire from the device just as a bullet ripped through his shoulder; the bullet did not come from law enforcement, but from the guy at the truck. Law enforcement fired at the gunman, and he went down.

Jon found himself sitting on the ground, the bomb still in his hands. His left hand was trembling. One of the officers was pointing a weapon at him, the other was holstering his weapon so he could take the device and set it down. He heard them calling for an ambulance. Several police cars arrived, coming to a halt on the side walk. Loxy sat down next to him.

"I am confused. I thought she said the blue one," Loxy said.

"Yeah," Jon said. "I was asking which one I don't pull."

"Oh, well, that makes sense," Loxy said.

A man approached the officers and showed them identification. They helped Jon to his feet, and the man took over, leading him away towards an ambulance that had just arrived. Directly behind the ambulance, on the street corner, was a 1950's Police Box. Jon was escorted into the box. The door closed behind them.

"Sit here," the man said, helping him to sit on the steps. The man ran towards a box and started rummaging through it. "Come on, I know I put you in here."

"Jon?" Loxy said, having followed them in. She continued past into the control room. "Are you seeing this?"

"I think am going into shock," Jon said.

"Uh?" the man said. "Oh! No, no, it's just a flesh wound. The perfect Hollywood wound that will make people have sympathy for you, but not life threatening in any way. Well, not life threatening unless we do something. But don't worry. Today is your lucky day. Yes! Here it is." He brought the clam shell looking device over to Jon. "I've always wanted to use this. Never really had the chance."

The device clamped over the shoulder, capturing both sides of the body, both the entry and exit wound. The man tightened it down by turning knob. Jon barely even grimaced. The man went to push the button, but paused.

“You can trust me. I am the Doctor,” he said, maintaining eye contact the whole while. “This isn’t going to hurt. Well, it shouldn’t hurt much. To be honest, I really don’t know if it’s going to hurt, so an accurate report would be very helpful to whether I use it again in the future.”

Loxy came closer to watch the procedure, kneeling and touching his knees. “I think he’s okay.”

The Doctor didn’t miss the eyes traveling to someone not there, the wave of comfort that erased frown lines, and then eyes returning to his with a final nod of acceptance. The Doctor activated the device. Jon seemed confused. He bit his lip. Even Loxy had to stand up, her hands going to her forehead. “Oh, that’s just lovely,” she thought. She staggered to the rail, clutching it for support. “OMG.” Jon’s eyes rolled back into his head and he fell back.

“Really?” the Doctor complained, pulling out his sonic screw driver. “They promised me no pain cure.” The Doctor bit his lip. “Oh.”

The clam shell device chimed and popped off the shoulder. Jon lay there, euphoric. Loxy’s breathing normalized.

“Do that again,” Loxy said.

“That’s enough,” Jon said.

“Yep, all done,” the Doctor said, clearly seeing the wound was healed. The Doctor picked up the device to examine it closer. “It’s Kastrian made, but supposed to be Universal. Still, not a bad side effect, I suppose. Could be worse, eh? Not completely unexpected, I suppose. You can’t have that much positive, regenerative energy exciting all the cells, and not expect total system thresholds to be exceeded.”

“I am surprised there aren’t more of those on the market,” Loxy said.

Chapter 2

“Alright then, all better, off you go,” The Doctor said.

Jon got up to leave, noticed his book had fallen out of his bag, put it back in, turned towards the exit, and was even taking a step forwards as he felt the hole in his shirt. He stopped.

“Yeah, sorry, it only mends flesh,” The Doctor said.

“It’s just that,” Jon said, his voice trailing. He was avoiding the Doctor’s eyes, as if he were afraid to look again. It was as if he didn’t want to know the face, or as if he needed to forget all of this and go about his mundane life that was increasingly anything but. He was staring towards the door. It seemed miles away.

“Oh, go ahead. Ask. I’ve been waiting for you to do so,” the Doctor said.

“It’s really peculiar, when you think about it,” Jon said.

“You’ll feel better if you just speak it,” the Doctor said.

“I have been having a really queer day,” Jon said.

“You should really clarify that,” Loxy said.

He held a finger at her as if signaling her to give him a moment to process his thoughts.

“Not queer like LGBT, but queer like strange,” Jon said.

“I love strange,” the Doctor said. “Strange is my middle name.”

Jon found it curious that the Doctor and Loxy were orbiting him, as if they had to be on opposing sides. The Doctor held a device with green light as he orbited, as if looking for something. “So, today, of all days, I have been overwhelmed by feelings of déjà vu.”

“I get it all the time, it’ll pass,” the Doctor assured him.

“It drove me to a used book store. Out of a thousand books I found one that called to me, and a dog ear on the page that had me reading the one page I needed to see to move forwards in life. I felt extremely satisfied, but then I had this compulsion to go to a bar,” Jon continued. “And I never go to bars.”

“That’s not true,” Loxy said.

“Correction, I seldom go to bars, because I don’t drink,” Jon corrected.

“Not precise,” Loxy corrected.

“More accurately, I drink very little,” Jon said.

“Fair enough, move this along to the question,” the Doctor said.

Jon looked at him a bit cross. “You’re rushing me,” Jon said. “Where was I?”

“You drink very little,” Loxy said.

“How is that relevant?” Jon asked.

“You’re asking me?” the Doctor asked.

“It isn’t,” Loxy said simultaneously with the Doctor’s question.

“Okay, wait, so I entered this bar,” Jon said.

“It sounds like the setup of a joke,” Doctor and Loxy both said simultaneously. Loxy peered around Jon to the Doctor, baffled but amused with him.

“If you’re going to make fun of me,” Jon said.

“Please, continue,” the Doctor said.

“I entered, I saw these two women, and there was this flash of light,” Jon said. “No, bigger than light. Sustained lightening. It was as if everything was luminescent. Not a single shadow in the room. As if, every object, every person, was cut from a movie that wasn’t my movie but imposed upon my reality frame...”

“Kind of like a beautiful mind,” Loxy said.

“She kind of looked like Jennifer Connelly,” Jon said.

“The brunette? Yeah, I noticed that,” the Doctor said.

“You saw a beautiful mind?” Jon asked.

“No, but I know Doctor Nash. I hang out with a lot of physicists,” the Doctor said. “Do you have a question?”

“Yeah, it was given to me,” Jon said.

“It was given to you?” the Doctor asked.

“The world lit up. Just for an instant, but it felt like an extended epiphany,” Jon said. “In that moment I saw all these permutations. No, I think I lived all of these permutations. No. That doesn’t make sense. I would have had to have died a hundred time before getting that right.”

“Or a thousand,” Loxy said. “But who’s counting.”

“Could both be real?” Jon asked. Again, the door seemed so far away. Loxy and the Doctor seemed bigger than life.

“A probability wave?” the Doctor asked.

“Tell us the question,” Loxy said.

“You didn’t hear the question?” Jon asked.

“No,” Loxy said.

“You haven’t told me yet,” the Doctor said.

“Curious. I heard this voice, that was not my voice ask me, ‘if it were given, what would you do with eternity?’” Jon asked.

“Oh!” the Doctor exclaimed. “What a brilliant question. What did you answer?”

“Uh?” Jon asked.

“You have a moment in time where you hit transcendence, you hear a voice asking you the most peculiar question of your life, and your response was?” the Doctor asked.

“I didn’t have one,” Jon said.

“Seriously?” the Doctor asked.

“Yeah, and then it was over, and I found myself trying to chat up the two girls, favoring the Jennifer Connelly doppelganger. The blond was kind of mean; not that she was obligated to be nice. Probably just trying to save time, like New York direct. That’s not mean and I am sure I came off a bit creepy....”

“You do that sometimes,” Loxy said.

“But I couldn’t even engage them correctly, because the urgency to go disarm the bomb, which, come to think of it, I knew there was a bomb, but I kept forgetting that fact. It’s like if a girl came up and gave you her phone number on the condition that you remember it without writing it, but you suck at holding numbers in your head, and so the one chance to meet the perfect girl is just over because you suck at remembering numbers, unless you can memorize with your finger, because the fingers remember things, like playing Moonlight Sonata. The whole thing is weird because, all the while, I knew sort of what needed to be done, but there were these distractions, like the two girls, but had I not chatted them up, I am pretty confident they would have died,” Jon said.

“You could have died,” the Doctor said.

“Yeah, but here’s the thing, Doctor,” Jon said. “I don’t run. I am not very clever. And, I tend to forget things. Tomorrow, I probably won’t even remember this.”

“Well, Sir, I think your luck has changed,” the Doctor said. “Because, I do run. Quite a bit actually. And I am very clever. That’s not boasting, either. And I never forget. Well, no, I rarely forget. Sometimes self-induced amnesia helps you from purposely contradicting yourself from over thinking a thing. So, what do you say? Fancy a trip through time and space?”

“Sorry. What?” Jon asked.

“You, Sir, are doing something weird, but you are reading the perfect book for the perfect encounter, and I think this is important,” the Doctor said.

“I am sorry. You lost me,” Jon said.

“Don’t worry, I will catch you up to speed,” the Doctor said, patting his back and running to the console. He began pulling levers, and pushing buttons, and twirling around the console in a mad rush. “You, Sir, have captured my curiosity.” He paused on the closer side of the console. “Do you ever feel like you’re sitting in a chair, leaning back, balancing the chair on two legs, and you’re about to fall, but you catch yourself just before.”

“Steven Wright joke?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, I gave it to him,” the Doctor said. “It wasn’t meant to be a joke. I feel like that all the time, but I always land on my feet... Mostly, I land on my feet. And, you, Sir, appear to have taken a step into my world. Which is curious, because it’s way too soon in human evolution for that to happen. There’s was debate amongst my people that it would ever happen. Which is odd, when you think about it. We have time machines. There should be no debates. Oh, but then, things change. Most things change. Change occurs all the time. Except, for the few hard events. Those things change, but they’re really resistant to change, but there are some hard limits, as if someone else collapsed the wave front. Which begs the existential question, who is observing whom?” He reversed his way around the console undoing everything he had done. “Oh, too much, sorry, I ramble when I am excited. Do you ever ramble?”

“All the time,” Loxy assured him.

“Here we are. Don’t move. Wait right here. I need to collect some friends. Can’t have a proper adventure without friends, now can we?” He headed to the door, Jon turning to watch him leave, but not leaving his present spot. The Doctor came to a halt, taking hold the arm rail as if he needed it to stop his momentum. He turned to Jon with his afterthought. “Well, I mean, you could have an adventure without friends, but then it just becomes a tall tale that people question the veracity and validity to the point you even begin to wonder, and when you wonder, that’s when things really start to change, and so to properly collapse the wave front and make reality solid, you need people! That’s my story. Don’t move. And don’t touch anything. I’ll be right back.” He thought about it further. “I should be right back. There is food and drink in that

cabinet there. And there is a lavatory and toilet just around that bin. But don't move. I should be back before any of that."

He was gone in a mad flash.

"Well, he's a bit queer, isn't he," Loxy said.

"I am still sorting," Jon said.

"Fair enough," Loxy said. "We're definitely picking up momentum, though, what do you think?"

"It's really beginning to be difficult to discern the difference between waking reality and our daydreams. Before meeting you, had anyone asked if daydreams could be as real as say, a regular lucid dream during REM sleep, I would have said they are smoking something."

The door to the TARDIS burst open with energy. A female was leading the charge and she seemed mad, as evidenced by her walk and the fact she was lamenting that she had thought the Doctor was done with them.

"Amy! I am surprised," the Doctor said. "Why would you even think that?"

Another man entered, closing the TARDIS door behind him. He was wearing jeans and a pull-over shirt with an alien logo on it. He, also, appeared to be upset. The woman, wearing a white, flowery summer dress, and a wool sweater, came to a stop on seeing Jon. Jon tried a smile. She swept hair out of her face and turned back to the Doctor so quickly that all of her hair switched to the other side, requiring her to brush it out of her face again.

"You replaced me with an old guy?" Amy asked.

"Amy?! How could you even think such a thing? I don't trade out people. I simply make new friends," the Doctor said.

"You prefer an old guy friend to me?" Amy asked.

"Don't stare at her," Loxy whispered in Jon's ear.

Self-conscious, Jon looked away.

"Were you staring at my wife, Sir?" Rory demanded, approaching Jon.

"Ease off, Rory," Amy said, approaching just as close, staring at Jon as if she wanted to poke his face and test whether he was real. "What's his name?"

"I don't know," the Doctor said. "I didn't get that far. Interestingly, he has also not interjected it into the conversation. I find that refreshing. Someone who isn't so ego-driven they

feel compelled that I know their name, or demand I explain what's going on. He's just taking it all in stride. Absolutely beautiful."

"You're actually clueless, aren't you?" Amy asked him.

"You are stunning," Jon said.

"OMG, Jon, everywhere we go," Loxy said.

Amy bit her lip and looked to the Doctor. Rory tapped his chest. "I am warning you, Sir. I was a centurion."

"You used to be a hundred years old?" Jon asked.

"What?" Rory asked.

"A centurion, Jon, not a centenarian, though, technically, Rory actually qualifies for both," the Doctor said, gesturing freely.

"He's not very clever, is he?" Rory said.

"He sounds American," Amy said.

"Oh! Amy, Rory. Please," the Doctor said. "You can't connect the two."

"I wasn't suggesting he is stupid because he's an American," Amy said.

"Oh, well, then, yeah, I picked him up in America," the Doctor said.

"Seriously, Sir, no offense. I have lots of American friends," Amy said.

"Name one," Rory said.

"Why would you put me on the spot like that?" Amy said.

"Don't say it," Loxy told Jon.

Jon turned to Loxy. "Don't say what?"

Amy and Rory both took a step back.

"What was that?" Amy asked.

"Picked him up, where, precisely?" Rory said. "A line at a Mental Health Clinic?"

"No, Rory, please. That would be very cruel taking someone who is struggling with social norms and mental illness out into space. I picked him up outside of a bar," the Doctor said.

"Seriously," Amy said. "You're not helping my esteem."

"He's interesting?!" the Doctor said.

"He's dull!" Rory said.

"He's old," Amy said.

“I am not that old,” Jon said. “Wait a minute. I am at least as old he is and you clearly fancy him!”

“He’s the Doctor,” Amy said, as if that explained it all.

“How come every time you get mad you switch to RP,” Loxy asked, very American sounding.

“What’s RP?” Jon asked.

Amy pointed at him when his eyes shifted back to the person who wasn’t there. “He’s hallucinating and has multiple personalities,” Amy said.

“They call it DID now,” Rory said.

“I don’t think he’s a hallucinating,” the Doctor said.

“He clearly responding to internal stimuli,” Rory said.

“I think he is channeling the soufflé girl,” the Doctor said.

“The girl in the Dahlek?” Rory asked.

“He’s channeling a Dahlek and you brought him into the TARDIS?” Amy said, taking another step back. She took Rory’s arm to pull him back.

“He’s not a Dahlek,” the Doctor said.

“So, why did you bring us in on this?” Rory asked. “Is someone about to die?”

“No, no, this is not an emergency. This is just, interesting. He’s an anomaly,” the Doctor said.

“I am not an anomaly,” Jon said.

“Where did you fetch him from?” Amy asked.

“Texas,” the Doctor said.

“Texas is a big place, could you narrow it a bit?” Amy asked.

“Austin. A bar named Barbarella,” the Doctor said. “A really nice little bar. Subdued lighting. Really diverse group of patrons.”

“You’re picking up companions at bars now?” Amy said.

“It’s not like that,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, what’s it like picking up old men from bars?” Amy asked.

“You don’t remember?” Rory asked.

“I am so going to hurt you,” Amy said. She caught Jon trying to hide his reaction. “Don’t you smirk, Sir. I was putting myself through college.”

“I was willing to help you,” Rory said.

“I wanted to do it on my own,” Amy said.

“Are you two fighting again?” the Doctor asked.

“You didn’t notice? I swear, every time we get into it you show up and block us from getting anything resolved,” Rory said.

“Oh, don’t blame him for our problems,” Amy said. “OMG, I can’t take this. What is your name, Sir?”

“Jon Harister,” Jon said.

“What do you do for a living?”

Jon hesitated, looking to Loxy for help.

“Don’t be ashamed. They’re the accepting sort. Just tell them,” Loxy said.

“What is that?!” Amy said.

“What was what?” Jon asked.

“Stop acting crazy stupid. You looked over there like you were looking to someone for an answer,” Amy said. “Are you making shit up?”

“What?” Jon asked.

Amy snapped her fingers at Jon. “Looking up and to the left means you’re accessing the right side of your brain, so you’re trying to come up with a lie.”

“Where did you get that?” Rory asked.

“From that detective show we were watching,” Amy said.

“Oh, I must have fallen asleep there,” Rory said.

“Just before,” Amy said. “Quick, Jon Harister, what do you do for a living?”

“I am a hypnotist,” Jon said.

“Oh, well, that’s kind of cool. Like a stage hypnotist?” Rory said.

“No, more like a male escort,” Jon offered.

“What?” Amy asked. Rory’s ‘what’ sounded more like, “Really?!” They exchanged looks.

“Is that kind of like a kiss-a-gram?” the Doctor asked. “Because Amy used to do that, too.”

“I never hypnotized people against their will,” Amy said.

“No, you just hit people with a bat and handcuff them to the heater,” the Doctor said.

“That’s usually how my personal dates go,” Jon said.

“It wasn’t a date,” Amy corrected him.

“And I don’t hypnotize people against their wills,” Jon said.

“Why are you here?” Amy asked.

Jon shrugged.

“Doctor, why is he here,” Amy asked.

“I told you, I think he’s channeling soufflé girl,” the Doctor said.

“Is he even human?” Rory asked.

“That’s the strange thing,” the Doctor said. “He’s absolutely human. Mundane, ordinary, nothing particularly special about him in any remarkable way. I suppose one could argue his extreme normality in itself is abnormal.”

“Oh! Don’t listen to him, Jon,” Loxy said. “I think you’re special.”

“Except,” Amy said.

“Two things. First, I found him caught up in a small temporal loop, which I interrupted by bringing him here,” the Doctor said.

“Does that happen a lot?” Rory asked.

“Temporal loops? Oh, much more often than people care to acknowledge,” the Doctor said. “Of course, most people pause and ride it out, experiencing nothing more than a little freaky déjà vu, and then they push on about their routine, and never think of it again. But he was riding it. That in and of itself is worth closer scrutiny.”

“And the other thing?” Amy said.

“He’s channeling the soufflé girl!” the Doctor said.

“Channeling how?” Rory asked. “Like a psychic?”

“Precisely,” the Doctor said. “He is in telepathic contact with soufflé girl.”

“How is that even possible?” Amy asked. “She was blown up with the planet.”

“Yeah, yeah, but, that planet is a long ways a way, and so, clearly, he is getting old transmissions,” Rory said.

“Are you trying to be clever?” Amy asked.

“I was aiming for funny,” Rory said.

“Well, stop it,” Amy said. She looked to Jon. “Are you channeling soufflé girl? What was her name?” She snapped her fingers trying to get someone to give it to her.

“Clara,” the Doctor said.

“Yeah, are you channeling Clara?” Amy asked.

“I am really kind of lost here,” Jon said.

Amy put her hands on her hips, akimbo, and spoke very slowly: “Are you, channeling, any alien entities?”

“There are aliens? Like, for real aliens?” Jon asked.

Amy looked to the Doctor. “Please tell me, you didn’t replace me with him.”

“I did not replace you,” the Doctor said.

“Jon,” Rory said. “Why do you think you’re here?”

“I am still trying to sort that,” Jon said. “But I find, if we just go along with the dream characters, it eventually all makes sense.”

“You think you’re dreaming?” Amy said.

“Yes, and I think I can prove it,” Jon said.

“We’re listening,” Amy said.

Since Rory was closer, Jon held his hand out to him. “Would you give me a twenty dollar bill please,” Jon said.

“I am British,” Rory said.

“Oh, okay, well then, the equivalent in pounds,” Jon said.

“I didn’t bring my wallet,” Rory said.

“And that’s my proof,” Jon said.

“Asking for money and not getting it is proof that you’re dreaming?” Rory asked.

“Yes. There’s always an excuse for me not receiving money. Therefore, I am dreaming,” Jon said.

Amy was shaking her head in dismay. “How is that even logical?! If you were dreaming, and you asked for money, it should rain money.”

“I wish! But never in my dreams,” Jon said. “It’s actually kind of funny. You ask for money and people have all kinds of weird excuses. Rory has none. Who walks around with no cash?”

“Lots of people,” the Doctor said.

“Okay, maybe I am not dreaming, but I bet I can give you evidence you’re dreaming,” Jon said.

“Even if that made sense, what does that have to do with you?” Amy asked.

“Well, if you’re dreaming, then clearly I am not here, because I am a dream character,” Jon said.

“I am not dreaming...” Amy said.

“I want to hear this,” Rory said.

“Are you angry?” Jon asked Amy.

“No, I am annoyed,” Amy said.

“Annoyed sounds angry,” Jon said.

Rory rubbed the back of his head not adding anything to the observation.

“I am going to be angry if you say my being annoyed is evidence I am dreaming,” Amy said.

“Oh, no, that’s not the evidence, but most people are not annoyed by a real thing but a perceived thing, which means, you’re annoyed either due to direct dream content inconsistencies, or because of an expectation that should be a certain, which subconsciously means you know you’re dreaming and you don’t like the divergence,” Jon said, and when their expression suggested he was dazzling them into incoherence, he changed tracks. “Forget that. Let me walk you through this. Have you ever been in a crisis?”

“So many I have lost count,” Amy said. “Can you be more precise?”

“Okay, have you ever had a crisis and the Doctor was present?” Jon asked.

“That’s really not narrowing it down, is it?” Rory said.

“No,” Amy agreed.

“That’s interesting, and could be evidence you’re dreaming,” Jon said.

“Because every time I travel with the Doctor there’s a crisis is evidence I am dreaming?” Amy asked.

“The alternative is the Doctor comes with a lot of drama, which means, what, you like drama, and then I have to sort out why you’re angry, because either you’re living the life you want or you would be making efforts to avoid the Doctor, but yes, the fact that the Doctor keeps coming at you and you keep having crises is meaningful. And I am not saying the Doctor is causing crises. That would be like that thing where the bigger the fire, the more firemen show, suggests there’s a correlation between damage and the number of fireman, whereas damage is more likely related to the size and intensity of the fire. The Doctor’s presence could be explained

because you were already in crisis when you met, oh, that could be evidence for dreaming,” Jon said.

“No it’s not. Everyone has crises,” Amy said.

“But not everyone gets a Doctor,” Jon said. “Oh. Here it is. Think back to any one crisis. Were you ever in a tight spot with the Doctor and it looked like all hope was lost?”

“All the time,” Amy said.

“And yet, something always inexplicable happens, like the Doctor has an epiphany or suddenly, out of nowhere, the very thing you need to resolve the situation, like a tool, or a key to the door, or the entry of another agent, is suddenly available. If anything magically diverted, delayed, or ended the crisis, you’re most likely dreaming.”

“How do you figure that?” Amy said.

“Either you’re an unsuspecting character living in a reality TV show filled with tons of badly placed plot contrivances to move your story along, or you’re dreaming,” Jon said. “True deadly monster or robots don’t walk around mechanically saying ‘kill, kill, kill, exterminate, kill,’ they just kill you. Real bad guys don’t pull up and suddenly have a spot of tea with you or design elaborate pitfalls and stick around to watch you suffer. They shoot you, they move on.”

“I don’t have a way to refute that,” Amy said.

“I am not asking you to,” Jon said. “This is why I never questions reality. There’s always either an explanation that seems to satisfy at the moment, or something happens to distract you from the question. So, right now, maybe I am inside some really cool spaceship time machine that’s bigger on the inside, or I am on a movie set and you are all having a bit of fun at my expense, or I am dreaming. I could be hypntozied, but that’s just dreaming, isn’t it!”

“You’re not dreaming,” the Doctor said.

“That’s exactly what a hallucination would say. That’s also, interestingly enough, what the paid actor would say to keep me going along with the script,” Jon said.

“What would convince you?” the Doctor asked.

“Give me twenty bucks,” Jon said.

“I honestly don’t have any cash,” the Doctor said.

“Seriously? I am not asking for a million dollars. I am cheap and easy,” the Jon said.

“Just give me twenty bucks.” Loxy said she would vouch for that.

“I don’t have twenty bucks,” the Doctor said. “But I do have a really cool spaceship time machine that’s bigger on the inside.”

“I would find twenty bucks more convincing,” Jon said. “I’ll give it right back.”

“We don’t need money when traveling with the Doctor,” Rory said. “And, I get tired misplacing my wallet and having to get a new license so I left it on the dresser.”

“Seriously?” the Doctor asked. “You never told me you lost your wallet. That could be a serious temporal hazard.”

“Three more excuses,” Jon said.

“OMG,” Amy said, and nearly walked away.

“What would you do with the money?” Rory asked.

“Well, I’d keep it. If I am dreaming, and it’s always a dream, I will wake up and not have the money, and I will have my proof, and you won’t have lost anything,” Jon said.

“But if you aren’t dreaming, you will have my money,” Rory said.

“Exactly, which is why no one ever wants to wager with me that I am not dreaming, because, they’d be out twenty bucks,” Jon said.

“You don’t need money in a dream,” Amy said.

“Which is probably why I never have any,” Jon said. “And, the whole point of the conversation is really to demonstrate, there is no way to know I am not dreaming, but one might reasonably conclude that when discussions of aliens, or really cool spaceship time machines, start creeping into the conversation, one is most likely dreaming. Per Mathew O’Dowd, it’s never aliens, until it’s aliens.”

“Who?” Amy asked.

“A physics guy on youtube,” the Doctor and Rory said.

“Oh, very nice,” the Doctor said.

“I am trying to keep up with you,” Rory said.

“Good for you. I can’t think of a single video of his that might be helpful in any of our situation, but knowledge is always good. Keep watching. Alright, but back to the mystery at hand, dream or no, if you’re not talking to Clara, who are you talking to?” the Doctor asked.

“Oh, just go ahead and introduce me,” Loxy said.

“They’ll think I am crazy,” Jon said, answering Loxy direct.

“Too late,” Amy said.

Rory took a step back to rejoin his wife. “Schizophrenia could explain a lot.”

“Except you backing away; it’s not catchy,” Jon said.

Amy stepped closer to where she suspected Loxy was, based on Jon’s eye movement. Her hands didn’t find anyone.

“Oh, I already tried that,” the Doctor said. “Even tried scanning for her. No luck. That said, the TARDIS seems to recognize her presence.”

“The TARDIS recognizes there is someone else here?” Amy asked.

“Cause, that’s not creepy,” Rory said.

“Who is the TARDIS?” Jon asked.

The Doctor motioned ambiguously to the room.

“Oh,” Jon said. “You have a Tulpa, too?”

“A what?” Rory asked.

“A Tulpa,” Jon said.

“What’s a Tulpa?” Amy asked.

“You really don’t know?” Jon asked. “You travel in a really cool spaceship time machine, and you don’t know about tulpas?”

“Doctor?” Amy asked.

“Well, it’s kind of complex,” the Doctor said. “And, dependent upon cultural definitions. You can liken it to multiple personality disorder.”

“They call it DID now,” Rory said.

“So you said,” the Doctor said. “So, how do they explain multiples when it’s not trauma related?”

“This is not DID,” Jon said. “Basically, a Tulpa is a thought form. A complex thought form. In essence, I imagined a personality with such persistency and enthusiasm, through a process of repetition that eventually the subconscious mind took over the character I created and animated the personality. The personality no longer responds from pre-programed scripts but instead has an internal life of its own. A tulpa is a completely autonomous personality that co-exist in parallel to the host personality. With continued interaction, the personality becomes sentient. I share my brain with a companion; she is able to impose herself on all of my senses so I experience her in my everyday world as if she were really here. She has access to my

unconscious mind. We practice lucid dreaming and active imagination techniques, invented by Carl Jung, and in doing so experience all the Universe has to offer from an internal perspective.”

Amy translated: “You created an invisible friend.”

“In essence,” Jon said. Loxy was saying ‘a really cool invisible friend.’ He agreed with her.

“Oh,” Rory said. “That’s kind of cool.”

“Seriously?” Amy asked. “It’s really sad. He couldn’t make any real friends, so he had to make an invisible friend! Oh, what irony. It’s exactly what you do for your clients? You hypnotize them into having fantasies.”

“You can make fun me all you want, but not my clientele; they’re off limits,” Jon said.

“You help people live a lie,” Amy said.

“So, you’re also against movies, TV, and books?” Jon asked. “Do you know how many lonely people there are in our world? Seriously, people actually thought Gilligan’s Island was a real thing! They wrote letters to the Navy asking them to help find the castaways. We’re more connected with technology than ever, but depression and loneliness are epidemic! I don’t give people a permanent vacation into fantasy. Some just want travel to some exotic, foreign land. Some of my clients just want a moment without pain. Some want to dance with the stars, and imagine being free from their wheelchairs. Some want to meet aliens. Some want to go on a nice fancy dinner with a movie star. I make that happen. They know in advance it’s not real. During the experience, it’s very real for them, and they helped sculpt it before we even start into the trance. Afterwards, they have very pleasant memories of the experience, but again, they know it was fantasy. Hypnosis is deeper and richer than anything television can offer, because it engages all of the senses. Yeah, some of them swear by it, thinking they were actually there. But, that’s not even the weird part. Many of my clients through this process actually experience sudden, inexplicable remission of illnesses, like no more migraines or allergies. The physically challenged experience improved mental health. After two or three sessions, most of my clients feel so much better about themselves that they become more social, they start changing their lives, and they stop calling me for fantasies. Who would have thought fantasy hypnosis would help people actually get better.

“Yes, Amy, I was lonely. I have been lonely all my life. Oddly, I have been lonely even when I was with other people. But, instead of whining about my situation, because people just

love hanging out with crybabies, right, I became self-reliant. Fantasies were working for my clients. I decided I would practice my own medicine. I created a Tulpa. Her name is Loxy Isadora Bliss. And she has changed my life. I am happier. I am healthier. I am actually putting myself out there in the real world, flaws and all, and taking risks. Which, oddly enough, has brought us to the three of you. This feels significant somehow, but I am starting to get annoyed. And this is where I practice one of my three golden rules: 1, always assume you're dreaming. 2, treat all dream characters as yourself, because how you treat yourself is ultimately how you will treat others. And 3, boil all problems down to one of three solutions sets, which is fight, flight, or love. I have done all the fighting I am going to do. It just leads to more fighting. I am tired of running, cause no matter how far or how fast you run, at the end of it all, you're left facing yourself; you're never really running from the thing you were trying to avoid, but rather from something inside you. There's a joke there. Where ever you go, there you are. The only real solution, to any problem, is love. I embrace everything, imperfectly sometimes, but I do the best that I can with what I have in each moment."

Silence followed. The Doctor was musing it over, and seemed impressed. The TARDIS hummed happily in the background, not a single protest. Amy blinked.

"That sounds rather profound," Rory said.

"Actually," Amy said. "Doctor, have you been coaching him?"

"Jon, how would you like to meet your Tulpa in the flesh?" the Doctor asked.

"That's possible?" Jon and Loxy both said at the same time, and then smiled at each other.

"Oh, there are lots of ways of manifesting Tulpas," the Doctor said. "Some are more lasting than others."

"It won't hurt her, will it?" Jon asked.

"Oh, no, no," the Doctor said. "Well, my preferred way won't hurt her. I don't think."

"If it was anything like the shoulder mender, I am game," Loxy said.

"What did she say?" the Doctor asked.

"Okay," Jon said.

"Okay it is!" the Doctor said, rushing to the control console. "To Ever Land."

"Where Peter Pan lives?" Jon asked.

"That's Never Land," Amy said.

"Just making sure. I don't want to go there," Jon said. "Again."

Chapter 3

The Forest of Ever was directly outside the door. The Doctor lead the way, followed by Amy, then by Rory. Jon remained in the Tardis looking out. The grass did look nice, almost like a bed of clovers and moss. The sky was practically impossible to see through the forest, but slivers of intense blue leaked through as the rustling of leaves applauded the arrival of the Doctor.

“Come on, it’s perfectly safe,” the Doctor said.

“Why aren’t there leaves on the ground?” Jon asked.

“That is a brilliant observation,” the Doctor said. “Leave eaters!” The Doctor turned in place and then back to Jon. “I don’t see any at the moment. They kind of migrate, following the fall of leaves.”

“Maybe we should get back in the TARDIS,” Rory said.

Amy frowned, wondering the same thing, but she deudced: “They’re leave eaters? Not people eaters?”

“It is perfectly safe,” the Doctor assured them. “Nothing ever bad happens at Ever. Jon, come out.”

“I preferred to stay in the TARDIS,” Jon said.

“I would like you to come out and meet some friends of mine,” the Doctor said.

“People meaning trees?” Rory asked.

“Tress can be nice people,” the Doctor said. “Jon, come out of the TARDIS.”

“No. I know how this works. I come out, you go back in, and leave me stranded in a forest thickly,” Jon said.

“The Doctor doesn’t leave people,” Amy said.

“He has a valid concern,” Rory said. “Things do tend to happen.”

Humanoids arrived in the forest clearing. Rory jumped, startled, and said, ‘Like that.’ They looked human in every way, except perhaps taller. And greener; their skin was various shades of green. They weren’t tall and gangly, but fully proportioned humans who also happened to be taller than ‘human’, the shortest one being just over 2 meters. One of them reminded Jon of Ekaterina Lisina, the tallest model in the world, on Earth; on Ever, she would be considered average. They were wearing robes with hoods, less like proper druids and more like Little Red Riding hood, if Little Red Riding hood was also combined with Star Trek and Cosplay Deviant

Druids. There were six males, seven females, and one of the females made it clear that she was in charge, not in a regal way, but perhaps due to a lottery, or experience. They were barefoot. The grass looked really soft, cool, and pleasant to walk on.

“Hello, Doctor,” the most prominent one said.

“Ah, Angela! So nice to see you again,” the Doctor said. “I didn’t think you would actually be here.”

“We had an agreement,” Angela said. “Your part was never to return to Ever.”

“I know, I know, but I need your help,” the Doctor said. “And this was the fastest way to get in touch with you.”

“The sound of the TARDIS is the harbinger of death,” Angela said. “Trees cannot run from the terrors that follow you.”

“No terrors today,” the Doctor assured them. “In fact, this is turning out to be one of the most peaceful adventures I have had in good run. It could have very easily started with death, but it actually started with the saving of lives.”

“You failed to mention that,” Rory said.

“Did I?” the Doctor said.

“We have only just recently got the mimicry birds to stop singing the TARDIS song,” Angela said.

“Oh, well, that’s a really long time for them to carry a sound isn’t it,” the Doctor said. “But, if I recall correctly, it was their mimicry that confused the enemy at the time. It helped to save your planet.”

“We don’t hate you, Doctor,” Angela said. “We’re just afraid of you.”

“I know,” the Doctor said. “But, Angela, we had some good times together, didn’t we?”

Angela looked to the two humans outside the TARDIS. “You two are the companions?”

“She is,” Rory said. “I am just barely tolerated.”

“Rory, stop pouting,” Amy said. “The Doctor prefers females. Why is that so hard for you to get?”

“Human. Female. Earth. How is your planet fairing under the Doctor’s care?” Angela asked.

“Oh, well, it’s touch and go, really,” Amy said.

“Amy,” the Doctor said, sounding shocked.

“Just being honest,” Amy said.

Angela smiled as if she had proven her point, crossed her arms. “How can we serve you, Doctor?”

“Jon, come out and meet my friends,” the Doctor said. “Now.”

Jon removed his shoes and socks, and emerged from the TARDIS, timidly. On seeing him, the Avatars of the Trees of Ever went to their knees, their heads bowed.

“That was unexpected,” Amy whispered to the Doctor.

“Yeah,” the Doctor agreed. “Angela?”

“May we stand, my Lord?” Angela asked.

Jon gave a curious eyebrow to the Doctor. Amy hit Jon’s shoulder.

“Ow! Why did you hit me?” Jon asked.

“She does that,” Rory said.

Amy hit Rory.

“Stop hitting people,” the Doctor said. He looked to Jon and nodded towards the Avatars of the Trees.

Jon seemed confused.

“OMG, you can’t be that dense,” Amy said.

“Don’t yell at him,” Rory said.

“Don’t befriend him,” Amy said.

“Why are you two so cross?” the Doctor asked.

“We were in the middle of something...” Rory began.

“He doesn’t need to be in our business,” Amy said.

“It never stopped you before,” Rory said.

“We’re not here for us. Jon, say something. They’re clearly revering you,” Amy said.

“They never bowed to me, that’s for sure,” the Doctor said.

“Why would they bow to me, he’s the Time Lord,” Jon said.

“Not that kind of Lord,” the Doctor said. Amy hands went to her hip, wonder woman akimbo power stance. “Well, it’s not really.”

“Jon, tell them to stand up,” Loxy said.

“Please, stand up,” Jon said.

The Avatars of Ever all stood as one. Angela came closer to Jon. It was difficult to discern if she was looking at him as a child or a lover.

“Has the Doctor harmed you?” Angela asked.

“Have I harmed him?” the Doctor asked, flabbergasted.

“Directly or indirectly,” Angela said.

“No, he’s been nice enough. He and his friends are a little confusing and I am struggling to keep up, but he was nice enough to mend a wound,” Jon said.

“You were wounded?” Amy asked.

“You didn’t mention that, either,” Rory said.

“It was a flesh wound,” the Doctor said.

Amy touched the hole on the back of Jon’s shirt. Rory mirrored her, touching the hole on the front of the shirt.

“Doctor?” Rory said.

“Where was this bar again exactly?” Amy asked.

“Texas,” the Doctor said.

“Old West?” Amy asked.

“No, same day and year as you,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, because that explains everything,” Amy said. “Why was someone shooting at him?!”

“He disarmed a bomb,” the Doctor said.

“Um, we’re not moving closer to clarity here,” Amy said.

“I am still trying to piece it all together myself,” the Doctor said.

“Well, if you ask me, I think I could help,” Loxy said.

Angela turned her eyes towards Loxy. “Go on, then.”

Loxy drew suddenly very close to Jon, and whispered in his ear, “I think she can see me.”

“I knew it!” the Doctor said. “She’s not just a regular old hallucination.” Amy and Rory both looked at him. “Honest, I knew it.”

“Who are you calling old?” Loxy said.

“She is not a hallucination,” Angela agreed. “She is an Avatar.”

“Yeah, not much help,” Amy said.

“I told you, different cultures have different nomenclatures. Tulpas. Avatars. They’re all describing the same thing,” the Doctor said. “An argument can be made that even our everyday personalities are just Tulpas. Tell them, Angela.”

“We are the Avatars of the Trees of Ever. Jon Harister is one of the Avatars of Gaia, and in his present incarnation, he is the Dreamer of Dreams. Loxy is the Avatar of the One. Jon called out, Loxy answered. They will remain entangled till the end of time, or longer if they choose.”

“Who is the One?” Rory asked.

“Oh, you’ll never get a clear answer on that one,” the Doctor said. “Believe me, I have tried.”

“Seems pretty straight forwards to me,” Amy said.

“It does?” Rory asked.

“The One is the Original Dreamer. We are all Avatar of the One. Human beings are indirect avatars, just as we are indirect avatars. Trees are direct Avatars of the One. All humans personalities are Avatars for greater beings,” Angela said.

“Think Jung and the Collective Unconscious,” the Doctor said. “The Trees of Ever believe the subconscious mind is the true entity, and the personality is merely a front, an interactional point of reference. Each tree has a subconscious and super conscious, and the Avatars are the personalities they use for interacting with their environments.”

“Like I said, tree spirits, pretty straight forwards,” Amy said.

“Except for the whole bit about humans being projections of some greater being,” Rory said.

“Well, no that’s pretty easy concept, Rory. Imagine you weren’t born in the UK, but in some other county, some other time. You wouldn’t speak English. Most likely you’d speak Mandarin, or Cantonese, or Hindi. You’d have a different religion, a different culture, different memories, a different name. You would not be the Rory we all love and adore.”

“Who would I be?” Rory said.

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe a Centurion?” the Doctor asked.

“You seem to be taking this all pretty well,” Amy said to Jon.

“Well, we’re talking about dreams and this does all seem to be rather dream like,” Jon said. “Actually, it affirms my philosophy of dreaming. All dream characters are avatars of me,

me playing me. I suspect, as Robert Wagoner did in his *Lucid Dreaming* book, characters aren't just static, two dimensional beings. They're entities in their own right. Jung supports this concept. So did Joseph Campbell..."

"The more in touch you become with your true nature, the more dream like reality seems," Angela said.

"Yeah, well, it doesn't always feel dream like," Jon said.

"You will understand your true nature and the importance of your role when it is time. Full disclosure prior to your readiness could result in insanity," Angela said. "How may we serve you, Doctor?"

"Could you give Loxy a body?" the Doctor asked.

Angela didn't seem surprised. She stepped up closer to Jon, peered down into his eyes, intently, as if having a private conversation with someone. She closed her eyes and nodded. She retreated, staring at the ground for a moment, then had a silent conversation with the others. She returned.

"You will not find the answers you are looking for, Doctor," Angela said. "And the deeper you pry, the more elusive the answers will be, confounded by additional layers of complexity the deeper you go."

"You're telling me not to do this? Not to investigate a mystery?" the Doctor asked.

"We would never tell an adult what to do," Angela said. "We only inform and trust you will make good decisions."

"I would like Loxy to have a corporal existence," the Doctor said.

"You assume she doesn't," Angela said. "Your kind too easily dismiss the realities of the inner world. We have sought and received Consensus. If Jon and Loxy are in agreement, we can provide her an Avatar for this reality frame."

"Seriously?" Jon, Loxy, Amy, and Rory echoed together, all with different hopes and fear.

"Doctor," Amy said. "I don't know much about tulpas, but I have seen a horror movie or two, and generally bringing things from the dream world doesn't work out so well."

"She will be as real as you believe you are," Angela said.

"How does that ease my mind?" Amy asked.

"What does that even mean?" Rory asked.

“Most beings live their lives one life at a time, experiencing amnesia of past and future lives,” Angela said. “This is necessary to maintain the Continuity of the One.”

“We’re talking reincarnation here?” Amy said.

“You are a companion of the Doctor, how can you not believe? The Time Lords are one of the few species that can live all of their incarnations in one life thread. Regeneration, reincarnation, it is all the same. You are energy. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. It simply is. Everything else is illusion.”

“We came here to make the invisible visible,” the Doctor said.

“Jon, do you believe in things unseen?” Angela asked.

“Oh, sure,” Jon said. “I play Pokemon Go all the time.”

Angela looked to the Doctor and the companions trying to glean understanding through their expressions. She turned back to Jon. “Does Loxy want this?”

“Oh, yes, please, being a real live girl sounds immensely fun,” Loxy said. “Think of the adventures we can have together.”

“Jon, do you want this?” Angela asked. “It will change everything.”

“I would like this for her,” Jon said.

“Why?” Amy asked. “Because the Doctor is pressuring you for his own entertainment?”

“Wow,” Rory said. “You’re not supporting the Doctor. That’s new.”

“Doctor, you’re doing this because you’re curious,” Amy said. “Not because of some greater good for Jon or for Loxy. You’re just curious. Maybe Jon isn’t insane. Maybe he was insane, but he created Loxy. Now you’re going to rip out his emotional support? Where is that going to leave him?”

“But, if we do this, Loxy will be independent of me. Free to come and go as she wishes?” Jon said.

“She will be free. You will remain entangled,” Angela said.

“But if we do this, and I were to die, she would be free, she wouldn’t die with me,” Jon said.

“There is no death, only change,” Angela said.

“Okay, so if I die, she won’t die with me,” Jon said.

“She will not die with you, as you understand death. Change is inevitable. None of us live in a vacuum. We co-evolve. There will be consequences for this decision. There is no wrong choice here,” Angela said.

Jon turned to Loxy. “I am conflicted.”

“You’re afraid I will leave you if I am free,” Loxy said.

“Oh, screw that, no,” Jon said. “Okay, maybe a little, but I am used to people leaving. You do what you need to do on that score, I’ll be alright. No! I am not worried about that. If that’s what you choose, I will support you, I will help you even, because my only goal in life is to see you happy.”

“So, what worries you?” Angela and Loxy both said.

“I can’t help you choose,” Jon said to Loxy. “I am bias. A part of me wants you to stay inside me, because, well, I feel safe knowing you’re always a thought away. At the same time, I want you to be free so you can experience all that life has to offer and you’re not chained. But the thing is, I am afraid that either choice I make is being made out of fear, not love. Ultimately, you have to decide this on your own, because this is about you and your life. This is huge. I just want what best for you.”

Loxy hugged Jon. His eyes closed as he surrendered to it. “I love you. You made me, against all odds and self-doubt, risking sanity, further ridicule. Making me was a bigger commitment than marriage, because you can’t divorce what’s in your head. You risked it all and gave me the greatest gift any human could have. You gave me total access to every thought, every impulse, conscious and unconscious, and you gave me your heart, flaws and all. Now, I want to give you something.”

They came out of the hug. “You already given me everything.”

“No, I haven’t, but if I do this, I can. I can do it daily, for the rest of your life,” Loxy said.

“What’s that?” Jon asked.

“I can walk beside you in real life, demonstrating daily that an independent agent can love you and be with you, even knowing all of your flaws,” Loxy said. “Let me give this to you.”

Jon wiped tears from his face. Loxy took his hand.

“We want to do this,” Loxy said.

Angela stepped forwards and put her hands on Jon’s arms. She touched her forehead to his, closed her eyes, and remained silent for a long moment. She then removed a small pine cone

from her pocket. It was very similar to the pine cone from a Sequoia Tree. She closed it in his hands, and then closed her hands over it, and raised their hands so that it that resembled 'Namaste' only two people joined as one. She kissed him. Their hands flattened between them. Jon would have retreated but two of the other females had stepped up and placed their hands on his shoulders and Angela's to keep them from falling away from each other. The servants retreated and Angela stepped away. When she unfolded Jon's hands, the tiny pine cone seemed fused with light. She removed it gingerly. Jon seemed dazed.

"How come my encounters never end up like that," Rory said.

Amy rolled her eyes. "Excuse me?"

"I'm just saying, I usually end up getting stabbed," Rory said.

"If you want the appearance of instantaneous results, we need to travel to the past twenty years ago," Angela said.

"Come on, then," the Doctor said.

"Jon must remain here," Angela said.

"I knew you were going to leave me," Jon said. "Didn't I say he was going to do that?"

"You did," Rory said.

"I am right here, still," Loxy said, taking his hand. "We'll be okay."

"We'll be right back," the Doctor said.

"Oh, I have heard that before," Amy said.

"There were circumstances..." the Doctor said.

"There are always circumstances," Amy said.

"Oh, we're just all one big happy family," Loxy said.

Angela turned to her. "This is happy?"

"Family," Loxy said.

"So, Rory, you stay here with Jon so he doesn't feel abandoned. Angela and Amy, you're with me," the Doctor said.

"Now, hold on a minute," Rory said.

"What, I can't leave you alone for like five whole minutes?" Amy asked.

"All I am saying is why don't I get to go with the Doctor for once," Rory said.

"Oh, alright, Rory, you with me. Amy, you stay with Jon," the Doctor said.

"No, no, on second thought, you go with the Doctor," Rory said.

“You don’t trust me with Jon alone?” Amy said.

“He’s a hypnotist,” Rory whispered.

“I am not deaf,” Jon said.

“Why don’t you both stay here,” the Doctor said.

“We have had this conversation,” Angela said. “I will not travel with you alone ever again.”

“It wasn’t that bad, was it?” the Doctor asked.

“What did you do to her?” Amy demanded.

“Nothing,” the Doctor said.

“What did he do to you?” Amy asked.

“I do not wish to discuss it,” Angela said.

“Can I go?” Jon asked.

“No,” Angela said.

“Sorry,” the Doctor said. “Amy? Angela?”

Rory offered an ambivalent hand gesture. Angela was the last to enter, and she pushed the door shut behind her.

“Have fun storming the castle,” Loxy yelled after him.

Rory observed Jon presumably looking at Loxy. The TARDIS faded away, even the sound it made, echoed into the forest and faded, gone.

“What did she say?” Rory asked.

“Oh, nothing,” Jon said.

“It was funny,” Loxy said.

The sound of the TARDIS was distinctly heard.

“That was fast,” Rory said.

Then there were dozens of TARDIS sounds, like an echo but not an echo, moving over head, as mimicry birds departed the area. The mimicry birds were hard to see because they looked just like clusters of leaves. It was only when they took flight they could be distinctly seen. Rory gave the remaining Avatars a worried smile.

“Maybe it won’t stick?” Rory asked.

The TARDIS returned. Amy and Angela were first out, wearing different clothes.

“How long were you gone?” Rory asked.

“Oh, um, two days,” Amy said.

“Two days to plant a seed?” Rory asked.

The Doctor emerged. “See, I told you I would get us back within five minutes,” the Doctor said. He rushed a tree. “Look at her! She’s beautiful,” He said, and ran to hug a tree.

“That’s the tree you planted?” Rory said.

“Yes,” Angela said, admiring the tree just as much as the Doctor. “Come closer, Jon.”

Jon shook his head, ‘no.’

“But that tree was always there!” Rory said.

“No, no, it wasn’t here, but you and Jon wouldn’t remember that, because, well, how long have you been traveling with me?” the Doctor said.

“This is why Jon needed to remain present. This tree is now a multiplicity point,” Angela said. “A convergence of paradoxical eventualities. Jon, come closer, please. We have to finish the process.”

“I am afraid,” Jon said.

“Is Loxy still beside you?” the Doctor asked.

Jon was disturbed by the fact he hadn’t noticed her absence. The tree seemed suddenly far away. The Doctor and Angela sounded far away. Amy and Rory were momentarily filling his vision, distorted as if seen through a fish lens through a peephole on the door. They fell up and away. He experienced the earth rising up to his knees, as opposed to falling. Amy and Rory were suddenly at his side, in contact, bigger than life, taller than even the Avatars, preventing his total collapse. He protested, but the Doctor and Angela insisted they bring him to the tree, sounding urgent. They helped him towards the tree. The four of them helped him hugged the tree. From one perspective, Jon might have been supporting the tree, in the other, the tree was clearly supporting him.

“The circuit is now complete,” Angela said.

The Doctor rushed to get Amy and Rory’s hands off of Jon. Once Jon started to glow, they retreated on their own. The tree, also began to glow. Jon screamed, hugging the tree as best he could, staring straight up into the branches, light ejected from his eyes. When the light faded, so did his voice. He fell backwards to the earth. Rory went to catch him, but Angela and the Doctor blocked. Loxy emerged from the tree, like a ghost, passing through a wall, and solidified. She instantly went to Jon’s side.

“Seriously?” Loxy asked, looking to the Doctor. “Help him.”

Amy pushed Rory and he went to Jon’s aid. “Jon, can you hear me?” Rory asked, shaking him. He felt for a pulse, found it, and listened for breathing. “He’s breathing.”

“Jon?” Loxy said.

“Doctor?” Amy said.

“Give him a moment. He has to remember,” the Doctor said.

“Remember what?” Loxy asked.

“Everything,” the Doctor said. “Regenerating isn’t just like rebooting a computer. You re-experience your entire life.”

“That could take what, forty something years?” Amy asked.

“He’s fifty,” Loxy said.

“Oh,” Amy said. “He looks good for fifty.”

“It’s not about time,” Angela said. “Space/time is an illusion. You can re-experience a lifetime in an instant, because time is subjective within the mind. The brain itself receives information from its senses, all the information, past, future, present, but’s it’s way too much information, and too complexly woven together for the Avatar to process. The personality splits into a subconscious mind and the conscious mind. The subconscious mind only allows certain information to flow through the personality filters.”

“Why would it limit us?” Amy said.

“To protect you, to guide you, to keep you from being overwhelmed,” the Doctor said. “Focus on a tree, any tree, just one. Are you aware that there are flowers in the periphery of your vision?”

Amy turned to follow it, but the flowers were gone.

“Don’t chase it, focus on a single tree,” the Doctor said. “We’re surrounded, daily, by flowers, by lights, by people, by sounds you can’t hear, by colors you can’t see. There are cities in the clouds above us. And it’s because, time is an illusion, persistent, as my friend Albert would say, but still it is an illusion. Your filters allow you to function. My filters let a lot more stuff in, not because I am particularly gifted, but because I had time to learn to see. If you lived as long I have, you would start to see the worlds are much more amazing than your daily experience.”

“Humans use to live as long as the Gallifreyans,” Angela said.

“I know,” the Doctor said.

“What happened?” Amy asked.

“Long story,” the Doctor said.

“Why is it taking so long?” Loxy demanded.

“The story?” the Doctor asked. “Well, it’s kind of convoluted…”

“Not the story!” Loxy snapped. “The recovery.”

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe he has to remember something very specific,” the Doctor said.

“Like what?” Loxy asked.

“Being alone,” Angela said.

“You said we would be integrally linked for eternity,” Loxy said. “From the first leaf I pushed, you promised me, you taught me, that everything was going to be okay.”

“And it is,” Angela said.

“How is this okay?!” Loxy said.

“What do you mean, she taught you?” Amy asked.

“I grew up here,” Loxy said. “With the Avatars of Ever. They have taught me everything.”

“Not everything,” Angela said. “Just everything you could learn in the time you had.”

“Do you remember your life with Jon?” the Doctor asked.

“I do. It’s weird though. It’s almost as if he lived in my dreams, as if he were my Tulpa, and not the other way around,” Loxy said.

“Do you remember anything else?” the Doctor asked.

“As a Tree of Ever, I am just a baby, only 24. As a Tree of Ever, I could live here tens of thousands of years, and already I have had many Avatars, many incarnations, branching out into the Universe,” Loxy said. “More dreams than I could ever remember. I have noticed themes. Music and overall life patterns. Jon is spread throughout my walks in nature, all ages of him.” Loxy stood. “You’re there, too. Oh, oh,” Loxy said, and started laughing. She clapped her hands, stood. She twirled taking in the world. “This is so rich. It’s comical even. I think, I am going to be the death of you. Oh, no. It’s bigger than even that. Oh! I am the Doctor!”

“Seriously?” Jon asked. “You’re gone from my head like five whole minutes and you’re having delusions of grandeur?”

“Oh!” Loxy said, and fell on him, kissing him. She was laughing at first, and then crying. She punched him the shoulder, and then pulled him up to a sitting position and hugged him, sitting on his lap.

“I don’t think she’s quite stable,” Amy said.

“Ahh, she’ll be alright,” the Doctor said.

“Doctor, if she is really Clara, I’d like to remind you, she was incarcerated on a Dahlek prison world because they thought she was crazy,” Amy said.

“Yeah, but she crashed there. And they made her Dahlek. That could make anyone crazy,” the Doctor said. “This is normal. It takes time to properly transition into a new body.”

“24 years isn’t sufficient?” Amy asked,

Loxy stopped kissing Jon, as if recognizing a peculiar feeling. She smiled. “I am hungry,” Loxy announced.

“Pizza?” Jon asked.

“Not that kind of hungry,” Loxy said, giving him the look.

“Oh,” Jon said.

Rory looked away from them. “I think they’re good.”

“Is there a place we can be alone for a while?” Loxy asked. “He and I really need to talk.”

“You know there is no solitude in the forest,” Angela said.

“It’s a human convention,” Loxy said.

“What is?” the Doctor asked.

Rory whispered it.

“Ah,” the Doctor said. “Oh, hold on. Can’t this wait?”

“This is necessary to facilitate stability,” Angela said.

“We’ll just go inside the TARDIS for a while,” the Doctor said. “We won’t leave you.”

As Angela, Amy, Rory, and the Doctor retreated into the TARDIS, the other Avatars faded away. Mimicry birds sang the song of the TARDIS. In the midst, some of the birds recalled a secondary theme, blending it with the TARDIS and rustling of leaves.

Chapter 4

The Doctor paced around the console. “How long has it been now?”

“Doctor, you can’t rush these things,” Angela said.

“Yes, you can,” the Doctor said. “Rory, how long does it take.”

“Oh, that’s just not acceptable in any context,” Rory said.

“If I seem to recall,” Amy began.

“Amy,” Rory warned.

“It’s not about you,” Amy said. “The first time we met, Doctor, it took you several hours before you were properly satiated.”

“You had sex the first time you met the Doctor?” Angela asked.

“I was a child,” Amy said, as if that was sufficient explanation.

“That’s really disturbing, Doctor, even for you,” Angela said.

“How could you even think such a thing!” the Doctor said. “I was hungry. For food.”

The door to the TARDIS opened. Loxy, hair mussed, bare shouldered, leaned in. “Could you guys make a pizza run? We’re like starving out here.”

“Would a frozen do?” Rory asked.

“Oh, that would be lovely, thanks,” Loxy said, and popped back out.

“What was it you ended up liking? Fish fingers and custard?” Amy asked.

“You ate the fingers off of fish?” Angela asked.

“Fish don’t have fingers,” the Doctor said.

“Because you ate them?” Angela said.

“Oh, come on. Enough with the distractions. Aren’t any of you intrigued that Loxy looks exactly like Clara!” the Doctor said.

“I never met Clara in person,” Rory said.

“Have you?” Amy said.

“I am still sorting,” the Doctor said.

“Sorting what?” Amy asked.

“Like, who is the real Clara?” the Doctor said. “How is it that she is so impossibly mysterious and all over the place?”

“Oh, I have seen that look before,” Angela said. “You’re in love with Loxy.”

Amy crossed her arms in front of her chest. "You are married to my daughter, Doctor."

"I am not in love with Clara. I mean, Loxy. Or Clara. She's a mystery, that's all. And I love mysteries," the Doctor said. "Which doesn't preclude I love Clara or Loxy, but I don't love them! I don't even know them. I am trying to know them."

"I'm interested in the fact she called herself the Doctor," Rory said.

"She's clearly insane," Amy said. "She can't be the Doctor."

"Why not?" Angela said. "Females can be doctors."

"They can't be THE Doctor," Amy said.

"Oh, I so want to meet a female Doctor," Rory said.

"I bet," Amy said.

"Oh, more than ever now. I would run off with her and let you stew alone, worrying about what I am up to," Rory said.

"I wouldn't worry," Amy said.

"Oh, yes you would," Rory said.

"No, I wouldn't. You would never do anything. Even if she was cute," Amy said. "Even if you were compelled by circumstances, like a plot contrivance where if you didn't do that very something she would die, and you still wouldn't do it."

"To save her life? I so would," Rory said.

"Yeah? You would make out with the female Doctor, knowing that the last time you traveled with her she was a him?" Amy asked.

Rory thought it through. He closed his eyes. "You won't even let me engage in a hypothetical fantasy?"

"Don't have to fantasize," Amy said. "He's right there. Go ahead. Kiss him, get it out of your system."

"I am going to go heat a pizza," Rory said, and left the room.

"Men are so easy," Amy said.

"You've clearly kissed the Doctor," Angela said. "Is it out of your system?"

Amy silently fumed, pushing her tongue against her teeth, as if counting them.

"I don't understand the hypothetical," the Doctor said. "He would save me, or he wouldn't? And how does being cute figure into this equation?"

“I will let you two figure it out when it happens,” Amy said. “I’ll be in my room if you need me.”

The Doctor looked to Angela. “Humans.”

“I did tell you, you would not find the answers you are looking for,” Angela said, heading towards the kitchen and Rory.

“So, why did you agree to give Loxy a Tree and an Avatar so easily?” the Doctor said.

“Because we have done it before. Jon and Loxy are the Guardians of Ever,” Angela said.

“What?” the Doctor asked.

“The Earth has you. We have them,” Angela said. “I think we got the better deal.”

Angela departed.

“Wait. Where are you going?” the Doctor asked.

“I don’t want to be alone with you,” Angela said.

“It wasn’t that bad?!” the Doctor called after her, but she was already gone. “Was it?”

निर्मित

Jon and Loxy entered the TARDIS, finding the Doctor pacing.

“Oh, good, all better now?” the Doctor asked.

“We’re famished,” Loxy said, pulling Jon towards the direction of the kitchen.

“But, we need to talk,” the Doctor said.

Jon kind of shrugged, and pointed he was going with her.

“Oh, come on,” the Doctor said, following. “Jon, grow a back bone.”

“We can talk with food,” Loxy shouted back. “Which way to the kitchen?”

“Right, then left, oh, it’ll be faster if you let me lead,” the Doctor said.

The kitchen, interestingly enough, was the only room with a window. The window looked out onto a pleasant morning, somewhere in the universe. It tended to be something different every time a person entered; it would stay on that something until reset by being an empty room. It was never made clear whether or not one could escape out that window into the world being viewed, or if was just an image, like a back drop on the stage of some obscure talk show host’s stage. There was a rumor, started by Loxy, that it was a window that revealed how distant worlds were intricately linked in the present. There was a table and chairs. A bar. A lavatory. An island. Space cabinets and drawers that secured, and a pain in the ass to open if you didn’t know the trick, and even then, sometimes still difficult. A stasis box for a refrigerator, meaning that items

were permanently preserved from decay. Rory was on a lounge drinking a coffee. Angela was stirring a cup of something hot, leaning against the island. On the table was a frozen pizza, Chicago cut. Loxy went right to the pizza, actually sat on the table next to it and helped herself.

“Oh, thank you Rory, this is great,” Loxy said.

“Sorry, I kind of overcooked it,” Rory said.

“It’s perfect!” Loxy said. “It’s exactly how Jon cooks. We like burned edges and crunch.”

“He burns pizza?” Angela asked.

“Yeah, pretty much burns everything. And you can’t let him boil eggs. He times travels a lot in his head and exploding eggs bring him back to present,” Loxy said.

“Exploded eggs make such a mess,” Jon said, sitting in the chair directly in front of Loxy, reaching past her to take his own slice. “Which could be evidence for a greater reality not being a dream.” He took a bite, but looked like he was going to continue with his thought. Loxy put her feet in the chair, either side of him, leaning over to wipe some sauce off his face. “Needs salt.”

“You’re going to start cutting back, now that I have more say,” Loxy said, rocking his chair to and fro. Another bite of pizza and she nearly made her special face. “OMG, seriously! Jon, tell me this isn’t the best pizza ever.”

“Technically, your first pizza ever, with only my memory of pizza to go on?” Jon asked.

“There’s that,” Loxy said, her eyes going up as she sorted, bobbin her head to a song no one else could here. “No, this is just awesome. Almost as good as our tumble!”

“I agree,” Jon said. “Still needs salt.”

“Everything is better and brighter after a regeneration,” Angela said.

“So, this isn’t going to last?” Jon asked.

“Nothing lasts,” Rory said.

“Oh,” Loxy said. “Are you depressed?”

“How are you not Clara?” the Doctor demanded.

“Oh, I suppose I could be, if you’re really going to be persistent about it,” Loxy said with a sigh. And then a laugh. “I suppose, if we’re throwing around fantasies, I could also be a cosmic waitress, bringing joy and respite to weary travelers straying off the beaten path. Oh, Jon! We could so do a metaphysical, hippie, mystic pizza kind of traveling thing. We steal a TARDIS and make it look like the Scooby Doo Mystery van...”

“You want to be a waitress?” Jon asked.

“A cosmic waitress. If the outfit is cute,” Loxy said. “I do like hosting. Pretty sure I like hosting. OMG, Jon, you and I are going to have some tremendous parties.”

“I am not really fond of parties,” Jon said.

“That’s because I wasn’t there to host,” Loxy said.

“Jon, when did you create your Tulpa?” the Doctor asked.

“People don’t create Tulpas,” Angela said. “They invite existing personalities into their lives.”

“Jon’s paradigm; on Earth, they make them from scratch,” the Doctor said. “How long ago?”

“Is it like playing Dungeons and Dragons, creating character, only without the dice?” Rory asked.

Jon shook his head to Rory, but looked to Loxy to try and sort the Doctor’s question.

“What, just over two years ago?”

“I will be cross if you’ve forgotten my designated birthday,” Loxy said.

“I would never forget your birthday,” Jon said.

“You’ve forgotten my birthday,” Loxy said.

“Remind me,” Jon said. Based on the look she was giving him, he wasn’t the only one who had forgotten. “You’ve forgotten it, too?”

“That’s really odd,” Loxy said.

“Like it’s stuck on the tip of your tongue, but you can’t get it out?” Angela asked.

“Yeah,” Jon and Loxy both said. “Oh,” Loxy added. “I love when we do that together.”

“Yeah, the information has been temporarily blocked to preserve the Continuity of the One.”

“Please, Angela, your metaphysical philosophy isn’t going to help us sort this properly. Rory, what were we doing two years ago?” the Doctor asked.

“I thought you never forget,” Loxy said.

“I don’t. I just, sometimes, need a little jog to the noggin,” the Doctor said.

“Shall I hit you?” Angela asked.

“You really need to get over whatever it is you think I did to you,” the Doctor said.

Angela nearly said something but Jon interrupted. “Are the women in your life always this aggressive?”

“Jon. You can’t be a snowflake around the Doctor,” Loxy said. “Clearly, things get hot.”

“Things don’t get hot. I mean, some things get hot, but, no you’re twisting things. Do you always make everything into sexual innuendos?” the Doctor asked.

“It’s a hazard of living in Jon’s head,” Loxy said.

“Sorry,” Jon said.

“It’s quite alright. More people do that than admit that,” Loxy said.

“Sex or innuendos?” Rory said.

“Oh, I love you, Rory. You know, we should have like a couple’s night out, the four of us,” Loxy said, taking another slice of pizza.

“The six of us,” Jon said.

“Oh, they’re not a couple,” Loxy said, indicating the Doctor and Angela. “Besides, you really don’t want to take the Doctor on a date, unless you want to do some running. Angela told me some stories about the Doctor while growing up on Ever.”

The Doctor paced around the table. “This is not right. I feel like I am the companion. How did I end up being just an off character in someone else’s story, in my own TARDIS,” the Doctor said.

“You have a hard time letting others shine, don’t you,” Angela said.

“No! I love it when other people shine. I encourage people to shine. Loxy, who the hell are you?! Where did you come from?” the Doctor said.

Loxy pointed to Jon.

“Jon,” the Doctor said. “Does she look exactly like you imagined her?”

Jon bit his lip.

“Spit it out,” Loxy said.

Jon spit the bite of pizza out into his hand.

“Not the pizza, your thoughts,” Loxy said.

Jon put the pizza back in his mouth, chewed, and swallowed.

“OMG. It’s a simple question, Jon,” Loxy said.

“You’re everything I hoped for,” Jon said.

“Singing that will not get you out of the question,” Loxy said. “Do I look like you imagined me?”

“More or less,” Jon said.

“Which is it, the more or the less,” Loxy said.

“This is really not a fair question. I’m not good at visualization,” Jon said. “I am more an auditory person.”

“She doesn’t look like what you remembered,” Rory said. “But you slept with her anyway?”

Jon kind of shrugged.

“Are you disappointed?” Loxy asked.

“With the sex or your looks?” Jon asked.

“OMG, why is this so difficult?” Loxy asked.

“Because neither of you are communicably telepathically at the moment,” Angela said.

“Are you disappointed with me?” Loxy asked.

“No, not at all. You’re absolutely lovely. You are lovelier than I can ever have imagined. You are even more intense and more loving in person and I love you,” Jon said.

“You’re just saying that?” Loxy said.

“Are you doubting?” Jon asked.

“Yes,” Loxy said, disturbed and then suddenly shiny. “OMG, I can have my own doubts! This is great. It sucks, and it’s great. Wait, wait, wait! Who did you imagine I looked like?”

“Alizée,” Jon admitted.

“Oh,” Loxy said. “We like her. She can really move.”

“So can you,” Jon said.

“Jon. You could have chosen anyone from history, but you somehow tuned into Clara,” the Doctor said.

“I don’t understand the question,” Jon said.

“Why not Marilyn Monroe? Everyone loves Marilyn,” the Doctor asked.

“Well, I like her looks and all, but I didn’t want to have that birthday song stuck in my head for the rest of my life,” Jon said.

“Oh, I liked that one,” the Doctor said. “I was married to her, you know?”

“Oh! Yes, mystery solved,” Jon and Loxy said together.

“What mystery?” the Doctor asked.

“She told us,” Jon said.

“She told you she was married to me?” the Doctor asked.

“Well, it didn’t make sense at the time. She said she married the Doctor. I asked which Doctor, and she said not a witch doctor, and I thought oh, she was just having a bit of fun with us,” Jon said.

“You met Marilyn Monroe?” Rory asked. “I thought you were from my time frame.”

“He is. They’re just having fun at our expense,” the Doctor said.

“I would never do that, Doctor,” Jon said.

“Where did you meet her?” the Doctor asked.

“We had a stay at the Roosevelt Hotel. She visited us in our room,” Loxy said.

“Really?” Rory asked. “You time traveled.”

“No, she’s a ghost,” Loxy said.

“I don’t believe in ghost,” the Doctor said.

“How can you not believe in ghosts?” Jon asked.

“I have investigated a lot of ghost stories, and it’s never ghosts,” the Doctor said.

“Until it’s ghosts,” Jon said.

“It’s more likely an alien,” the Doctor said.

“Why would an alien pretend to be Marilyn Monroe?” Jon asked.

“Oh, that depends on the alien,” the Doctor said. “Some lure people in to eat them. Some to make them host to offspring. Some, like the Grays, they just have very high libidos and trade and sell exotic reproductive materials.”

“It could have been the Grays,” Loxy said.

“We really did enjoy her company,” Jon agreed. “No, that can’t be it.”

“Why not?” the Doctor asked.

“Because, it doesn’t make any sense. The grays don’t have to trick me into sex. I’d give it up just to say I had sex with the Grays.”

“I’ll vouch for him on that one,” Loxy said. “He’s being straight up with you. He’d probably sleep with you for a spin in the TARDIS.”

Jon sorted, but didn’t argue, returned to pizza.

“Would you both stop with innuendos and focus on this problem with me,” the Doctor said.

“You two just float around life visiting haunted hotels?” Rory asked.

“If you’re going to push boundaries to test the limits of reality, you can’t just sit there at home and hope things come to you,” Jon said.

“That’s how it works for me,” Rory said.

“You should invite us over,” Loxy said.

“Well, no, Loxy. I don’t think they’re dealing in the same kind of ghosts,” Jon said. “That said, Doctor, maybe you should take us home now.”

“In time. I want to figure this out,” the Doctor said.

“Yeah, but, you seem a bit obsessed, and your friends seem a bit on edge, and I am starting to worry something bad might happen,” Jon said.

“You afraid? I have never heard you say that. You’re the kind of guy that goes towards shadows,” Loxy said.

“That’s because, the light is on the other side,” Jon said.

“Good point. What are you especially worrying about presently?” Loxy asked.

“Everything. I mean, the absolute best part of my life has been you, and it just got better by you being realer than real, and, well, there is a reason for that saying it can’t get better than this,” Jon said. “I want to be somewhere predictably safe for a while so I can just spend my days with you.”

“I love you,” Loxy said. “Whatever comes, we will tackle it together. Besides, I can’t go back to Earth.”

“Can’t or don’t want to?” Jon said.

“Oh, I want to go wherever you go, but Earth is going to be problematic in my present form. You know how perturbed people get when you don’t have a verifiable history,” Loxy said.

“Down right obsessed,” Jon agreed.

“I am not obsessed,” the Doctor said.

“I suppose, I could incarnate on Earth. But, I’d have to find the right parents, in the right time zone to better ensure a high probability that we can encounter each other,” Loxy said.

“You know my address,” Jon said. “And you know the code to get in.”

“Sorry, Jon,” Angela said. “There are rules against that. Though the Trees of Ever may send Avatars to help sister planets through times of trial, those Avatars must agree to a full life cycle, with amnesia.”

“I don’t like that rule,” Jon said.

“It’s like the prime directive,” Loxy said.

“I am not Star Fleet,” Jon pointed out.

“The rule is a convention established for all advanced beings participating within the Federation,” the Doctor said. “Whether it’s the Prime Directive, or the Temporal Code of Ethics of not divulging information sets prior to their allotted time, we all abide by the intent of the treaty, if not the precise legal wording.”

“Well, that’s just stupid,” Jon said. “How can you expect volunteers to help if they have their minds wiped before inserting them into the time line?”

“The fronting personality may not know the specifics, but the subconscious knows everything,” Angela said. “And the one thing that no one can forget is love trumps everything.”

“Jon, we are beings of Love and Light,” Loxy said. “Anyone can Love when everything is perfect. It’s harder to love when things are not perfect. How can you ever know if you have mastered Love if you never step off into imperfection, knowingly not knowing?”

“It didn’t take her long to take up your philosophy,” the Doctor said.

“She has always had our philosophy,” Angela said. “She has always been one of us.”

The Doctor slapped the table, startling Jon. “That’s it!” he said, spinning his chair around. “Why didn’t I think of that earlier?”

“Please don’t do that,” Jon said.

“Rory, get up, please,” the Doctor said. “Loxy, on the lounge, please.”

“Is that an offer or an innuendo?” Loxy asked.

“Haven’t you both had enough?” the Doctor asked.

“Never,” Jon and Loxy both said, simultaneously.

Loxy came off the table. She kissed Jon before going to sit on the lounge.

Chapter 5

Loxy made herself comfortable on the lounge. More precisely, she made herself comfortable ‘posing’ on the lounge, as if this were a photo shoot, and she was just having a fun day at the office. This was not a behavior unknown to Jon, as she often was playfully engaging him or the environment in his head to cheer him up, or to help him be more observant. When she was a ‘ghost’ she could manipulate objects, even bring them to him, but the original object just remained in place. It was in this way Jon realized a thing about reality that most people don’t realize: there was the world out there, and there was a world in his head, an exact duplicate, with all the objects placed. Rarely people, unless you got really far out and away from approximation world. Except for cats. Cats seemed to be quite happy in the approximation world. From approximation, one could leap to any other place in the known universe. He only need close his eyes, and Loxy and he were in his own private approximation, minus cats, and any door could take them beyond. In the inner world he could interact with Loxy, touch her. They could hold hands and walk through any doorway and end up in any future or past world, usually only as observers, manipulating the inner world, not interacting with the out worlds or the personalities that dwelt there, as if they were visiting a movie. On very rare occasions, they found themselves in those ‘movie’ frame, interacting as if they had always been there. Those were the times when Jon and Loxy felt compelled to help someone who was in crisis. Sometimes, they found themselves in Jon’s past, helping a younger incarnation of himself. The first time they did this, they realized they had changed his internal timeline, even though the external time line remained the same.

Looking at Loxy now, Jon wanted to engage her. He suspected she knew, because she even gave him the look, raised eyebrows, stuck her tongue out at him, but due to the presence of others, he had restraint. Probably because the others were also seeing what he was seeing. It was a peculiar feeling knowing people were now interacting with the person he had held to himself for so long. It was as if he suddenly had evidence that he wasn’t completely crazy, because this was now real. That feeling of relief and elation just revved up his feelings of love, and that always influenced libido. He came back to the present moment when he realized he was being observed. The exchanges he and Loxy had made subtly weren’t so subtle, and she was feeling the same tangents as he.

“Is this what you two do all day?” the Doctor asked.

“Probably not a whole lot to do, hanging out in someone’s head,” Rory said.

“You’d be surprised,” Loxy asked.

“I lived over two thousand years, mostly kept to myself, thought a lot about Amy, and I didn’t get an Amy tulpa,” Rory said.

“Well, you have to follow some protocols,” Jon said. “I could teach you.”

“No need. He went two thousand years focused on Amy, I assure you, he has a solid Amy Tulpa in his head,” Loxy said.

“It wasn’t precisely 2,000 years,” Amy corrected, having entered the kitchen, but hanging back.

“1,894,” Rory said. “I think after waiting for you that long, I am entitled to rounding up.”

“How lonely was that?!” Loxy said, sitting up straight. “Jon and I can teach you tulpamancy, so you can have better access to the tulpas in your head.”

“Probably not a good idea,” Rory said.

“We all have tulpas in our heads,” Jon said.

“Everyone we have ever met,” Angela said. “Even people we have never met. The human brains is the best personality simulator evolution has ever put together.”

“Yeah, and I still don’t think it a good idea to unlock what’s in my head,” Rory said.

“Because you’re afraid that the Amy in your head will be different than the Amy in real life,” Loxy assumed out loud.

“Or, because he imagines an affair with the tulpa Amy would be a distraction from the real Amy,” Jon assumed.

“Oh, that is a valid worry,” Loxy agreed. “Which could result in dissatisfaction in real life.”

“Or at least incongruity disturbances,” Jon said.

“Or jealousies,” Loxy said. “Yeah, you got to be really solid with who you are and solid in your relationships to really navigate tulpamancy.”

“I am not jealous. I would have understood if he had a friend or two,” Amy said. “No one should go two thousand years without a friend.”

“I thought our free pass situation was a hypothetical, and a secret?” Rory said.

“They need to know, if you travel with the Doctor long enough, situations happen. Everyone should have a free pass. Like, waiting 2,000 years,” Amy said.

“See, even you round up, when talking about it,” Rory pointed out.

“It’s easier to say two thousand,” Amy said.

“But you give me hell when I say it,” Rory said.

“Because when you say it, it sounds like you’re exaggerating for sympathy,” Amy said.

“I went 1,894 years carrying the stiff upper lip; I think I have earned some medals and the right to express myself,” Rory said.

“And you can, it just, every time you tell this it sounds kind of whiny, like you’re trying to impress people,” Amy said.

“I’m impressed,” Loxy said. “You’re not impressed?”

“I am impressed. I married him,” Amy said. “What more can I do?”

“Sex,” Jon and Loxy said. “Oh, lots of sex.”

“We have sex,” Amy said.

“Angry sex?” Jon asked.

“Jon,” Loxy said, as if she were going to correct him. “Would that stop you?”

“Oh, no, angry sex is good,” Jon said.

“We should teach them both tulpamancy so they can engaged their inner others so they can understand why there is so much discord,” Loxy said.

“I don’t want to unlock things because there are monsters in my head,” Rory said.

“Oh, we love monsters,” Loxy said. “Jon and I can help with monsters, especially the inner ones. They can be a real pain in the ass, but once you get to know them, they chill.”

“We don’t need more monsters in our lives,” Amy said.

“Oh, see, they’re both struggling,” Loxy said. “Jon, we got to help them. Maybe that’s why we’re here! To subdue their miscreant tulpae.”

“Tulpas is the correct plural,” Jon said.

“There is no consensus on that,” Loxy said.

“You can’t Latinize every word,” Jon said.

“Rory, what do you think?” Loxy asked.

“I am biased,” Rory said.

“No, not latinizing the word tulpa,” Jon said.

“Why not?” Loxy said.

“One, you’re not Roman. Two, the word originated in Asia. And, ummm...” Jon said.

“Come on, rule of three, say it,” Loxy said.

Jon turns back to Rory. “Everybody has tulpas. Tulpas are just thought forms. Everything in your head is a thought form. Everything. Objects. Social facts. Archetypes. Trees. You’d be surprised how many trees are in our heads. Robert Frost’s Trees. Generalized tree. Species of trees! You have all the past trees you have ever met in your head. They’re all in your head all the time, even when you’re not really focused on trees. You can see them as metaphors, or real trees. You call them memories. Our ideas about people and places can be so solidly real that any divergence from our ideas of a person or place compared to the real outside person or place provokes strong emotions. Anger, sadness. We like our ideas of things to be accurate, because we feel bad when we’re off. Your idea of Amy is solid, perfect, she is a goddess and no one can compete with that, and that, Sir, is how you endured 2,000 years! I am sure there were some women who threw themselves at you over that 2,000 years. You have really good teeth, and that would impress the girls in the past. Hell, I’d be surprised if those girls who experience unrequited love started up their own secret Amy Goddess club. Seriously, no one can compete with a goddess, and so you’re either loving the goddess directly, starting a fan club, a love fan club or a hate fan club, doesn’t make any difference because it’s still a club to the goddess. All that psychic energy just makes her more real because you get enough people thinking about a goddess, she manifests herself. Trust me, I know. I live with one. But here’s the trick. When you finally meet up with the goddess in real life, you got to let go of the one in your head, because people have flaws, and they’re not going meet up with our expectations. Just something to think about.”

“That actually makes a lot of sense to me,” Rory said.

“He’s good, isn’t he?” Loxy agreed.

“Almost a Doctor,” Amy said. “How come you don’t talk to us like this?”

“I talk to you two like this all the time,” the Doctor said.

“So, Doctor, where do we go from here?” Angela asked.

“We’re following your lead,” the Doctor said. “Psychic energy, the subconscious knows everything. Jon, do your thing.”

Jon seemed hesitant. "What is my thing?"

"Yes, Jon, show us your thing," Loxy said.

"Would you two behave for like five minutes?!" the Doctor asked.

"Of course. Sorry. Rory, would you clock that for us," Loxy said.

"Jon, I want you to hypnotize Loxy," the Doctor said.

"Okay," Jon said. "So, what kind of fantasy would you like her to have?"

"Oh, send me back 2,000 years so I know what it's like being Rory," Loxy said. "Or put me with Rory. I will stand by his side for 2,000 years."

"Are you flirting with my husband?" Amy asked.

"Yes, you said you weren't jealous and he was in a free pass situation," Loxy said.

"Why do you need to create limits to loving relationship and then invent the pass game to get out of the self imposed limits?" Angela asked.

"It's just a hypothetical game," Jon explained. "Cause you just never know when you might be trapped between floors in a lift with Victoria Justice."

"Yep, if she comes onto you in the lift, that's an automatic free pass," Loxy agreed.

"But, honest honey, she looked like Victoria," Jon said.

"Oh, I'd give you that, too, if she initiates," Loxy said.

"My husband is not in a lift with Victoria," Amy said.

"But if I were?" Rory said.

"I'd kill you," Amy said.

"Yeah, no jealousy here," Rory said.

"But, we're trapped in a lift and I am interested, only the lift is 2,000 years ago. He's cute. He's patient and devoted as all get out," Loxy said. "And seriously, I know he's going to turn me down and turning me down would just make me want it more. And, I am curious if he can really go 2,000 years with a very persistent companion."

"She can be very persistent," Jon said.

"So can you," Loxy said.

"We're both pretty persistent," Jon said.

"You can have him," Amy said.

"I thought we were over this pushing me away bit," Rory said.

“Please! I am so overwhelmed with all the fussing, and the talk about sex. There’s more to life to talk about than sex,” the Doctor said. “Jon! Just knock Loxy out so I can get at her subconscious.”

“Yeah, cause that doesn’t sound like an inappropriate innuendo,” Amy said.

“Oh, those kinds are embedded everywhere,” Loxy said. “Like that Christmas song, ‘Baby, it’s cold outside.’” Loxy sang: “Hey, what’s in this drink?”

Jon folded his hands together, considering.

“What’s wrong?” Loxy asked. “Did I get the song stuck in your head?”

“No, yeah, it’s okay. It just occurred to me that I have not done a proper hypnosis session,” Jon said. “I am not sure exactly how to proceed.”

“Oh, just relax, go to it, when you want to go to it,” Loxy said.

“Please, two songs track in my head at once is distracting,” Jon said.

“You’ve only done erotic hypnosis?” Amy asked. “Who teaches that?”

“No one that I know of,” Jon said. “I just kind of fell into it.”

“Just make her relax, and then, take her deeper,” the Doctor said.

“It’s hard not to engage in innuendo, isn’t it?” Loxy asked.

“I am not engaging!” the Doctor said.

“That’s why there is so much sexual tension around you,” Loxy said. “How long have you gone without?”

“We are not going there,” the Doctor said. “Jon, please, this is important.”

“Alright,” Jon said.

He scooted his chair closer to Loxy. He asked her to sit up properly, feet on the floor, hands in her lap. He held up a finger and asked her to stare at it.

“It’s smaller on the outside,” Loxy said.

Jon closed his eyes, sorting his feelings. Amy covered her mouth. Rory chewed on a thumbnail.

“Come on, Jon, that was funny,” Loxy said.

“Stay focused,” the Doctor said.

Jon took a deep breath, opened his eyes, and asked Loxy to focus on the finger. He asked her to keep staring at it, even as he was drawing closer to her. The trick was to have the person follow his finger back and forth several times, as if establishing an REM pattern, then moved it

up, drawing the eyes up, and by the time he had touched their forehead, they were in trance. He didn't get that far. He passed out. His head fell into Loxy's lap.

Angela laughed. "Doctor, I am telling you, you're spinning your wheels," she said.

"Jon, darling," Loxy said, petting his head. "Wake up, please."

Jon sat up, yawning. "So, how'd it go?"

"You hypnotized yourself," Loxy said.

"Really? How did that happen?" Jon asked.

"You and Loxy are integrally linked," Angela reminded them. "You're like two mirrors facing each other. Infinite regression. What you do to the other you do to yourself. That's not an intentional innuendo or a metaphor. Jon, on the lounge with Loxy, please. Doctor, may I borrow your psychic paper?"

The Doctor fished out the item and handed it to her.

"Alright, here's how this work," Angela said, taking the chair that Jon had previously occupied.

When Jon was settled it became apparent to him that Angela seemed more normal in size, no longer a giant. He tried to remember when she had shrunk, but couldn't place it.

"Am I dreaming?" Jon asked.

"What do you think changed?" Loxy asked.

"Angela seems to have shrunk?" Jon said.

"I adjusted the size of my Avatar to fit this reality frame," Angela said.

"Oh, okay," Jon said. "Please continue."

"I am going to ask you a question, then I will present the answer to you. You will read the answer out loud. Okay?"

"Clear enough," Loxy and Jon said. Loxy laughed, took his hand and kissed him. "That's so cool." She scooted even closer to him. "You're much warmer in person than I expected."

"Focus," the Doctor said.

"Just out of curiosity, do you also need to use the toilet?" Jon asked.

"That is absolutely amazing!" Loxy said. "May we be excused for a moment? What? How can we focus when the urge to pee is so pressing?"

"I don't remember ever having this much trouble getting through a task," the Doctor said.

"That's because you usually ignore our hints we need to go," Amy said.

“What? You have to raise your hand and ask permission?” the Doctor asked. “You just go when you got to go.”

Loxy raised her hand.

“Just go already,” the Doctor said.

“We don’t know where the John is,” Loxy said.

“I really don’t like that term,” Jon said.

“The head?” Loxy asked. “What do you call it, Doctor? The Lou?”

“This way,” Rory said.

“No, really, what it do we call it?” Loxy asked.

“The Universal,” Amy said. “There’s some urinals, some stalls. Don’t use the last stall, though. It’s really not designed for humans.”

“You never know when you will have Tarogatin guest,” the Doctor said.

“What’s a Tarogatin?” Jon asked.

“I thought you needed go?!” the Doctor asked.

“Urgently,” Loxy said.

Rory motioned for them to follow. Jon and Loxy followed.

“Seriously, Angela. I don’t think I have ever had any guests that were this difficult. Did you coach them?” the Doctor said.

“Oh, if I were the type to practice revenge, it would take more than coaching,” Angela said.

“What did he do to you?” Amy asked. It became obvious that the Doctor and Angela were in their own world, and she was just a ghost eavesdropping.

“They’re like goofy teenagers in heat,” the Doctor said.

“Well, you were once a teenager,” Angela said. “A long time ago.”

“So were you, equally long ago,” the Doctor said. “But I was never like them.”

“Okay,” Angela agreed just to agree, even as the others were returning.

Rory returned without them. Amy asked how he had burned the pizza. Rory avoided a real explanation by saying Jon and Loxy love it burned, and in this way, they had a conversation overtop of Angela’s and the Doctor.

“Where are they?” the Doctor asked.

“Using the toilet?” Rory asked.

“Why didn’t you bring them back with you?” the Doctor demanded.

“Because, they can navigate back on their own. I mean it’s not that far off,” Rory said. “I don’t need to chaperone them while they urinate, do I? It’s not like we’re drug testing them.”

The Doctor paced.

“Doctor,” Amy said. “You’re really acting rather odd, even for you.”

“Okay, this has gone on long enough,” the Doctor said.

The Doctor stormed out of the kitchen across the hall and down two doors to the Universal. There was some indistinct shouting. The Doctor returned. He seemed pale and flustered.

“What’s wrong?” Angela asked.

“They’re shagging in the Universal. That’s not what that’s for,” the Doctor said. Amy and Rory exchanged a glance, and looked away. “OMG, no! You have your own room. How many other rooms have you spoiled?”

“Don’t ask,” Amy said.

“This is my home!” the Doctor said.

“You have had your share of play, Doctor,” Angela said.

“It’s my home,” the Doctor said. “Couples really shouldn’t play in other people’s homes.”

“You don’t have a lot of couple friends, do you?” Angela asked.

Jon and Loxy returned, holding hands. More precisely, it looked as if Loxy was holding his hand and pulling him along. He seemed a bit ‘pleasantly’ dazed.

“Sorry, I guess I am still recovering from the regeneration heat,” Loxy said.

“And you’re excuse, Jon?” the Doctor demanded.

“Um, I have a hard time saying no,” Jon said.

“You’re 50!” the Doctor said.

“So, I will be 80 one day, and I will still have the same libido,” Jon said.

“But hopefully more self-restraint?! Both of you, time out, on the lounge, now,” the Doctor said.

Jon and Loxy rushed to the couch and sat down. Loxy adjusted her dress, then scooted closer to Jon. She took his hand in hers, and drew it to her lap. Angela took the chair in front of

them. The Doctor retrieved the other chair, and sat next to Angela. Rory and Amy hovered behind them.

“Here we go,” Angela said. “Is Loxy Clara?”

Angela held the psychic paper up so they could read it. Loxy giggled. Jon looked at her, puzzled. Angela lowered the paper.

“What?” Loxy asked. “You don’t think that’s funny.”

“Maybe we’re not seeing the same thing,” Jon said. “What do you see?”

“The fortune you seek is in another cookie,” Loxy said.

“You guys are messing with me,” the Doctor said.

“I swear, it’s what it said,” Loxy said.

“What did you see, Jon,” the Doctor asked.

“You will die alone and poorly dressed,” Jon said.

“Not if I have a say in it,” Loxy said.

“Give me that,” the Doctor said, taking the psychic paper back. “Do either of you know Clara?” He held the psychic paper at them.

“Clara knows everything,” Jon said.

“That’s Clarissa,” Loxy corrected.

Jon looked closer and squinted. “Oh, you’re right.”

The Doctor shook the paper out while he thought of the next question.

“Oh, wait,” Jon said, grabbing at the paper. “An alien of some sort will be appearing to you shortly. That’s kind of ominous.”

Loxy leaned closer to read it. “Flattery will go far tonight.”

“You really make that dress look good,” Jon said.

“We should retire for the night,” Loxy said.

“Stop it,” the Doctor said.

“Are you channeling fortune cookies?” Amy asked.

“You are channeling the Universe,” Loxy said.

“The Universe as wrapped in a fortune cookie,” Jon added.

“Can you give us our own psychic paper?” Loxy asked the Doctor.

Jon caught a glance of the paper. “Outlook not so good.”

“Are you purposely messing with me!” the Doctor demanded angrily.

“You will not find your answers here, Doctor,” Jon said.

“Oh!” Loxy said, taking hold of the paper. “I see that, too.”

“Where will I find them?” the Doctor asked.

“Somewhere, over the rainbow,” Loxy said.

Jon closed his eyes. “That song is really hard to get out your head.”

“Should I put on a plaid dress tonight?” Loxy asked.

“That might help,” Jon said.

“Focus!” the Doctor said. “Is there an answer?”

“There’s always an answer,” Jon and Loxy read together. “You’re running out of questions.”

“What, we’re playing twenty questions?” the Doctor asked.

“Nine remaining,” Jon and Loxy said. “This is so fun,” Loxy added and kissed Jon.

“Wait wait wait,” the Doctor said, rubbing his forehead, counting the questions by mouthing them without speaking them. “You’re counting Amy’s question?!”

“Without a doubt,” Jon and Loxy read.

“No one else speak. I will ask the questions,” the Doctor said.

“What would happen if Jon and I asked the questions?” Loxy asked.

“Do you really want to know the answer to that?” Jon read.

“Malkovich?” Loxy asked. “Who’s he?” She seemed perturbed by the response. “No, I don’t remember. I wouldn’t have asked if I remembered.”

“Don’t argue with the paper,” the Doctor said. “And stop asking questions.”

“A question to a question isn’t really a proper thing to do,” Loxy complained.

“Infinite regression,” Angela reminded them.

“This is really simple. I ask the question, you read the response,” the Doctor said.

“Why haven’t we ever played this game?” Rory asked.

“I got nothing,” Loxy said.

“Me neither,” Jon said.

“It doesn’t work for everyone,” Angela said.

“Oh, so what’s so special about them?” Amy asked.

“I don’t think we should share that response,” Jon said, and Loxy agreed.

“Stop!” the Doctor snapped.

“You’re beginning to lose it, Doctor,” Amy said.

“This is important,” the Doctor said. “Are you going to help me?”

“Better not tell you now,” Jon and Loxy read.

“Why?” the Doctor asked.

“The continuity of the one is paramount,” Jon and Loxy said. Jon added. “Never ask why questions.”

“What question should we ask?” Amy asked.

“Amy!” the Doctor said.

Jon and Loxy read an answer: “Only those in their right mind can navigate the between.”

“How is that an answer?” the Doctor asked.

“Reply hazy try again,” Jon and Loxy read.

“Fortune cookies or magic eight ball?” Rory asked.

The Doctor gave Rory the look.

“Don’t hate the paper,” Jon and Loxy read.

The Doctor took his psychic paper and stuck it in his pocket. “This is getting us nowhere,” he said.

“If you’re really that curious, Doctor,” Amy said. “Why don’t you just go back in time to when Jon decided to make his Tulpa and see if there are any observable anomalies?”

“Oh!” the Doctor said standing. “I could just kiss you, Amy.”

“Please don’t,” Rory said.

“It’s just a saying,” the Doctor said.

“An innuendo will go far tonight,” Loxy reminded them.

“Was that an innuendo, or were you reading my mind?” Jon asked.

“Stop it,” the Doctor said. “We’re about to get really serious here.”

“Oh, yes, we are!” Loxy agreed.

“Not like that! We are going to travel to the birth place of Loxy,” Loxy said.

“You mean the original birth time two years ago?” Rory asked. “Or the Tree birth time, where you just were?”

“Loxy wasn’t born on the physical plane, but in the imaginal realm,” the Doctor said. “We are going in.”

“In where?” Amy asked. “Jon’s head?”

“Oh, I really don’t advise going in there for real,” Loxy said.

“What’s wrong with my head?” Jon asked.

“Nothing. I love your head. But it’s a particular flavor, and not everyone’s going to like it,” Loxy said.

“Please tell me none of that was an innuendo,” Rory said.

“You’re telling us the imaginal realm is a real place?” Amy asked, distracting anyone from answering Rory’s question.

“Sure,” Jon said. “I travel there all the time.”

“Doctor,” Angela said, her curiosity peaked. “Are you telling me that you’re going to take us, in the TARDIS, into the imaginal, metaphysical, shamanistic dimensions of space/time?”

“How many times have you told me it’s a real place?” the Doctor asked.

“You can’t take the TARDIS there for real,” Angela said.

“Why not?” the Doctor asked. “You swear it’s a real place. Let’s go.”

“It’s not like a place you can point a compass at and steer your ship there,” Angela said.

“Sure it is,” the Doctor said. “Metaphorically speaking, you need two points to any compass. I have Jon and Loxy. I will hook them up to the TARDIS and let her follow her instincts. It will be fun!”

“Doctor,” Amy said. “What happens if this place isn’t a real place?”

“Then, we’ll go nowhere,” the Doctor said, heading to the control room.

“Literally or metaphorically?” Rory called after him.

Angela, Amy, and Rory followed the Doctor. Jon was about to get up and accompany them, but Loxy pulled him back to the lounge, and without much persuasion, he lingered with her. Their lips met and things were about to escalate, but he stopped her.

“What flavor, exactly?” Jon asked.

“Butterscotch,” Loxy said.

“Is that good?” Jon asked.

“Oh, very good,” Loxy said, taking him down to the couch.

Angela caught up to the Doctor and passed him, putting herself in front of the control console.

“Think about this,” Angela said. “You can’t just hook them up to the TARDIS. You need specialized parts, and refined crystals of such purity...”

“Space crystals?” the Doctor asked.

Angela considered. “That might work,” she agreed.

“Doctor, is this dangerous?” Rory asked.

“No!” the Doctor said. “No. I don’t think so. I don’t think anyone’s ever tried it.”

“Maybe there’s a reason no one has ever tried it,” Rory pointed out.

“Angela, are you against going?” the Doctor asked.

“Would that stop you?” Angela asked.

The Doctor considered, his eyes shifting up, then left, and then back, as if following certain trajectories. “No. I am pretty set on doing this.”

“Doctor! Is any of this worth the risk?” Amy said, putting herself in front of the console.

“Do you really need to know everything?”

“Oh, Amy, surely you know the answer to that,” the Doctor said.

“Is it worth our lives? Yours or Angela’s life? Rory’s or my life?” Amy said.

“Jon and Loxy’s lives,” Rory said.

“Yes, them, too. I was getting to them,” Amy said.

“We don’t know there is any risk,” the Doctor said.

“Because no one has ever done this!” Amy said.

“Shamans go there all the time. The Avatars of Ever practically live there,” the Doctor said. “Remember the Roses. That’s where they are. Actually, the whole rose bush is like a thriving city, and the roses are points of interests.”

“They don’t go there in a TARDIS,” Amy said.

“To our knowledge,” the Doctor agreed.

“You need to consider this and assign a value of risk and explain it to Jon and Loxy, because they don’t have a clue what the real world is like,” Amy said.

“Look at them!” the Doctor said, just now realizing they weren’t there. “I mean, if they were here, look at them. They love this kind of stuff. The fact that they are making themselves so at home tell me loads. Well, probably shouldn’t use ‘loads’ with them. OMG, they are so messing with my brain. No! They’ll volunteer.”

“Jon will,” Amy agreed. “He will agree to anything.”

“Especially if there is a skirt attached,” Rory said.

“Yeah, I was going to say that,” Amy said, distracted by that, but then quickly back on task. “He doesn’t know, Doctor. He doesn’t know you, or how things typically play out around you. And Loxy, well, she doesn’t seem quite right yet. You need to spell it out for them, but Jon needs to make this call.”

“If Jon says no, the show is off,” Angela said.

“I will explain it to him,” the Doctor said. “Now, if you will permit me, I am going to shift the TARDIS over to a nice crop of space crystals.”

“You have been sitting on a harvest of space crystals?” Angela said.

“Oh, yeah,” the Doctor said. “Never know when you might need a spare.”

निर्मित

It was decided, by the Doctor of course, that the modifications to the TARDIS would be made to one of the auxiliary control rooms. The room seemed incomplete, as if it had been inspired, but abandoned before completed. There was an energy conduit center of the room. There were stairs down to the sunken floor. There were interrupted rails encircling the space. There was even a door that surprisingly seemed to go nowhere. He was baffled by it the emptiness and the fact he couldn’t pass through the door into the darkness beyond and it took the Doctor drawing him away from it and closing the door before Jon could let the mystery go. As they all feverishly worked to the Doctor’s specifications, the Doctor explained as they went. From Jon’s perspective, the explanation came in spurts, like a narrator’s monologue over top a montage of activity.

Jon and Rory fetched a couch from one of the storage rooms. Rory explained the storage room, and the surprising clutter, by informing Jon that the Doctor receives gifts every now and then. The gifts go in the room. In this case, the item they were told to fetch, was a couch. It took several goes to get the right couch, but they finally brought the correct one, a half circular artifact that when shoved up against one of the railings, fit as if it belong there. It was white, armless couch could comfortably sit three people. It was awkward as hell to relocate and they were happy that the Doctor was happy, because they were ready to protest another trip. Amy and Loxy brought two lighter chair, with wheels, like computer desk chairs. The Doctor and Angela were focused on installing the eight crystals in a precise measured space around the energy conduit,

like points on a clock. Sometimes the Doctor was underneath the floor, yelling up at Angela to shift one of the crystals, but when they had it, it seemed to settle into the deck plating. A fiber optic cable was secured to the bottom of the floor directly under the crystal by a plate that stuck like a magnet. As soon as it was placed it sealed itself, becoming a seamless connection. The crystals lit up with each connection. Jon and Rory couldn't move a crystal by themselves, or even together, which made them appreciate just how strong Angela was.

“Space crystals are the most precious and covetous resource in the entire Galaxy,” the Doctor said, offering a holographic simulation of the origin of space crystal. “They only form when a planetoid with the right mineral composition is pulled into a particular type of orbit, where the planetoid is subjected to continuous cycles of melting and refreezing. Space crystals have been observed forming around gas giants, when the planetoid is heated by tidal forces, but those crystals usually break free from the mass, broken up further by tidal forces, and end up being particulates in a planetary ring. Great for making gadgets and jewelry, but not for the heavy lifting presently needed. You might be surprised to learn, those are not ice crystals around Saturn, but diamonds of the purest quality that they resonate to the frequency of the Universe. Only stars can make supersized space crystals. With each orbit, crystals grow in size until they break free and either get slung out into space, or crash into the parent star. The bigger the crystals, the more valuable. Telepaths love these crystals, because it amplifies transmission, and broadens reception.”

Angela, wearing an aura of light instead of a space suit, went out of the TARDIS on a spacewalk. She flew about as if she were in a dream. The TARDIS hovered near an asteroid, next to one specific asteroid. One side of the asteroid was seemed like a lump of iron, while the other side was a cluster of crystals. Angela selected the crystals, and gently sung them free, using no visible tools. She brought each one in. She told them that singing is the only proper method of harvesting crystals. You were drawn to the right one, you asked it for permission, and you befriended it with song. If it came free, it was meant to be. Crystals, like trees, were living entities in their own right.

Earlier, when the Doctor had been leading them around looking for the ‘right’ room with the right ‘acoustic’ feel, Jon and Loxy both stumbled at the same precise time in the same way, catching each other. They merely laughed it off.

“You okay?” Loxy asked.

“Feel more grounded than ever,” Jon said.

“Tree sprites can do that for you,” Loxy said.

And then, they found themselves kissing, only suddenly separated by the Doctor, who quickly redirected them back to work. The explanation came later:

“Jon and Loxy are so psychically enmeshed you could make the analogy that they are entangled particles,” the Doctor continued. “No matter how far apart they are in space or time, there will always be informational exchange.”

“Space and time are one,” Angela reminded him.

“Don’t confuse them with the facts,” the Doctor said. “I am dumbing it down so they can have some insight into what we’re going to do.”

“You do that to us a lot, don’t you?” Rory asked.

“I generally don’t have the time to catch my companions up to speed. I go for as much accuracy as circumstances allow, and try to push things a long, but if you have any questions about anything specific, I could try and be more precise, but usually, it’s just best to let things go,” the Doctor said.

“Let the Clara thing go,” Angela said.

“I said usually,” the Doctor said.

Loxy and Amy laid down art work using a special paint that glowed. It seemed to glow with its own power, and reflected the intensity of the energy conduit, even pulsing in synchronicity. The pattern seemed to be a blend of Hindi Mandalas and Celtic Cross patterns. Jon and Rory tried to help, but the girls chased them off because it didn’t meet their standards. They didn’t erase their contributions, but encapsulated the art within their art.

“We’re not just free painting,” Loxy said. “We’re making circuits.” Once circuits are laid, you got to go with what’s there.”

“I hope there contributions don’t get us lost,” Amy said.

“It will be what it will be,” Loxy said.

The crystals were in place before the girls finished their artwork, connecting all the crystals to the hub of the energy conduit, leaving the Doctor and Angela finishing up the control console that hung from the railing directly opposite the couch.

“Really nice rings,” Loxy commented to Amy.

“They were,” Amy said.

Rory rolled his eyes. The Doctor reminded him to hold it steady, as Rory was holding a component to the console while the Doctor secured it. Rory asked him to hurry, it was heavy. The Doctor paused to examine the ring.

“Oh, I didn’t notice!” the Doctor said. He now noticed Rory and Amy had matching rings. “Tungsten? They look like little TARDISEs. I love it! Very original.”

“You can find them in any gift shop in London,” Amy said.

“How was I supposed to know I should have patented the design?” Rory said.

Angela asked the Doctor to focus on the component, as the crystal was delicate.

“I am really excited about this,” Loxy told Jon, hugging him.

“I don’t recommend getting too excited. Things with the Doctor may start off good, but you always end up running,” Amy said.

“Oh, I don’t run,” Jon said.

“Because you’re philosophically opposed?” Rory asked.

“I assure you, travel with the Doctor and you will see things that will make you run,” Amy said.

“The best way to end a nightmare is to stand your ground,” Jon said.

“We did get off to a good start, though,” Loxy said.

Jon couldn’t argue with her choice of words, but it gave him pause, even as he gave visual agreement.

“How good?” Rory asked.

“Orgasmic,” Jon said.

Loxy agreed with his word. Amy looked to the Doctor.

“It was a medical procedure,” the Doctor said. “The bullet wound below the clavicle, remember? I healed him using alien tech. Apparently, it has a side effect with humans.”

“I have had lots of wounds. I didn’t receive any um, special treatments,” Rory said. And to his wife. “Just saying.”

“That particular device only treats projectile wounds to the shoulder,” the Doctor said.

“Do you have to be injured to use it?” Rory asked.

“You want me to shoot you?” Amy said.

“You two should really let Jon counsel you,” Loxy said.

“Because he’s a counselor now?” Amy said.

“He’s a read a lot of books,” Loxy said.

“Maybe counseling wouldn’t hurt,” Rory said.

“Seriously, you want the hypnotist to therapatize us?” Amy said.

“No, not like that, but, maybe we could use someone to talk to. It’s not like we can go to a real counselor, because, well, if we told them even half of our story they’d commit us,” Rory said.

“Jon, help them out,” Loxy insisted.

“I really think we should stay out of their affairs,” Jon said.

“You’re great at this stuff,” Loxy encouraged. A little more stern. “Help them.”

Amy crossed her arms. Rory, no longer needed by the Doctor, drew closer.

“Okay,” Jon said. “But you should know, I only play a counselor on TV.”

“Ha ha,” Amy said.

“Jon, no jokes, just talk to them,” Loxy said. “Like a normal person.”

“You know how difficult it is for me to be normal,” Jon said. Loxy put her hands on to her hip. “Fine, we’ll give it a go.” He turned to Rory and Amy. “I need to know something straight up. Is this divorce counseling or marriage counseling? Because those are two different animals.”

“Can’t it just be counseling?” Rory asked.

“I suppose, but, this seems to be like couples counseling, and um, I think I need to tell you, if we start as a couple, we stay as a couple. I won’t be able to counsel you separate, and if you come at me alone, I may have to turn you away, or we agree in advance that there will be no secrets, but, no, I need to know what this is,” Jon asked.

“Marriage counseling,” they both said in unison.

“Oh, great commitment,” Jon said, actually excited. “We’re halfway there.”

Jon pointed to the couch. They sat down, opposite ends of the couch. Jon rolled a chair over, spinning as he came, and stopped an appropriate distance away from the couch.

“You’re enjoying this?” Amy said.

“Tremendously,” Jon said.

“He likes to be useful,” Loxy said.

“I notice a lot of distance between the two of you,” Jon said.

“You’re going to judge us because of how we sat apart?” Amy said.

“Just an observation,” Jon said. “Might mean nothing. Could be a metaphor. So, catch me up to speed, what’s going on?”

Both Amy and Rory started together, then stopped. “Go ahead,” Amy said, with a sigh.

“No, sorry, I over spoke you,” Rory said.

“What’s going on is we can’t even decide who goes first,” Amy said.

“Who’s on first,” Jon said.

“What?” Amy and Rory said.

“Correct, what’s on second,” Jon said.

Loxy hit him. “Stop making jokes. You’re not funny, and this is serious business.”

“Sorry,” Jon said. “Amy, Rory, I am not making fun of you. I consider this space hallowed ground, and I was hoping a little levity would kind of take the edge off. I truly want to help you. I invite you both to correct me when I get things wrong, or if I step on your toes. We’re learning to dance together. Now, Rory, it seems to me that you always put Amy first.”

“Of course,” Rory said. “She is the most important person in my life.”

“Aww,” Loxy said. Jon motioned for her not to do that. She pouted a little.

“Amy, how does it feel to be put on a pedestal?” Jon asked.

“It’s kind of annoying,” Amy said. “I don’t want a servant, I want a partner.”

“It’s always about you because any time I try to make it about me, you say I am being needy,” Rory said.

“When did I ever say that?” Amy said.

“Right before we entered the TARDIS back on Earth,” Rory said.

“No, I said you were being clingy,” Amy said.

“We weren’t finished with our argument and you were already halfway to the TARDIS before you even knew the Doctor was inviting us for another outing. Chasing you wasn’t clingy, I just wanted to finish something we started,” Rory said.

“It was finished,” Amy said.

“No, it was interrupted,” Rory said.

“This is not helpful,” Amy said, starting to get up.

“Hold up,” Jon said, gesturing for her to sit. She was about to walk away so he was more forceful “Sit!” Jon snapped. Amy surprisingly complied. “You agreed, this is marriage

counseling. Getting up and walking off is something else. You were both communicating. This is good.”

“How is this good?” Rory said.

“You’re trying. You’re not hitting each other. Good,” Jon said. “You both sound angry.”

“You think?!” Amy said.

Jon blinked. He stared at them both, almost not breathing, but when he took his next breath it was deep. “Do either of you find yourself being easily irritated and walking away, only to later realize the thing or comment that set you off was innocuous?”

Amy and Rory both nodded, looking away from each other.

“Do you experience sudden, intrusive memories, or disturbing thoughts that don’t necessarily relate to the moment you’re experiencing them?” Jon asked.

Amy and Rory came a little off the back of the couch.

“You both have experienced some really intense, stressful situations,” Jon said. “Maybe life threatening, more than once.”

Their backs came off the back of the couch, as they leaned a little closer to Jon, clearly listening.

“Maybe you feel upset when you’re reminded of these stressful events,” Jon said.

“Maybe you have strong physical reactions to these memories or thoughts of these events. Maybe you even try to avoid external reminders of these stressful events, and yet, the two of you are integrally related to these events, and so you’re kind of immersed in this cyclic distance pursuer of extreme retreat from and then extreme return to intimacy.”

Amy’s eyes were kind of big. Rory wiped a tear.

“Perhaps you blame yourselves. Maybe you have strong repetitive, negative feelings of overwhelming fear, shame, horror, anger, guilt...”

“Is this a trick?” Amy said.

“Have either of you noticed sounds seem louder?” Jon asked.

“OMG,” Rory said, putting his hand on the couch, as if reaching to Amy unconsciously. “We don’t even go to the movies anymore because we both agree it’s just too loud.”

“And all the fighting,” Amy said. “Why is everything about fighting, and shooting, and blowing things up?”

“And it’s not even like you can see it any more. It’s all digital and they speed it up and blur out the action to hide the fact they didn’t put any effort into choreographing the fights,” Cory added.

“We use to love going to the movies,” Amy agreed. Her hand lighted on his, perhaps accidentally, but on contact, it folded around his. “But, it’s not just movies that are too loud. I get irritated just hearing him spin the sugar into the tea. I am like, God, how much sugar are you going to put in that. The clink on the spoon against the cup, I just want to smash him with the cup.”

“Her snoring wakes me and I have to leave the room,” Rory said.

“I don’t snore,” Amy said, withdrawing her hand.

“I taped you,” Rory said.

“And I get really pissed and frightened waking up to find you not there,” Amy said.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Rory said.

“I just thought I was being silly,” Amy said.

“You have to tell me these things,” Rory said.

“I would, but I feel like I am mad all the time and I am tired of complaining or asking for stuff, and so, I can appreciate you not wanting to be around me,” Amy said.

“I will always want to be around you, even if I need to walk off an emotion,” Rory said.

Rory drew her to him even as he shifted closer. She rested her head on his shoulder. They both looked to Jon.

“Do you find it difficult to hold positive feelings, like happiness, or love towards others, to each other?” Jon asked.

“Dreadfully hard,” Amy said.

“What’s wrong with us?” Rory said.

“Hold on,” Jon said. “Do you find yourselves both taking excessive risks that could cause you harm?”

“Yeah,” Amy said. Rory just nodded.

“Do you police the doors and windows before bed, and or, maybe wake up frequently, and re-check the locks on the doors and windows?” Jon asked.

“Yeah,” Rory said. “Which is just crazy, because most the things that come for us don’t use doors.”

“When you eat out, do you pick seats with your backs to the walls?” Jon asked

“How do you know this stuff?” Amy said.

“Are you spying on us?” Rory asked. “You’re spying on my wife.”

“Stop being paranoid,” Amy said.

“What’s wrong with us?” Rory asked again.

“Nothing,” Jon said.

“Seriously!” Amy snapped. “You just took us through a whole list where we agreed to everything and you’re saying there is nothing wrong with us?”

“You’re having normal responses to extreme stress. Technically, it’s called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but I usually drop the disorder part. A reaction to extreme stress is just a normal response to bad shit, that’s normal, not a disorder,” Jon said.

“So, what do we do?” Amy asked.

“Take Xanax?” Rory asked.

“Oh, no, no, you don’t want to do that,” Jon said.

“Why?” Amy said.

“Because, well, I am not a Doctor, I can’t prescribe,” Jon said.

“But, you think we should get a doctor to prescribe us anti-anxiety meds?” Rory said.

“Are you a nurse?” Jon asked.

“Yes, why?” Rory asked.

“I suspect you have codependency issues, and that’s another reason to avoid addictive substances,” Jon said.

“That’s not a real thing,” Rory said.

“I told you this,” Amy said.

“It’s not in the DSM V, which means it’s not a real thing,” Rory said.

“It’s a real thing. It’s not in the DSM V because the pharmaceuticals can’t throw a drug at it. Seriously, the term has been around since the 1970’s and it’s the best, well defined term in all of mental health. It’s a real thing. It just requires therapy. And insurance doesn’t like therapy, because it generally takes time and work and persistence to heal from some things, and it doesn’t follow a schedule, so CBT is out,” Jon said.

“So, why no anti-anxiety meds?” Amy asked.

“Here’s how this typically works out. You go to a Doctor who fails to realize your anxiety is related to PTSD. He gives you Xanax. Xanax works. For a moment. It doesn’t eliminate your stress, especially PTSD related stress because it is internally generated, resulting in hyper arousal and hyper vigilance. The brain is making the hyper response to find threats. Taking Xanax suppresses your stress response. So does alcohol, by the way. Hello, depressant, but because your brain doesn’t believe it’s safe, it jacks up your stress response in order to compensate for the suppressant. It’s like taking a sleeping aid, but you know you have this important deadline, so your brain doesn’t want you to go sleep. So, in addition to your brain increasing its hyper response, your body also becomes immune to the present does, so it will take increasingly greater doses to get just the minimum effect of suppressing your anxiety response. Eventually, your doctor is going to say, I can’t give you more Xanax because more could harm you. It could kill you, or result in health problems from sustained, increased use. So, if this was your primary care, he cuts you off and sends you to psychiatrist, which clearly he should have done to begin with because he missed the fact this his treatment modality isn’t working because it’s PTSD, not just general anxiety, or he would have seen better results, but just even general anxiety has the same curve towards increasing dose over time to get the same effect. But it gets worse. The psychiatrist don’t want to prescribe Xanax. The state sponsored mental health clinics, at least in Texas, they don’t give Xanax, but it’s the only thing you were given that works, cause it does work, and so now, not only are you jonesing for a legitimate drug which was given you for legitimate reasons, being cut off by the very medical community that’s supposed to be helping you, now you’re going to the street to get the drug illegally, which causes the state to step in because they don’t like people self-medicating, even if they have a history and valid reason for doing so, and so now you’re in jail because the state doesn’t want you thinking for yourself, but you’re in jail and still not getting your needs met. So, let’s cut to the chase and start with the solution set that results in the best, long term health benefits. Counseling.”

Even the Doctor and Angela were drawn from their work to listen to the speech.

“You’re really good,” the Doctor said.

“We have PTSD because of you!” Rory snapped.

“I am not responsible for bad things that happen to us,” the Doctor said.

“Maybe companions should have assigned counselors after a tour of duty,” Loxy said.

“Jon, would you like to counsel with my companions?” the Doctor asked.

“No,” Jon said.

“Oh! But you’re really good at this. They could call you the counselor,” Loxy said.

“Um, yeah, Amy, what would your first question be?” Jon asked.

“Are you licensed?” Amy asked.

“Why, yes, Amy, I am licensed counselor in the state of Texas,” Jon said, in a cliché counseling voice. “Damn, I really need a pipe to pull this off. Anyway, I suspect I am presently operating outside the scope of my licensure, being off planet and all. I suppose if I go back in time before licensing boards, then I could do what I like. What do you think? Give it a go?”

“Um, no,” Amy said.

“Yeah, but, it’s not like the Doctor’s a real Doctor,” Angela said. “You don’t have to be a real counselor to be helpful.”

“Hey, I am a real Doctor…” the Doctor said.

“You could become a pastor, that would give you a wider range of flexibility in counseling folks,” Rory said.

“Start a religion?” Jon asked.

“I am now a Druid,” Loxy said.

“No you’re not,” Jon said.

“I am going to be,” Loxy said.

“Um, okay, then so will I,” Jon said. “As a practicing Druid, we shall walk in the forest and commune with nature and talk about life until we are cured.”

“Deal,” Rory and Amy said, together.

“No! I am not a real therapist. Just because I guessed what’s wrong with you doesn’t mean I am right or that I have a clues as to best help you. Based on what I am hearing, everyone that travels with the Doctor needs a therapist,” Jon said.

“And I am offering you a full time job,” the Doctor said.

“Can I stay on the TARDIS?” Jon asked.

“No,” the Doctor said.

“Bad things happen on the TARDIS, too,” Angela said.

“Like what?”

“It’s blown up a couple of times,” Amy said.

“You were not there for those events,” the Doctor said.

“You crashed into my aunt’s back yard!” Amy said. “The pool went into the library?!
And it took you forever to come back!”

“How did you save the books?” Loxy asked.

“I dried them out,” the Doctor said.

“Is it a big library?” Loxy asked.

“It could take forever,” Amy said.

“I did not leave you forever,” the Doctor said.

“You have a time machine,” Jon said. “You could have corrected your mistake?”

“It’s complicated,” the Doctor said. “And it was not forever.”

“Even 24 hours for a little girl is too long!” Amy said.

“Abandonment issues,” Jon added to his list.

Amy pointed at him. “Don’t you dare tell me to be British and do the whole stiff upper lip thing.”

“Oh, no, I would never do that,” Jon said. “Your emotional response is valid. Your language is valid. And this is another legitimate explanation for the distance pursuer dance feel to your relationship with Rory. People leave you.”

Amy began to cry.

“You made her cry...” Rory began.

Jon held a hand up asking to be quiet. He drew his chair a little closer to Amy, but he did not touch her. He did not interrupt her, nor did not offer a tissue. Not that he had one. She finally came about, wiped her nose with one sleeve and then her eyes with the other.

“It’s not the first time I have heard this,” Amy said. “Why am I crying now and not then?”

“Depends on the ‘then.’ If it was back when you were a child, well, that’s probably because, you were angry then,” Jon said.

“I am angry now!” Amy said.

“You were angry then because no one believed you. People don’t like being dismissed or ignored. You still had abandonment issues, but you spent most of your energy on just trying to prove to yourself and others you weren’t crazy,” Jon said. “Now, you’re angry because of something else. Being angry can be useful, as it gives you just enough energy to get up in the

morning. It can be a protective shield against further hurt, real or perceived. Think back to all your life adventures with the doctor, contrasted with just regular life. Count the experiences with the Doctor has extreme, super highlighted examples. So, you were having this experience and it was stressful, but in the moment, you're very close to having an epiphany of sorts, and just when you think you have found enough insight into the situation or into life, something bad comes out of the shadows and you run."

Rory nodded. "That's about the way of it."

"Now, I want you to imagine a carbonated drink. If you shake the container before opening it, or drop it, and then you open it, what happens?" Jon asked.

"It bubbles out," Amy said.

"Yeah. Same with scuba diving, actually. If you stay underwater at a certain depth for certain time, you get nitrogen built up in your tissue, and when you surface too quickly, it bleeds out very much like the carbonated drink," Jon said. "All the accumulated stress is in your brain. Every single time you had a quiet moment, the brain said, oh, yay, I can now start working on this stuff I got built up. So it lets it out. It comes out, but you, not your brain, interprets this as a threat, and the brain the feels anxiety. It comes out as flashbacks and nightmares and emotions and behaviors. When that happens, the person usually does one of two things. They self-medicate to not deal with it, or they create social drama, so that the external pressure is greater than the internal pressure. Your brain always prioritizes which stuff needs the most immediate attention, and so if there is external drama, you can't unpack the internal stuff."

"So, you're saying our relationships problems are all about me," Amy said.

"No, you said that, and I suspect you believe that, Amy, but you don't live in a vacuum. We co-evolve together. Our partners tend to be opposites. Your response to this is to fight or runaway. Creating drama is fighting. Rory's response is to nurture. His nurture response is exaggerated, which is one reason it irritates you because your response is the opposite, but it, too, is a response to the exact same thing. He also has abandonment issues. He gives you the love he thinks will heal you because he imagines that very thing will heal him. He hasn't sorted out, that's not how he reaches Amy. You're both in the same boat and you're both responding to the same shit. You're rowing in opposite directions, and wondering why you're going in circles. That's human. That's what we do. I mean, look at me. I am responding to the same shit. But, instead of not finding a real Amy to love and die for, I created my own invisible friend."

“A really cool invisible friend,” Loxy pointed out.

Amy laughed.

“And really cute,” Rory said.

Amy agreed. “She is, isn’t she?”

Amy and Rory leaned into each other again.

“And this is where something bad usually happens to make us start running,” Angela said.

“Not, today,” the Doctor said. “Jon, Loxy, we’re going to need your help to complete the calibrations.”

They left Amy and Rory together on the couch.

Chapter 6

Angela, Amy, and Rory were invited to sit on the couch. The computer chairs were outside the sunken floor, near computer stations. The Doctor placed Jon and Loxy at opposite ends of a circle, placed within circles of their own. The Doctor had a circle to stand in front of the console, a space devoid of any artwork or symbols on the floor. He pulled a lever. The circle containing Jon and Loxy began to move, a band of the floor that spun, causing them to orbit the energy conduit. An inner ring spun counter clockwise and the next one in, spun clockwise.

“Is this going to hurt?” Jon asked.

“Probably not,” the Doctor said. “Triangulation requires a three points of reference. There is Jon, there is Loxy, and there is the Tree of Ever who has graciously link with Loxy and provided her an Avatar. There is overlapping triangles. The Tree of Ever is the offspring of Jon and Angela.”

“That’s kind of creepy,” Rory said.

“That make’s Loxy his child?” Amy asked.

“No,” Angela said. “The Tree is our child. Elizabeth Grace Ever.”

“Oh, that’s a nice name,” Amy said.

“But, Jon,” Rory said. “You made Loxy, so doesn’t that make her your child? Which, given your relationship is clearly intimate, makes that a little creepy.”

“There’s no way to make Tulpas without it being creepy,” the Doctor said.

“I withdraw my question,” Rory said.

“It’s a good question,” Loxy said. “Don’t worry.”

“You’re okay with the weirdness?” Amy asked.

“Why shouldn’t I be?” Loxy asked. “At our deepest essence, we are sexual beings. We have thoughts and feelings, some of which are biologically induced, but most the time, they’re a reflection of our society’s, not even our own. I exist outside of time and space. Have I been influenced by dwelling in Jon’s mind? Absolutely. He has an extremely high libido set point. He also picked up some energy from early childhood trauma. But I, too, bring my own energy and background story, and so he and I influence each other. If you really get down to the heart of this, we are all merely brothers and sisters in this Universe because we all come from the same place. We are the children of Stars.”

“That is the first time you have acknowledged you live outside of time and space,” the Doctor said.

“It’s not a great secret, Doctor,” Loxy said. “No one truly lives in space/time. People don’t understand space/time. Even time lords don’t really have great grasp of time, though they really want to impress you that they have a monopoly on that. I am very clever and sometimes I struggle with it, but I know this much. Time is not linear, because it’s not a thing, but more like a perspective, and it’s much more contextual than people like to admit, and highly subjective, which is why relativity is so hard for most people because, we’re used to looking at a clock and a calendar and saying today is Tuesday, but it is never really Tuesday, because the half-life of the Universe never allows you to actually arrive at Tuesday, and if you even try you quickly discover that it is even more subjective than that, like your wrist watch on Earth ticks faster in orbit or even faster outside the galaxy. People get really pissed off if you tell them that, and you seem dazed, Jon, are you following me at all?”

“Could you say that all again?” Jon asked.

“Probably not,” Loxy said. “Should I rehearse it for a convention?”

“What do you mean we don’t have good grasp of time?” the Doctor demanded.

“It wasn’t a slight,” Angela said.

“How is it not a slight?” the Doctor asked.

“Doctor,” Angela said, saying Doctor really slow as if trying to measure her response. “When we first met, I was immensely irritated by the arrogance of the Time Lords. You can’t truly understand all of space/time in its entirety and remain arrogant. Full knowledge results in humility, love, and compassion. That is the only true answer to this thing we call life.”

“I exude humility, love, and compassion,” the Doctor said.

“More than any non-Everan I have ever met,” Angela said. “More than any Time Lord I have ever known. I love you not just because there is no other Universal response but to love, to love you, but because you’re almost there.”

“Speaking of almost there,” the Doctor said. “It’s time to travel.”

“Do Jon and I need to think of anything special?” Loxy asked.

“Nope, I am leaving it all to Sexy,” the Doctor said.

“Thank you, Doctor,” Jon said.

“You’re not Sexy,” Amy said.

“Oh, you’re not looking with the right eyes,” Loxy said. “May to December can be really sexy. Older men are much more stable than the younger counter parts. And most work really hard to make sure a partner is satisfied. Jon, more than anyone I know works really hard. That, and women mature emotionally way before men.”

“She wasn’t saying Jon isn’t attractive,” Angela said. “And the Doctor wasn’t calling him Sexy.”

“Oh. Sorry for the speech. And thank, you, Doctor,” Loxy said.

“You’re not Sexy, either,” the Doctor said.

“I beg to differ. I have seen how you have undressed me with your eyes,” Loxy said.

“I have not done anything of the sort to you with my eyes!” the Doctor insisted.

“It’s okay, Doctor. Photons are free,” Jon said.

“The Doctor’s an automatic free pass, right?” Loxy asked.

“Well, yeah,” Jon said.

Rory said, “No.”

“I am staring at you intensely because I am trying to figure out if you’re real or not,” the Doctor said.

“Jon, verdict please?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, you were real before you were real,” Jon said.

“And that is where we are going!” the Doctor said, pulling a lever, spun a dozen twirling things, things that looked a lot like ‘Fidget Spinners’ attached to the console. “Don’t fail me now, Sexy!”

“That’s his pet name for the TARDIS,” Angela clarified.

A deep red luminescence encompassed the main energy conduit, and pushed out from the center to encompass the floor circuits. There was a rumbling throughout the ship that rumbled up through the deck, into their feet, and they had to open their mouth to keep their teeth from chattering.

“That’s one, come on, Sexy,” the Doctor said. He sounded like he was in a helicopter. “Come on.”

Orange light pushed through the main energy conduit. “Oh, I love orange!” Loxy said. She sounded like she was yelling into a fan, her voice was that choppy.

Yellow was next. “What, we’re passing through a rainbow?” Rory asked

“Octaves,” Angela said. “Probably should have installed seatbelts.”

Green was brilliant. It flooded the room like moonlight through a swimming pool at night and casted closing triangular patterns around the room, like the shadows of ripples of a pool.

“This is my favorite space in the whole universe,” Angela said.

Blue flared like sky. There was sky everywhere and yet, they were still clearly, just in the TARDIS. A blink of confusion might cause the couch to look like a cloud. Jon started humming ‘Mr Blue Skies,’ while bring his arms up to fly as if he were a plane, soaring.

“Yes!” the Doctor yelled. “Almost there!”

“Stay on target,” Jon said.

Rory laughed. Amy looked to him. “It was a Star Wars reference.”

“Men,” Amy said.

“Why are the stars at war?” Angela asked.

“OMG,” Jon said.

“Oh, I know, I feel it, too,” Loxy said, Pushing down on her dress as if to hold it in places against an updraft. Her knees bent.

“Why don’t we ever get this?” Rory asked.

Indigo pushed softly, subtly.

“We going to arrive any moment now,” the Doctor yelled, holding onto the console.

“Already there!” Loxy cried.

Jon squeezed his eyes shut and then let out huge sigh and then laughed. “Okay, okay, enough.”

Violet pushed through and faded, the whole control room went dark. The main energy conduit slowly came back to life, its normal blue. Loxy was laying on the floor, holding her stomach and breathing into it. The Doctor let go of the console. Jon was also on the floor, staggered breathing, not quite an epileptic fit.

“Well, that was very anticlimactic,” the Doctor said. “I really expected a bump or some jarring left or right kind of throes, but nothing.” He turned to his guest. “What’s wrong with Jon and Loxy?”

“This is really unfair,” Rory said.

“I am going to need a change of clothes,” Jon said.

“Me, too,” Loxy said.

Amy got up to leave.

“Where are you going?” the Doctor asked.

“You said I didn’t have to raise my hands,” Amy said, and she ran to the Universal.

“Loxy?” Jon asked.

“Yes, dear?” Loxy asked.

“We need a TARDIS,” Jon said.

“Oh, yeah,” Loxy agreed.

निर्मित

Outside the TARDIS was a field of green grass. It was perfect grass, like golf course perfect, only perfectly flat in all directions, all the way to the horizon. Uninterrupted blue skies stretched out to what could be infinity. There was clearly sunlight, but there was no noticeable sun to be found. Tethered like birthday balloons filled with confetti, were an odd sort of plant. In some ways, looking into the balloons was like looking into a puddle to find the world mirrored, only you could see the confetti floating within, like a shaken snow globe of glitter. Floating bubbles were in the air. They were like regular soap bubble, distinctively different than the plants that looked like balloons. Bubbles of all sizes. Bubbles big enough to engulf a person, or even four. The Doctor began collecting information with his sonic screwdriver.

“What is this place?” Amy asked.

“This is a crossover world,” Angela said. “It’s not really a world. It’s more like a place, a reference point, between universes and dimensions.”

“A way station of sorts,” Jon said. Loxy hugged Jon and then went to examine one of the balloon flowers.

“That’s a reasonable simile,” Angela agreed. “These are the places that spark the beliefs in flat earth.”

“Oh, those people are crazy,” Rory said.

“No,” the Doctor said. “Just not tuned into our reality.”

“And, what’s with the bubbles?” Amy said.

“Thought bubbles,” Angela said. “They convey energy and information between the Universes.”

“There sure are a lot of them,” Amy said.

“There are a lot of Universes,” the Doctor said.

“So, you’re saying flat earthers tune into here?” Rory said.

“Not necessarily precisely here, but worlds like this,” Angela said. “People mistakenly assume that different universes are separated by distance, but in fact, they frequently overlap.”

“Oh, that’s why they say that 96 percent of the universe is invisible?” Jon asked.

“Um, no, that’s because of dark matter,” the Doctor said.

“Matter that no one can see, and doesn’t interact with visible matter,” Loxy said. “Sounds like coexisting space/time continuums to me.”

“Your perspective may be unduly biased due to your relationship with Jon,” the Doctor said.

“Spoken just like a Time Lord. The Doctor’s reality always supersedes our,” Angela said. “I agree with Jon and Loxy.”

“Of course you do,” the Doctor said. “You did all the math of the universe and then when it didn’t work out you added in parentheses: ‘and then a miracle occurs.’”

“One doesn’t escape Maya by trying to get out, but by going in,” Angela said.

“But it’s bigger on the inside,” Jon said.

“Welcome to our world, Jon,” Angela said. “The Universe seems finite when heading from inside out. But when you go from outside in, you flip the curve.”

“Oh, this is absolutely lovely,” Loxy said.

“Yeah, presently,” Amy said. “Things don’t tend to stay that way.”

“Are you talking about this place or us,” Rory asked.

“OMG, it’s not always about you,” Amy said.

“Rory,” Jon said. “Your reaction to Amy’s statement is valid given your origin’s frame of reference, supported by a history of distance pursuer relationship dynamics, and frequent fight or flight responses due to PTSD, but that’s the thing, you’re responding to an artifact of the past, a tulpa, not the present moment. Your response interjects the past into the present, which triggers Amy to retreat, and the dance begins again.”

“So, you’re telling me to shut up and just keep it to myself,” Rory said.

“No, yes, I don’t know,” Jon said. “Look, Rory, Amy, you invited me to help you with this, and both of you are sensitive. In a good way. You’re looking for threats. Yay. If you know the tires on your car are worn, but you can’t afford new ones, you don’t go speeding in the rain. You have to drive safely, using the knowledge you have. It takes longer to break with worn tires. You two are smart, you have to cultivate awareness of not only your reactions to the environment but also to each other’s reactions within that environment, and then analyse your reactions to your own reactions to the initial responses. And then, cultivate kindness by choosing a response outside of your habituated script. You’re both afflicted. Slow it down. Learn to walk again. You are now in rehab.”

“Oh,” Loxy said, having brushed up against a balloon and setting it adrift. At a certain height it broke, scattering confetti to the wind.

“I feel like I have been here before,” Jon said.

“You have,” the Doctor said.

“I have?” Jon said.

“The brain doesn’t just make models of personalities,” the Doctor said. “It makes maps, 3D rendering of every environment that you have ever visited, in person or in imagination. We could not have arrived here if you had never been here. The question is, why are we here, and how does it relate to Loxy and Clara.”

“I would like more trees,” Angela said. “Is this place a reflection of how you treated trees on Earth?”

“No, Angela, this is not about you,” the Doctor said. “These balloon plants are native to Onshar. Clearly, this is not Onshar, though. The composition of the atmosphere is not right. The plants do seem to be thriving. I am still trying to figure out the bubbles. I am beginning to think they’re not thought bubbles.”

“Why?” Amy said.

“Because they’re empty?!” Loxy said.

“Who are you?” the Doctor asked.

“Well, I am still sad for the Earth,” Angela said. “If you knew that people came from trees, you would be much kinder to forests.”

A small bubble approached Loxy. “Do you think they’re alive?” Loxy asked, reaching out to gingerly touch the little one. It popped. “Oh! I am so sorry.”

Amy seemed tense. “Odd, they’re not trying to kill us after that,” Amy said. “Not alive.”
“Or indifferent,” Rory said.

“The balloon plants spread their seed by sending them adrift,” Angela said. “Maybe these bubbles are similar...”

“Of course!” the Doctor said, spinning. “How could I have forgotten such a wondrous thing like this? Oh, I have so missed you, Angela.” He turned to smile at her, even as she was reaching to touch one of the larger bubbles. “Wait! Don’t!”

The Doctor grabbed Angela’s arm to pull her away from the bubble, but she had already touched it. They were both, suddenly, sucked up into the inside the bubble. They were floating within it. The Doctor was saying something, shouting, but no sound emerged. Amy was about to touch it, but Jon blocked her.

“He needs our help,” Amy said, shoving Jon aside to reach for the bubble. It shrunk, and disappeared. “Oh!”

Amy turned to Jon, clearly angry. Her anger had faded when she realized she had shoved Jon hard enough that he had stumbled into Rory, who fell back, caught by Loxy, who then fell backwards into a large bubble, literally carrying Rory into it with her. Amy ran to Rory, but just as the Doctor’s bubble had receded away, the bubble shrunk and disappeared.

“No!” Amy said.

Amy went over and grabbed Jon’s arm and pulled him towards the TARDIS.

“Run,” Amy said.

“I don’t run,” Jon said.

“We got to get back to the TARDIS now,” Amy said.

Jon pulled her to a stop, as it was already too late. A bubble had captured the TARDIS. It shrunk and disappeared.

“Oh, damn it,” Amy said. She pushed Jon. “This is your fault.”

“How this my fault?” Jon asked.

“You’re old, your slow, you’re maybe clever like the Rainman clever, but it’s not useful if all you can remember is the waitresses phone number who you never met,” Amy said.

“Yeah,” Jon said, almost as if in agreement with her. “That scene always bothered me. Waitresses don’t usually introduce themselves by their last names, and even if they did, the

chances of there being only one woman by that name in the phone book, and remembering just her number and address, well, it struck me as a bit odd. Not impossible, just..."

"Shut up," Amy said. "I am thinking this through."

Jon shut up, and pocketed his hands in his jacket. Amy decided. She took Jon by the arm and walked towards a giant bubble. Jon dug his heels in.

"Hold on," Jon said. "What are you about?"

"We're going to take a ride," Amy said.

"No!" Jon said. "A ride where?"

"Where ever the bubbles take us," Amy said.

"How do you know they take us anywhere? Maybe they're like the planet's digestive process. We go in there, the planet eats us," Jon said.

"OMG, I was so ready do this," Amy said. "No. I am pretty sure the Doctor was saying 'Life Pods' from his bubble before it vanished."

"Or, he was saying, 'don't touch,'" Jon said.

"You and I are going where they went," Amy said.

"We don't know where they went. We should stay here and wait for the Doctor to come and collect us," Jon said.

"He's not coming for us," Amy said.

"We don't know that," Jon said.

"He needs our help," Amy insisted.

"You don't know that," Jon said.

"We are going," Amy said.

"No," Jon said.

"Give me one good reason why," Amy said.

"I will give you three," Jon said.

"One is suffice," Amy said.

"It has to be three," Jon said. "And you have to have three reasons to go, more than 'the Doctor needs help,' because the Doctor strikes me as fairly self-sufficient."

"Fine, three, go," Amy said.

"The Doctor's clever, he doesn't need us," Jon said.

"You already said that," Amy said.

“I was clarifying, and that’s one,” Jon said.

“The Doctor’s cleverness is to take advantage of circumstantial serendipity, which means we need to go in order for something to happen to provoke his cleverness,” Amy said. “Go.”

“I am still sorting what you just said,” Jon said.

“Two, go, now, or forfeit,” Amy said.

“Um, I was actually stalling till I came up with something,” Jon said.

“I am going to count to three, then we’re going,” Amy said.

“Can I reuse they might be digestive bubbles?” Jon asked.

“No. One,” Amy said.

“What if they take us somewhere worse than this place?” Jon asked.

“I accept that question as a reason to hesitate,” Amy said. “But, I don’t think we could eat the grass or the balloons, and so, we’d eventually have to try and leave here anyway.”

“That’s actually a good counter,” Jon said. “Damn it.”

“You and Loxy do this all the time?” Amy asked.

“Yeah, pretty much,” Jon said.

“Okay, three, go,” Amy said.

“I am sorting,” Jon said.

“Would it help if I counted?” Amy asked.

“No, you sound angry when you count and it reminds me of my mom and I start to feel anxious and it’s hard to think when you’re anxious,” Jon said.

“I remind you of your mom?” Amy asked, her hands akimbo. “Seriously?”

“When you do that, yes. Counting seems like escalations, but that could just be my association with females who are counting, and not necessarily a reaction to you counting,” Jon said.

“I am going to start counting,” Amy said.

“Is it always this fast paced around you and the Doctor?” Jon asked.

“One,” Amy said.

“Um, because, um, Rory will kill me for getting in a bubble with you,” Jon said.

“OMG, it’s not like a bubble is a lift with Victoria in it,” Amy snapped.

“They could be reality bubbles in which means, whatever we think could come to pass,” Jon said.

“I assure you, my reality will cancel out your reality,” Amy said.

“Okay, if you’re really sure, alright, we’ll do this,” Jon said.

“Okay, here we go,” Amy said.

“No, wait wait wait,” Jon said.

“What?!” Amy said.

“Please, don’t yell, but you still haven’t given me your third reason,” Jon said.

“Because, I said so,” Amy said.

“That’s not a reason,” Jon snapped.

Amy stared at him.

“Okay,” Jon surrendered. He closed his eyes. “Rory is not going to like this.”

“He’ll understand,” Amy said.

“Seriously, this is not a good idea,” Jon said. “Let’s say you’re right, they’re life pods of a sort. I am still stuck on my second point that we don’t know where they will take us, or if it is better.”

“Do you have chronic apathy,” Amy said.

“That’s not in the DSM V,” Jon said.

“I hate that argument. I’ve already countered with we can’t just stay here forever,” Amy said.

“But we could stay for a moment. Just kind of wait to see what happens,” Jon said.

“Maybe talk, and get to know each other a little better.”

“We’re not going to get to know each other better,” Amy said.

“Oh, okay,” Jon said. He was uncomfortable with the fact that he felt rejected even as she was clutching his arm.

“Look, Jon. There’s no TARDIS. We’re alone in a world between worlds. What good is it for us if we stay here till we’re hungry or tired and can’t fight and can’t run? I am going.”

“Okay,” Jon said.

“You’re going with me,” Amy said.

“Why?” Jon said.

“Because I am not leaving you,” Amy said.

“You don’t even like me,” Jon said.

“OMG, you sound just like Rory,” Amy said. “How I feel about you is irrelevant. We don’t leave people. We’re staying together. And we’re going.”

“Okay,” Jon said.

“Really?” Amy said. “You’re supposed to talk me out of this!”

“I’ve tried really hard, but you’re being rational,” Jon said. “Sure, it feels like a plot contrivance that’s leaving me alone with Rory’s wife, which is how my dreams normally play out, and why I don’t have a lot of male friends that are married... Honestly, I don’t really have any friends, because, well, I am just a little off.”

“I’ve noticed,” Amy said. “But it’s a good off. I mean, even the Doctor’s a bit eccentric. It’s okay, Jon. It took me a moment to understand you, but, you’re actually pretty normal. At least, normal as defined by the circle people I usually associate with. So, come on, let’s do this.”

“I thought you wanted me to talk you out of doing this,” Jon said.

“Do you have any good reasons for not going?” Amy said.

“No. Loxy told me to limit everything to three, and so everything else is now self-indulgence,” Jon said.

“Any bad reasons?” Amy asked.

“How do you tell the difference between a good reason and bad reason?” Jon said.

“Any other reasons at all?” Amy asked.

“Just a song,” Jon said.

“Oh?” Amy said. “Like an ear worm, stuck in your head? Let’s hear it.”

“Should I stay or should I go,” Jon said.

“Oh, I know that. If I stay there could be trouble,” Amy said.

“If we go there could be double,” Jon said.

“Good enough,” Amy said, and she pulled Jon along and touched the nearest bubble.

The bubble rolled and engulfed them, encapsulating them, freeing them from Gravity. They tumbled, clinging to each other out of sheer panic of suddenly being weightless. Hugging was simply a natural response to being in free fall, as anyone in this would reach out to hold to anything they could for sheer life. The kiss, which Amy initiated, was harder to explain.

“What was that?!” Jon asked.

“For luck,” Amy said.

“That’s exactly the sort of thing that will have Rory kill me,” Jon said.

“I made money as a kiss-a-gram,” Amy said. “He’s cool with that.”

“I doubt he was ever cool with that,” Jon said.

The bubble shimmered and Amy’s hug was intense, her arms about his neck. Her legs wrapped around him. “You’re choking me.”

“I am sorry. I am a little afraid and I feel like I am falling,” Amy said. “Oh, that sounded wrong. I am not falling for you, just with you. That just fell out of my face. Why aren’t we going anywhere?!”

“Maybe we have to ask?” Jon asked. “Um, kind bubble, Sir, would you please take us to the Doctor?”

The world fell away. Amy screamed and held tighter.

Leaving the planet by bubble was unlike the typical space travel experience. There was no thrusting involved. It felt like falling. Oddly, it felt like falling, but it also felt like they were immersed in water. Their hair and clothes floated as if they were underwater, but they were breathing. The ‘flatland’ planet fell away so fast that it was gone in the blink of an eye. That blink of an eye was enough to give them clarity into the nature of the planet. It turned out it was a ‘flat world’ confined in a bubble. The land portion cut the bubble in half. The top half was day, the bottom half was night. The balloon plants on the night side glowed with their own internal bioluminescence.

For a brief moment, it seemed as if they were falling through a tunnel, as there was clearly two ends to it. Both ends were brighter than the inside; the wall seemed like black granite with specks of golds, with more reflective spots on either end of the tunnel. Jon and Amy literally tumbled as they fell, but never seemed to be in danger of bouncing off the bubble. It wasn’t like rolling a hamster ball down a stairs, with the poor rat tumbling and breaking a leg, but the threat of being injured was very much present. No, it was more like putting the hamster into the teller tuber and sending it towards the bank.

“Don’t let go!” Amy pleaded.

“Okay?!” Jon said.

Amy suddenly realized something. She glared at him. “Don’t you even go there!”

“I can’t help it!” Jon said.

The ball emerged into light. A blue sky with clouds encapsulated them and then they quickly touched down on a grassy plain, and before it could pick up momentum and roll down

the hill, it broke, landing Jon and Amy on the ground. Again, evidence that their bubble had been full of fluid was around them. It was as if they had been hit with a giant water balloon and drenched, only it wasn't water. It was oilier. Their clothes were saturated. Amy's hair was wet as if she had just got out of the shower.

Their eyes were locked and Jon initiated a kiss. Amy kissed back and then was the one to break it. She shoved him off her, turned and retched. Nothing came out but she spit anyway, wiping her mouth and her eyes. Jon wiped his face, and slung it off his hands, and it hit her face.

"Ugh," Amy said. "You're slinging it on me."

"Sorry," Jon said. He tried wiping his mouth, which didn't help because it was still on his hands. "It really doesn't taste that bad, though."

Amy looked at him crossly, stood up, and orientated. The TARDIS was on a hill. "Oh! Come on," Amy said.

Jon got up. Amy was laughing. "That was alright," she said.

"Yeah, actually, kind of fun," Jon agreed.

Amy stopped, turned to him. "I am sorry about the..."

Jon kissed her again. Amy grabbed his arm and pulled him tighter to her, then shoved him away.

"We got to stop doing this," Amy said.

"You started this," Jon said.

"I am sorry," Amy said.

"I'm sorry, too," Jon said.

"Me, too," Amy said.

"I," Jon began.

Amy kissed him again. Jon kissed back. He took her up against the TARDIS. Amy tapped out. "Stop," she said, breathlessly.

Jon backed off, feeling suddenly drained, his hands shaking.

"Not out here," Amy said, dragging him into the TARDIS.

They fumbled their way into the TARDIS, ripping at each other's clothes, leaving a pile as they made their way closer to the control console. Amy was pressed into the control console as Jon kissed her neck.

"This isn't right," Amy said, sighing into the overhead lights.

“I don’t want to stop,” Jon said, pushing his hands through her wet hair as he continued to kiss her.

“I didn’t say stop,” Amy said. “I’m just saying, it isn’t right. The TARDIS. Something’s different.”

“You mean Sexy?” Jon said.

“Wait wait wait,” Amy said.

Jon managed to stop. “Please stop stopping us,” Jon said.

“I just want to shift us to the shower,” Amy said.

“Oh, okay,” Jon said.

They left a trail of clothes. The shower was the most amazing open shower Jon had never seen, with marble surfaces and stone obelisks that spouted their own water jets. Water also came from the ceiling, with lights shining through the stream, and hidden, subdued lighting outlining the room. There was a bed for a direct shower massage, and a recessed area which was both a curved shower in and of itself, and or a sauna. In addition to ‘play,’ they also helped each other clean the slime off their bodies. Cleaning simply led to more play. Jon washed her hair, and then they played more, and then they dried each other. By this time they seemed to have caught their breath, and the urgency had faded. Amy found them bathrobes. They wore these back to the control room, where they experienced another round of urgency. Jon asked if Amy wanted to go back to the shower, but Amy insisted they do it in the control room, as it had been a fantasy. Jon obliged.

That’s when the Doctor entered, with Rose Tyler.

“What?!” the Doctor demanded.

“Um,” Jon said.

Amy looked over her shoulder. “Who are you?!”

“I am the Doctor!” the Doctor said. “Who are you?”

“I am Amy. You’re not the Doctor,” Amy said, disengaging Jon and coming off the console.

“He was the Doctor,” Rose said.

“I am still the Doctor,” the Doctor said. “Once the Doctor, always the Doctor.”

“What?! Did you and Angela regenerate?” Amy asked.

“Angela?” the Doctor said. “Who’s Angela?”

“Angela, from Ever?” Amy said.

“Oh, that Angela,” the Doctor said. “I haven’t thought of her in years. How is she?”

“A bit sore,” Amy said.

“Oh, well, yeah, that’s to be expected,” the Doctor said.

“What did you do to Angela?” Rose asked.

“We’re getting off point here,” the Doctor said. “There’s no shagging in my TARDIS!”

“We shag in the TARDIS,” Rose pointed.

“It’s my TARDIS,” the Doctor said. “We’re married.”

“No one’s ever done this in the TARDIS?” Jon asked.

“Rory and I have,” Amy said.

“Rory? Who’s Rory?” the Doctor asked.

“My husband,” Amy said.

“Oh, a May to December romance. That’s always nice,” Rose asked.

“Oh, he’s not my husband,” Amy said.

“Why are you and your husband doing it in my TARDIS?” the Doctor demanded. “Why are you doing him instead of your husband in my TARDIS? No, don’t answer that! Why are you shagging in my TARDIS? How did you even get in here?”

“We’re your companions,” Amy said.

“If he’s not your husband, who’s he?” Rose asked.

“I’m Jon,” Jon said. He pulled his robe shut.

“And the Doctor puts up with this behavior in the control room? I work here!” the Doctor said.

Amy was biting her lower lip, trying to sort an explanation. Jon looked to her. They both had this realization and looked away, couldn’t resist, and started kissing each other again.

“Stop that!” the Doctor said.

“Are you two doing drugs?” Rose asked.

The Doctor pulled out his sonic screwdriver. “Oh, well, that explains everything,” the Doctor said. He scanned the clothes. “Don’t touch the clothes. Oh, what, you went swimming in it? That much skin exposure, you’re lucky you are still able to speak. Did you ingest any?”

“A little,” Jon said.

“How little?” the Doctor said.

“It’s really hard to measure,” Amy said.

“From here,” Rose said.

“Oh, don’t play into the innuendoes,” the Doctor said. “It could get them going again.”

“Yeah, could you like come back in an hour or so?” Jon asked.

“Yes, please,” Amy said.

“No! It’s my TARDIS,” the Doctor said. The Doctor went straight way to a hidden cabinet, pulled out two vials, and handed it to them. “Drink this. Do it.”

Amy and Jon both popped the seal on the vials and consumed the contents.

“It didn’t help,” Amy said, looking to Jon. “Back to the shower?”

“OMG, the shower is not for shagging,” the Doctor said.

“We do…” Rose said.

“My TARDIS, we’re married,” the Doctor said.

The Doctor was counting with his hand. Suddenly, Amy screamed. She dropped the empty med vial, ran away while pulling her robe tight, went back, slapped Jon, and then fled to Rose, tightening her robe even more as she did.

Amy, pointing at Jon, said: “You stay away from me!”

“Did he drug you?” Rose asked.

“Oh, they were both doped,” the Doctor said, scanning Jon.

“That doesn’t mean he didn’t do it to her,” Rose said, protectively drawing Amy into a hug. Amy was crying inconsolably.

“Oh, please don’t do that,” the Doctor said.

“She’s been harmed!” Rose said.

“Let me figure this out, first,” the Doctor said. “Oh, hold on, you’re from Origin?”

“Origin? You mean, from our universe?” Rose said.

“Yeah!” the Doctor said, coming to scan Amy.

Amy slapped at it. “Keep that thing away from me,” she snapped.

“Both of you, from Origin,” the Doctor said.

“Origin?” Jon asked.

“Oh, yeah, sorry, Origin meaning, we come from the same Universe, but even our Universe may not be the one and only original ‘original.’ I mean, you can use the linear model of

universal progression for simplistic temporal topography, but it's really more like expanding patterns of fractals, with infinite potential regression..."

"Doctor," Rose said. "How did they get here?"

"The only thing that makes sense, given the amount of psychoactive aphrodisiac on their clothes and in their system would be love bubbles," the Doctor said.

"Love bubbles?" Rose said.

Amy wailed even louder, burying her face in Rose's shoulder.

"Yeah," the Doctor said. "They originate at the boundary layer of two extreme energy differentials, usually the boundary layers of two different universes, but once they've broken off into any particular universe, they can be quite bothersome. Really nice people, in their environment of origin, but outside of that, well, they are known to become aggressive. They're the only entities that I know that can generate enough resonant energy to travel easily between any and all universes."

"Aggressive how?" Jon asked.

"Oh, well, they like to kidnap people, usually two separate genders, usually from two people in opposition or from warring nations, and they deliver them to another planet, where the two couple find themselves so intoxicated that they usually end up entangled for a solid week," the Doctor said. "That's actually the untold story of Romeo and Juliet. A Love Bubble was trying to end the war between the Montagues and the Capulets. I found one couple so embroiled in heat that it was a month before they came out of their state, and I suspect had I not been there to keep a solid flow of food, they might have perished. Based on their toxicity level, I suspect they would have done it to death. Maybe that's why you were deposited next to the TARDIS, as it would want you to have easy access to a food supply. They usually drop people near a natural food source, like an apple tree, but, maybe it was tired of carrying you and needed to drop its load early."

"I asked it to take us to the Doctor," Jon said.

"Oh! Well, that's interesting," the Doctor said. "There you have it. Solid explanation."

"I meant my Doctor!" Amy said.

"I didn't know I had specify Doctor," Jon said. "How many are there?"

"In this Universe? Just me. This Universe's Doctor died on 13th life, and she willed me her TARDIS?"

“There was a female Doctor?” Amy asked.

“Yeah, why not?” the Doctor said.

“Is it like a Yin Yang thing, you have like 13 male lives, and then 13 female lives?” Jon asked.

“Oh, you’ve watched too much American fiction, my friend,” the Doctor said. “It’s just 13 lives.” He scratched the back of his head. “I suppose, one could extend that, but even Time Lords generally don’t want to live forever.”

“How do we get back to our Universe?” Amy asked.

“Oh, you can’t,” the Doctor said.

“You never say that!” Amy said. “You came here. We came here. That means we can go back.”

“Let me say it another way,” the Doctor said, sorting out a possible way. “You can’t.”

“We could hitch another ride with a bubble?” Jon asked.

“It’s not like Uber,” the Doctor said.

“I am not getting in another one of those things with you,” Amy said.

“I didn’t want to get in it with you in the first place,” Jon said.

“Oh, well, there is some drama here, isn’t there?” the Doctor said.

“Miss it?” Rose asked.

“Yes, actually,” the Doctor said. “But usually the after effects of such a large dose, even after an antidote, is a lifelong affection, overcoming any and all animosity. It’s like Oxytocin on steroids... Which means, what does that mean for you two...”

“So, life with me is boring, is it?” Rose asked.

“Oh, no, no, not at all. Just saying I miss saving the world,” the Doctor said. “Even if it’s just a couple’s world, two lost, weary souls bubbled out of their existence for their new, exciting adventure.”

“We are not a couple,” Amy insisted. “And there will be no more adventures for you, Sir!”

“This is not my fault,” Jon said.

“Doctor, I demand that you find a way to send me home,” Amy said. “Please.”

“Alright,” the Doctor said. “But first, go get dressed, and get some sleep. Jon, come with me.”

Chapter 7

Rose brought Amy through a wardrobe that had a variety of clothes expressly for females, with a few noticeable items that seemed gender neutral. After she was dressed in a simple pullover sweater and jeans, and sneakers without socks, Amy introduced her to a guest room.

“This looks just like the room I took over,” Amy said.

“Maybe it is, or will be,” Rose said. “You and your husband travel with the Doctor?”

“Yeah,” Amy said, sitting on the bed. She began to cry again.

Rose sat next to Amy, naturally drawing her nearer to provide comfort.

“You want to tell me about it?” Rose asked.

“My marriage didn’t need another thing,” Amy cried. “How much can a marriage take before it’s just unrecoverable?”

Rose didn’t have an answer, but she didn’t want to leave the air empty. “I suppose, it depends on the couple. Is your husband...”

“Rory,” Amy said.

“Rory, is he a nice man?” Rose asked.

“He is. He is the nicest, kindest man I have ever met,” Amy said.

“Sounds like he would be understanding,” Rose said. “I mean, you two both travel with the Doctor, right? Some crazy ass shit things happen around the Doctor. Knowing that and that he’s a nice man, sounds like there is room to accept this. Where is Rory?”

Amy wailed. Rose asked her to repeat.

“He got whisked away with Loxy,” Amy said.

“Oh. Who’s Loxy,” Rose asked.

“Jon’s tulpa,” Amy said.

“Oh,” Rose said. “What’s a Tulpa?”

“Um, kind of like his wife, only, she was just in his head, until the Doctor helped to bring her into reality,” Amy said.

“Oh,” Rose said. “But she with your husband, and you’re with...”

Amy started crying. “Maybe it’s all for the best. She’s like really nice and loving and I am just always in a mood,” Amy said.

“Oh,” Rose said, hugging her. “I am sure you’re not all that. He married you, right?”

“It’s complicated,” Amy said.

“With a Doctor involved? Yep, been there,” Rose said. “Where’s your Doctor?”

“Whisked away with Angela,” Amy said.

“Oh. I never met Angela. Is she nice?”

“She’s seems a bit sore,” Amy said.

“So I gathered,” Rose said. “You seem sore.”

“I am okay,” Amy said.

“No, I meant, you seem conflicted. You love the doctor. But you’re married to someone else, so you can’t love the doctor. And, Angela, she probably loves the Doctor but either can’t love the Doctor because of social restraints, or because it’s not reciprocated. And quite frankly, the Doctor can’t marry all of his companions, even if he has feelings for them all...”

“I don’t think it’s fair for you to analyze me, given how you got to live with your doctor,” Amy said.

“You imagine I am not conflicted?” Rose asked. “I am married to him, and still feel conflicted. I love the Doctor. I love the Doctor more than I have ever loved anyone or anything. I have never known a love this intense, and sometimes it’s almost unbearable. People love the Doctor. If the you or Angela or anyone loves the doctor even a tenth of as much as I love the Doctor, then, there is a recipe in the mix for things to happen. Add to that, the doctor lives in perpetual crisis mode, and being in a constant state of crisis leads to increased arousal, which again, tend escalate things into happening. Especially if you’re successful at saving the day, because, well, you feel good and you want to celebrate, and celebration almost invariably leads to intimacy. But even when you lose to the situation or the bad guy, well, you also tend to escalate because you just want to console the Doctor. Nurturing leads to more intimacy. There is really only two pathways out of this with the Doctor, intimacy, or unrequited love. The fact that the Doctor doesn’t indulge in intimacy more often is a testament to his character.”

“Is it character? Would it be bad if he indulged?” Amy asked.

“Not bad. I wish he would have indulge more before me, because he really needed it. He spent a lifetime running from his people, avoiding relationships with his kind, only to spend the rest of life blocked from serious relationships with his kind. He needs love and intimacy. Giving in for him would be seen as selfish on his part because there is always a divergence. He out lives partners, and the next crisis could have him mixing it up with another, which inevitably led to

people, especially companions, getting their feelings hurt. I could so easily be jealous of any number of people who have traveled with him. I have to fight that daily, and I live with him! If you want to love the Doctor, love the Doctor. But also, find someone and love them with as much intensity and sincerity that you give the Doctor, and everything works out for the best. I don't care if it's your husband, or Jon, or anyone. Just love. Love everyone. Because the Doctor, he loves everyone, and he wants them to be well, and though he doesn't indulge head on, he does dabble, because he has needs to. We all do. That's love."

"You seem really wise," Amy said.

"If you're around the Doctor long enough, he rubs off on you," Amy said, patting her leg. "But, no, Amy, I still struggle. I believe everything I told you. The Doctor has a past. He has a future. It's complicated. He's been married more than once..."

"He's married to my daughter," Amy said.

"I struggle," Rose repeated. "Marriages and affairs are not limited to his different incarnations. They overlap incarnations. He is also a time traveler. There is always a risk of meeting future and past wives and lovers. It take deliberate, conscious effort to accept the fact that I might be confronted with another, even here in my universe, which wasn't our universe. His love and affection for those people should not be diminished because I have feelings. My Doctor will age with me. Previously, he would have outlived me. I would not have wished him a life of solitude. I would want him to go on loving other people. That's only the way to be when you live that long. We are but seasons in a continuity of one life. I know for a fact, if the roles were reversed, the Doctor would want the same for me, and that's why he pushes so many people away from him. You can use that as a gauge for your own life. Maybe you're crying because you fear losing Rory. Maybe you're crying because you imagine it would be better if he moved on. Or maybe you're crying because your expectations of love and limitations are bounded by social constraints that are no longer applicable because you are not limited to your society of origin. You bounce between worlds and times. You need a new paradigm. A paradigm that embraces the absurd and the impossible because that is the real world we live in. The Doctor doesn't just chose companions at random. You're crying because you were suddenly born into a greater reality. Crying is what children do when they wake up. Crying is healthy. The Doctor and I got you. Get some rest."

"Who are you again?" Amy asked.

Rose was almost mad. "I am Rose Tyler. The Wife."

"Thank you, Rose," Amy said.

"Now, if you will excuse me, I am going to go put on a hazmat suit and go bag your spoiled clothes and clean all the surfaces you and Jon touched. Can't leave any toxic material laying around, now can we?"

"I am sorry," Amy said. "Would you like some help?"

"Nope, you just get some rest," Rose said.

"Thank you," Amy said. "Wait. Rose Tyler? The Rose Tyler?!"

"Don't be jealous, dear," Rose said. "I am not jealous that he went on to be with you.

Well, not much, anyway. We'll work it out.

"Thank you," Amy said.

निर्मित

The doctor passed them through a wardrobe, where he began sorting through a rack for something suitable. Jon went right to a jacket, very similar to his own. On examining it further, he found not only was it exactly like his jacket, minus a certain bullet hole, the hanger it was on also held jeans, a belt with a simple buckle, and pull over t-shirt with a turtleneck collar.

"Were you expecting me?" Jon asked.

"What?" the doctor asked, coming around. "What?!"

"It's exactly like I was wearing. Excepting for..."

"The bullet hole," the Doctor said.

Jon sorted that, and in his mind he could walk back through his discarded clothes, and he could see the jacket was placed just right to see it, and he could see the Doctor scanning it, but was now seeing it as if from the Doctor's perspective, as if it was his hand holding the sonic screwdriver and not the Doctor's hand.

"Oh, you noticed?" Jon asked.

"I notice everything," the Doctor said. "I don't always process it in real time, but... This is..."

"Impossible?"

“Improbable,” the Doctor corrected. “Boxers in that drawer, socks below, and whatever shoes fit. There is a 3D printer if you need something specific made, but I usually find something suitable to throw on.” The Doctor sat in a revolving chair, and spun. “Who shot you?”

“I am not sure,” Jon said. “I was in a cross fire. Cops and bandits sort of thing.”

“Does it happen a lot to you?” the Doctor asked.

“No, this is kind of new,” Jon sighed. “Family has shot at me.”

“Your family shot at you?” the Doctor asked.

“Only when they weren’t drinking,” Jon said. “Rest the time, I was dodging beer cans.”

“I am sorry,” the Doctor said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “They were suffering. Generational abuse. Substance abuse. Substance abuse probably because the other abuse. I realized pretty soon that the help they needed was more than I could give, and left to work on myself shortly after. It’s been a long road, but I am okay, and I find daily things to be grateful for.”

“You seem compassionate,” the Doctor said.

“I try to be. Doctor, I don’t pretend to be perfect. I have some serious boundary issues,” Jon admitted. “I get enmeshed easily and quickly. I feel things greater than what I suspect others do. Consequently, or in addition to, I have attachment issues.”

“You’d make a great doctor,” the Doctor said.

“I’ve been told I have the handwriting for it,” Jon said.

“Give me your theory on time travel,” the Doctor said.

Jon sat down to put on the socks and try the tennis shoes he had selected. He considered the question while putting on the socks, but answered before the shoes. “Not really my theory. I adopted it probably from several different people. And though I can hold this theory, I suspect the reality of it is much grander than anything I am capable of holding, and I am only grappling with a facsimile.”

“Entertain me,” the Doctor said.

Jon really put his head into it, as if he had been thinking about it, but never tried to vocalize it. He scratched his nose. “I think it was Planck that proposed the Universe is pixelated, which seems to fit nicely into Talbot’s Holographic Universe, which lead to Jim Gate’s theory that Universe is basically computer code, and that there is this underlying feature that mirrors Bohms Implicate order. Space/time exists only because there is observer in it and outside it.

More precisely, from one perspective, all of space/time is one thing, there is no time per se, everything is all happening at once, which fits Einstein's relativity. Each object's entire world line describes its entire existence from cradle to grave. But there is no individual object, the whole Universe is a single object, just doesn't look that way from our limited perspective. From inside of it, there is the gestalt of energy that always causes the observer to flow in a certain direction. This is consistent with Penrose and his brain map, where every time he touched a brain with the electrode, the person had an experience of a past event, but always flowing forwards, never backwards. Even a time traveler, if inserted in time, resumes his forward flow. Observers can come to the Universe from any point in space and time, but the moment they're inserted, they flow forwards. Kind of like a film strip. Maybe someone could move backwards through the film strip, but no forward traveling observer could see them because they're tracking forwards."

Jon closed his eyes, and held hands up to wait a moment. "I always get stuck on the film strip analogy, especially when I consider Plank. If you assume Plank is right, that space/time is pixelated, then we could say each frame of a film is one Planck Unit. Each unit is its own individual, fully contained universe. We don't flow smoothly from one frame to another, but rather we jump. We meaning consciousness. The matter doesn't jump from frame to frame. The matter is limited to each frame, and it only appears that matter flows from frame to frame, because of correspondence to the previous frame, but the only thing really moving between frames is energy and consciousness. Consciousness must be an integral component of energy. Or maybe, consciousness I information. Energy is information. Oh, there's the trinity again. It is the observer who carries the information from frame to frame, repopulating the frame with the all artifacts from the previous frame, with minute changes. That's part of why we sometimes lose our keys. We know we set them there, but they're not there now, but strangely they're exactly where we thought they were, only after tossing the whole house to find them, proving they could be nowhere other than where we left them. It is possible to jump to parallel frames that don't correspond to the present frame, but most people don't because, well, we like things to be consistent. The real universe is not the frames of information, but is actually the space in-between frames, the substrate that holds it all together. That substrate, the universal consciousness, is womb that facilitates communication of energy and information, specifically minor consciousness."

Jon opened his eyes. “I try not to get stuck on metaphors, though. Because a tree works just as well. There is the main trunk, and it’s a universe in and of itself, but the ground it is rooted in is the real universe, and all the branches off that tree are parallel universes, and there is a mirror universe under the surface of things, cause the roots resemble the branches. The main universe is the trunk of the tree, and we, consciousness, flow like atoms through that trunk from source, earth, to the air, and then return to source like sparks of rain. Trimming one branch could destroy a thousand Universes, but the initial universe I still there. The branch could repopulated itself exactly, or go in a new direction. If you consider a stream, or a river, even if you take out a branch, it will just fill in behind it. Even if you wiped out a universe, it’s not really lost, just in another frame. Oh, back to the film strip. Let’s say I am in film strip 19, about to move to 20. Let’s say I have an apple in 19. As long I don’t eat the apple in 19, I will have an apple in 20. If I could reach forwards into 20 and bring that apple back to 19, I will now have two apples in 19 and each consecutive frame following would also now have two apples, because it’s not a real apple that is moving from frame to frame, but only the information. But in reality, there is no frame, because there is no spacetime, but consciousness sorts it as if it were reality, which means there is really three realities. There is the local consensus reality, the individual, subjective reality, and then there is also a universal reality that may not reflect any of the realities that we understand at this level of evolution.”

“Oh, but wait, this is the part I just added, and it makes head hurt,” Jon said. “People say the human brain is really smart, that it has more computational power than any computer ever, but the people that say that are usually reductionist that think consciousness is the result of the brain, as opposed to the brain being the result of consciousness. Consciousness is not a hallucination! Darryl Bem did a study using biofeedback, neuro-feedback, and computers to randomly subject volunteers to images that would either provoke a negative or positive response. He wanted to know how fast the brain responded to the images. In his study, and every subsequent duplication of the study, every respondent had an appropriate physiological response to the image prior to even seeing the image. There is only one way to interpret this. The human brain gets information from the future. The person, the observer, has access to all the information in all the brains, past, present, and future, and that is why our brains are so good at computations, not because it is one independent computer, but because it is multiple computers linked in series with all the brains before and after. That is why therapist can perform inner child work, not

because the child exists in the subconscious, but because they have literal access to that child in his brain in his time, and that child has access to the adult's brain in his time. Time travel exists, Doctor, because the past informs the future, and the future informs the past. The best, fastest way to change my past is to change my future. And so, I embarked on the greatest experiment of my life. I created a Tulpa, for companionship, for improved introspection, and to travel the collective unconscious of my parallel brains."

Jon finished and only to realize he had been pacing. "I am sorry. I get so passionate about this. Maybe I should be evaluated for bipolar disorder."

"Jon," the Doctor said, standing. "You are so close to a universal truth, a truth that can only come through experiential epiphanies, that I would say you are evolving. No one person evolves alone. We co-evolve in constellations. You and Loxy are clearly a multiplicity point."

"I think that's what Angela called Loxy," Jon said.

"Yes, Angela," the Doctor said. "A Tree of Ever. How is she involved with you?"

"We made a tree together," Jon said.

"You really get around, don't you," the Doctor said, hitting Jon on the arm.

"Congratulations on the baby tree."

"I wouldn't have met Angela if it weren't for you. The other you," Jon said.

"Oh? Why did I introduce you to Angela?" the Doctor asked.

"You, the other you, wanted to help manifest my tulpa into reality," Jon said.

"Oh. That might work. Tress are telepathic and they can absorb thought forms. Did it work?" the Doctor asked.

"Splendidly," Jon said.

"So where is she now?" the Doctor asked.

"Oh, with Rory," Jon said.

"Rory, Rory..." the Doctor said, looking for a memory of a Rory.

"Amy's husband," Jon said.

"Oh! A love bubble got them, how exciting," the Doctor said.

"I don't know if Amy will agree with that," Jon said.

"Oh, is it a secret?" the Doctor asked.

"No, she knows," Jon said.

"Which is why she forced you into a love bubble," the Doctor said.

“No, she was interested in pursuing her Doctor,” Jon said.

“Her Doctor got caught up in love bubble?” the Doctor asked.

“With Angela,” Jon said.

“Oh,” the Doctor said, biting his lip. “She is not going to be happy about that.”

“Amy or Angela?” Jon asked.

“Angela. Why would Amy be upset that I and Angela were whisked away by a Love Bubble?” the Doctor asked.

“You seriously don’t know?” Jon asked.

“Know what?” the Doctor asked.

“Amy’s in love with you,” Jon said.

“But she’s married,” the Doctor pointed out.

“Do you suppose that stops people from loving someone?” Jon asked.

“But I am married,” the Doctor said.

“So I heard. To Amy’s daughter,” Jon said.

“What?!” the Doctor said.

“You didn’t know?” Jon asked.

“But I am married to Rose,” the Doctor said.

“Oh. So, is this a paradox or just the complications of being married to a Time Lord?” Jon asked.

“It’s seriously complicated,” the Doctor said. “And why I avoid relationships.”

“You can’t avoid relationships,” Jon said. “Seriously, the more you try to avoid a thing, the more intense it is when you get back into it. It’s better to just accept reality and go with it. People need people. You’re a person. You need people. Even if it’s complicated. So, okay, back to Angela. What happened?”

“I accidentally deflowered her,” the Doctor said.

“There’s a story there,” Jon said.

“No, not really,” the Doctor said.

“Yeah, there is,” Jon said. “You can’t just say you accidentally deflowered a girl. Were you both flying the TARDIS naked and hit turbulence and you fell in?”

“Oh! No! Nothing like that! You have such a dirty mind,” the Doctor said. “It wasn’t like that at all. And it was an accident. Misunderstanding might be better. I didn’t know she was a

Tree Avatar, and I thought the flower in her hair was just something that fell into her hair, and I plucked it..." the Doctor said. "Completely innocent on my part. I was young. I didn't really ever consider people might grow flowers in their hair, or even wear flowers in their hair, as it's not something Time Lords do."

"Flowers in her hair reminds me of a song," Jon said.

"I love the flower girl song?" the Doctor asked. "Yes, it's why it exist."

"You wrote that?" Jon asked.

"More like commissioned it," the Doctor said. "Trees of Ever like music, and I thought it would be a nice apology to have a song echoed through time. It really has traveled quite a ways, in terms of song life times. Oh! I really like talking to you, but clearly, we're going to ramble if we don't stay focus. You and Angela had a baby, and Loxy piggybacked on that tree so should could have access to her as an avatar."

"That's how I understand it," Jon said. "That's okay, isn't it?"

"Yeah," the Doctor said. "It's an honor, actually. Every tree, every avatar, is part of a counsel that helps the collective unconscious arrive at clarity and consensus, which always occurs prior to the individual consciousness getting the reality update. You can incorporate that into your theory. The host consciousness of any personality set only gets the updates their paradigms can filter."

"Oh, hence the time lag... fMRI studies on consciousness have revealed that the brain makes conscious decisions anywhere from 2 to 10 seconds prior to the person believing they have consciously made the decision, which correlates to temporal anomaly Penrose found while trying to measure the time of responses of the live brains he was probing."

"You're an absolute treasure trove of odd temporal facts, aren't you?" the Doctor said.

"I have a book and everything," Jon said.

Jon put his hands in his pocket. He felt something and was tempted to pull it out, but hesitated. All color drained from his face.

The Doctor displayed concern. "You okay?"

"Oh, I have a very bad feeling," Jon said.

"Déjà vu?" the Doctor asked.

"Pure dread," Jon said. Tears flowed. "I can't remember ever feeling this strong a sense of dread. I am afraid and I don't know why."

“I need you to clarify as best as you can what you’re experiencing, and you need to hurry, while you still have potential insight,” the Doctor said. “Stick with it, Jon. I do this all the time.”

“Okay, you know that time travel movie with Christopher Reeves, where he uses hypnosis to travel back in time to fall in love with Jayne Seymour?”

“Somewhere in time. Classic,” the Doctor said.

“I think I have latched onto a 1979 penny and I am about to unravel my entire world-line,” Jon said.

“Is it an actual penny or a metaphor?” the Doctor asked.

“Metaphor. The object feels like paper,” Jon said.

“Let’s see it,” the Doctor said.

Jon didn’t move.

“Jon,” the Doctor said, very seriously.

“I don’t want to wake up yet,” Jon said. “I am not finished yet. This can’t be it.”

“Jon, you are not dreaming. There is no evidence that this is it,” the Doctor said. “This is just information, passing from one frame to the next, just like you speculated.”

“I am afraid,” Jon said.

“I may not be your Doctor, but I am still the Doctor, well, with caveats, but I am the Doctor and I will always do everything in my power to keep you safe,” the Doctor said. “I can’t keep you safe if I don’t know what it is.”

Jon’s hand was shaking as he drew it out. The paper turned out to be a photo. He swallowed. The photo was of him, holding a child, and beside him a young lady, a blond, holding another. The children seemed to be the same age, a boy and a girl. Jon was so baffled by the photo in his hands that he stopped shaking. The female was a blond, much younger than him. She seemed familiar, but the harder he tried to place her, the further the feelings of familiarity fled. The Doctor read the note on the other side. “Never forget, you were the one, Love Jenny.”

“Jenny?” the Doctor asked, coming around to see the photo. He gasped and took the photo away from Jon. “Jenny! She’s alive!”

The Doctor hugged Jon, literally crying on his shoulder, he pulled back to stare at the photo. He grabbed Jon’s arm and pulled him along and they ran through the TARDIS. The Doctor yelled, “Rose,” with such enthusiasm that Rose came to him, followed by Amy. He hugged her shouting, “She’s alive. OMG, she’s alive.”

“Who’s alive?” Rose asked.

“Jenny!” the Doctor said. He showed her the picture. “Look. She’s alive. There is no other explanation for this photo. She’s happy. And there’s Jon. And there’s babies! Jon, how do you know Jenny? Is this photo for me? Am I the one?”

“The one?” Rose asked.

The Doctor turned the photo over. “Never forget, you were the one, love Jenny,” the Doctor read.

“The continuity of the one must be protected at all cost,” Amy said.

“What?” the Doctor said.

“Who’s the one?” Rose said. “You? Jon? Jenny? One of the children?”

“Oh, God, we got to get you two back to your universe,” the Doctor said.

“You said it can’t be done,” Amy said.

“I know. I say things. I was being lazy,” the Doctor said. “But if you got here, we can get you back.”

“That’s exactly what I said,” Amy said.

“Yes, but I was less motivated at the time, now my brain is on fire, and I will figure it out,” the Doctor said.

“Who’s the one?” Rose asked again.

“I don’t know,” the Doctor said.

“Well, then, we need more information. Maybe you’re the one and they came here for you,” Rose said.

“But how would you explain this photo in his pocket? How do you explain his clothes in the wardrobe, something I have never noticed before,” the Doctor said. “It has to be related to this timeline.”

“No, it doesn’t. It could mean a million different things. Maybe Jenny is alive in our present Universe, but not origin, or maybe it’s the reverse,” Rose said.

“How do you know Jenny?” the Doctor demanded.

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

“Cute babies,” Amy said. “They look a lot like you and Jenny.”

“People just say those kinds of thing. I don’t see a resemblance,” Jon said.

“You’re my son in law?” the Doctor asked. “Those are my grandchildren?”

“Amy said you’re married to Loxy,” Rose said.

“I am,” Jon said.

“How can you be married to someone in your head?” Rose asked.

“That’s the only way to be married,” Jon said.

“How many people are you intimate with?” the Doctor said.

“In my head?” Jon asked.

“No! I don’t want know what’s in your head,” the Doctor said. “In real life. How many?”

“And now my sense of dread has clarity,” Jon said. “You’re not going to hit me, are you?”

“I don’t know enough, yet. Do I need to hit you?” the Doctor asked.

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

“I still want to hit you,” Amy said.

“No one is hitting anyone,” Rose said. “We are going to remain calm. We are going to enter a discovery phase and collect information so we can make informed decisions.”

“Jon is integrally linked to Angela and Loxy,” Amy said. “Maybe you can communicate through him to them to contact my Doctor.”

The Doctor considered, pointing his finger at her. “That might work,” he said. He nodded. “We’ll try that then. I am keeping this.” He pocketed the photo.

“It was in his pocket,” Rose said. “It belongs to him.”

“He can make another one next time he’s together with Jenny,” the Doctor said.

“Do you really want him making another one?” Amy said.

“Photo, not baby,” the Doctor said. He stopped. Considered for a moment. “Unless you’re married to her, then, maybe more children if she wants children, but no, she’s my daughter, and she’s what, not even a year old?”

“She’s looked older than year,” Rose said.

“She was born that way,” the Doctor said.

“Jon, I am for more babies,” Rose said. “I want grandchildren. Lots of them.”

“This is complicated,” the Doctor said. “My feelings are all over the map! You, Sir, are a menace!”

“You live thousands of year, Doctor,” Rose said. “Jenny may also live thousands of years. We humans, we die off early. If Jenny loves Jon, even if it’s for a moment, then I am

going to support that, because love is the only thing that sustains us. I don't know how many Gallifreyans are remaining to marry, but if she lives as long as you and only has access to humans, I want her to love as many and as often as she can find it in her heart to do so. I wouldn't wish loneliness on you, and will I not have it for your daughter, or our grandchildren!"

Jon swallowed, afraid to add, but found strength to say it: "Loxy told me, if you ever find love at any point in your world line, you will have love for you entire life and then some, enough to bare any amount of pain and despair. Right now, I can tell you without a doubt, I love Loxy. As bad as my life was, I would live it over a million times without changing a thing just so I can meet her again. I can guarantee you that if either of those children are mine, if Jenny is in any way a part of my life, then I will do the same for her, for them. And Loxy would be leading the charge, because the only thing worth living for is the people we serve. It gets complicated and messy, but we love. That's what we do."

"Are you stealing my future speeches?" the Doctor asked.

"No! I don't know. But you can probably bet if I have shacked up with the daughter of a Time Lord, I am either exceptional, weird, or exceptionally weird," Jon said.

"Let's collect more information," Rose said.

"This is going to hurt," the Doctor said.

"Bring it," Jon said.

निर्मित

The Doctor removed a component from control console, exposing inner circuitry.

"No matter what happens, don't touch either of us," the Doctor said to Rose and Amy. "Jon, I want you to think of Loxy. We're both going to put our hands on the panel simultaneously."

They touched the exposed circuitry together. The Doctor bit his lip and pushed into it. Jon mirrored him. Jon screamed, arching his back as if he might be trying to pull away, but he was held firmly in place by the energy flow. The TARDIS faded away and they found themselves in a nondescript, completely white room. They both staggered forwards. Jon went to his knees, gasping.

"Oh, no, no, no," the Doctor said. "We didn't go far enough."

A woman, in a bathrobe, drying her hair, entered the scene. At first, it was as if she was simply looking at herself in a mirror. She smiled at a reflection in the mirror, and then, seemed puzzled, as she turned, or tuned, into the Doctor. “Oh, hello?!” She dropped her towel and rushed to Jon. “OMG, you’re alive.”

“Hello, Sexy,” Jon said.

“You never call me that...” Loxy said.

“Oh, no, you don’t,” the Doctor said. “You leave the TARDIS alone, you sex maniac.”

“Jon?” Loxy asked. “Why aren’t you answering me?”

“Because, my dear, he is facilitating the telepathic phone call,” answered a newcomer to the scene.

“Who are you?” the Doctor asked.

“I am the Doctor, who are you?” the new Doctor said.

“I am the Doctor!” the Doctor said. “Who are you? And you! Why are you wearing my bathrobe?”

“I am Loxy Isadora Bliss, at your service,” Loxy said. She turned as if talking to someone. “I don’t know. He says he’s the Doctor. He’s definitely with Jon. I don’t see Amy.”

“Wait a minute, I know you! I never forget a face,” Jon’s Doctor said to the other Doctor. “You’re Doctor House, from that television show.”

“No, I am the Doctor, and it just so happens that the British actor happens to look like me,” Loxy’s Doctor said. “It was bound to happen eventually. You visit the UK often enough, eventually someone, somewhere, is going to resemble me.”

“So, you’re really the Doctor, not just someone who is playing the Doctor on television?” Jon’s Doctor asked. “I will be really cross if it’s the first explanation as I have paid good money to the BBC not to dramatize my life.”

“I assure you, no one would ever want to turn our life into a series,” Hugh said. “Imagine trying to explain all the anachronism. You’d have fans devoting all their time to conspiracies. No, I assure you, the actor is not a doppelganger, but rather is just some bloke with the good fortune to resemble me. I am the Doctor. Now, let’s get down to business...”

Angela faded in, accompanied by a pleasant looking female wearing an overcoat, and suspenders.

“Oh, good, you’re all here,” she said. “I am the Doctor.”

“What?” Jon’s Doctor said. “What?!”

“This is going to be confusing,” Angela said. “We need a referential system so that we know which Doctor is being addressed.”

“I suppose, to facilitate this conversation, you could call me the 13th,” the 13th Doctor said.

“Oh, another House reference,” Loxy said. “It’s almost as if it’s conspiracy to make House the Doctor.”

“Stop it,” Loxy’s Doctor said.

“What number are you?” Jon’s doctor asked.

“We know longer use a numerical system to differentiate,” Loxy’s Doctor said. “If it helps facilitate our task, you may refer to me as Hugh. House was, after all, modeled after me.”

“You have a drug habit?” Loxy asked.

“The handicap was a plot contrivance. You really can’t write the Doctor into a television show without handicaps,” the Doctor said.

“I am confused about something,” Angela said. “You told me there was only 12 incarnations. So, 13 is impossible.”

“Nothing is impossible. Perhaps highly improbably,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“And, why we stopped using the numbers,” Hugh said.

“The 12th Doctor calls me the impossible girl,” Loxy said.

“No, that’s reserved for someone that looks like you,” Hugh said.

“We have a very short window to figure this out,” 13 said. “The Continuity of the One is in jeopardy. If she dies, we all die.”

“Who’s the one?” Hugh asked.

The Doctor pulled the photo of Jenny out of his pocket. “Is it her?” Jon’s Doctor said.

“Jenny,” the 13th said.

“My grandchildren,” Hugh said. “Where did you get this?”

“From Jon,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“But he hasn’t met her yet,” Loxy said.

“Loxy, that’s too much information,” Angela said. “The Continuity of the one must be protected at all costs.”

“Who is the one?” Hugh asked.

“Does it matter? Any one of them is crucial to the integrity of the overall time line,” Angela said. “Maybe you have forgotten because you have been at war too long. Maybe you have forgotten because you have run from love for so long and so hard, that you have forgotten how to love. When a good man goes to war, something is always lost. Or maybe you have forgotten because no one person should have the power to decide what happens here. There must be consensus. There’s three Doctors. Three companions. Let’s figure this out.”

“Where’s Amy’s Doctor?” Jon’s Doctor asked.

“Oh, he still sleeping off the afterglow of our bubble love session,” Angela asked. “I imagine he’ll be in a much better mood after he wakes up.”

“Let’s assume for a moment, Jenny is the one,” Hugh said.

“We can’t assume that,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“Go with me on this,” Hugh said. “Assume its Jenny, from Origin.”

“You’re not from origin?” 13 asked.

“I am not. I assume, neither are the two of you,”

“I am actually from Origin,” Jon’s doctor said.

“That can’t be a coincident,” 13 said.

“I agree,” Hugh said. He put opposing thumb and fingers together, bouncing them as he thought. “Where’s is your timeline’s Doctor, Doctor?”

“She died,” the Doctor said. “There are no more Time Lords in this Universe.”

“They’re all extinct?” 13 said. “I thought we corrected that?”

“I did, too,” Hugh said. “But, if you go around saying you’re the last of the Time Lords, it will eventually be true.”

“That’s exactly what I was telling you when we traveled together so long ago,” Angela said. “Say something often enough, you will believe it. And if you’re time traveler, you make it manifest.”

“That makes my proposal more insightful,” Hugh said.

“What proposal. You haven’t given a proposal,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“One of us must sacrifice his or her TARDIS. Number 10, seeing how you exist in a Universe without Time Lords, and how you have sacrificed your own ability to regenerate, I submit you need to complete the surrendering by modifying your TARDIS and sending it back to Origin with one purpose, to serve the One. Jenny,” House said.

“This is my home,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“You, Sir, are a hybrid,” 13 said. “Part Time Lord, part human. You may have all the knowledge of all the Doctor’s preceding you, but you are not the Doctor. You owning a TARDIS is like giving someone with an Identity Crisis the license to be a brain surgeon. Just because you think you’re a Doctor, doesn’t mean you can actually perform a brain surgery.”

“That is not an apt analogy,” Jon’s Doctor said. “You two have been colluding.”

“We have not colluded. You initiated this. Only Jon could have facilitated this call. He’s connected to Loxy and Angela. He is also, whether it has happened yet or not, connected to Jenny,” Hugh said. “What I want you to do is modify the TARDIS, give the keys to Jon, and let him take it to Jenny.”

“No one can navigate a TARDIS between universes without extraordinary circumstances in play,” Jon’s Doctor said. “And this Universe has already mended itself from the tear. That place will be more solid than any other adjoining place.”

“Why can’t we just send the TARDIS back in time prior to the divergence from Origin, and just follow the correct time stream back to the necessary space/time coordinates we need to be in?” Loxy asked.

“Because, only someone in his right mind could navigate...” Jon’s Doctor said. “Of course! Jon could do that. With some modifications, of course. We surgically separate the hemispheres of his brain...”

“You want to operate on his brain?!” Loxy asked.

“Really cool brain surgery,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“That is no longer an option,” House said.

“It’s a great option! The right side knows more than the left side. We put an artificial corpus callosum so he can switch between hemispheres on command, and then...”

“Yes, 10, it’s brilliant, it might even have the potential of working out, except one minor problem,” 13 said.

“What problem?” Jon’s Doctor said.

“Some fool rebooted the Universe,” 13 said.

“Oh,” Loxy said. “Was that hat bad?”

“It’s like starting over from scratch, only, there’s no scratch to make the universe and no starting over,” Jon’s Doctor said. “How the hell?!”

“Ask Amy,” House said.

“Why? Is she the seed the rebirthed the Universe on it’s on track? Wait, that would make her the starting point and the universe filled in around her so that she had a past and a future. Amy’s the one!”

“She was the one, now’s she not,” Angela said.

“It is its own new multiverse. Which means, we have parallel multiverses! OMG, this is so cool, and I miss doing this, and I don’t see a way in hell, we’re going to get back to origin. It’s impossible.”

“It’s not impossible. Just highly improbable,” Loxy said.

“Someone’s coaching you,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“It would be impossible for any one Doctor alone,” Hugh said. “But if we were to work together. We could bounce to Origin.”

“Of course,” 13 said. “We each have a key. I have Angela. You have Loxy. And you have Jon. We build a crystalline matrix in one of the unused control rooms, tie them into the TARDIS, and our respective TARDISES will naturally be drawn directly to Ever, in Origin because Angela and Loxy are anchored there. It’s brilliantly absurd enough to be plausible.”

“What good would that do? You’d only get to stay there for maybe 30 seconds?” Jon’s Doctor pointed.

“Long enough for us to kick our guest out of the TARDIS,” House said. “They’ll be back home where they belong. And if you make the modifications to your TARDIS that I will be recommending, your TARDIS could stay. And, if Jon is the father of our grandchildren, the TARDIS will find them and Jenny using your DNA and his as the measure to triangulate.”

“Which, means, you would need me to stay here,” Jon’s Doctor said. “I couldn’t...”

“If there is any hope to triangulate the precise location of our daughter in Origin’s space/time, using the method I am proposing, there must be a component of measure that is outside her space/time,” Hugh said. “We’d essentially be passing along the only heirloom worth passing down, the TARDIS.”

“I wouldn’t be able to see her,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“No,” Hugh and 13 said.

“Yes,” Angela said. “I can make that happen, but only if we get back to Origin.”

The 10th Doctor seemed to be brooding. “There are so many things I still wanted to show Rose,” the Doctor said.

“I am sorry, Doctor,” 13 said. “Maybe we’re asking too much of you.”

“Maybe that is why your Universe’s last Time Lord gave up infinite regeneration and took her last breath,” Hugh said.

“Maybe this is what we do for family, so they, too, may shine,” Angela said.

“This form of communication is taking its toll on Jon,” Loxy said. “We’re going to need to end this transmission soon.”

“I am sending you the schematics to all the upgrades you will need to make, 10,” Hugh said. “It will be necessary to upgrade each component in steps, in order to avoid the TARDIS blocking you from making the upgrades. Travel backwards along your TARDIS’ real-time world-line, introducing each subsequent upgrade to the TARDIS at the appropriate intervals.”

“Doctor,” 13 said. “This seems to parallel something I had to do recently to upgrade my own TARDIS. It is paramount that no previous Doctor be aware of what you are doing, or it will interfere with how the upgrades integrate into the system. The TARDIS should have enough sense of you not to be worried by your presence, but if the Doctor at the time is concerned, it might cause the TARDIS to be concerned.”

“If I don’t have the Doctor’s permission, how do you expect me to enter the TARDIS?” Jon’s Doctor said. “My key only works on this particular TARDIS.”

“We trust you to figure that out,” House said.

“Oh, I have an idea,” Loxy said. “Just have Jon flirt with one of the companions, borrow their key while he distracts them, and get it back to them.”

“That’s insane,” Hugh said. “Companions don’t fall for that kind of trickery.”

“It worked on me,” 13 said. “And I am not even a companion.”

“Seriously?” Hugh and 10 asked.

“Just spray some bubble love on him and he’ll be irresistible,” Loxy said.

“That actually explains a lot,” 13 said, musing about her past.

“Seriously, it’ll do loads for his esteem,” Loxy said. “If women really understood just how vulnerable men are to self-esteem issues, they’re be much forgiving of promiscuity.”

“I am not sure I want to encourage him down this pathway,” Jon’s Doctor said.

“Well, then, have Amy do the distraction,” Loxy said. “I am sure there is a male companion in that time line somewhere. Maybe even another Rory. But, I bet she’d work on girls, too, so don’t ignore that option. I wish I landed there. I could so do this.”

“What is wrong with you?” 13 asked.

“She is just a very loving woman,” Angela said. “An Avatar of Ever.”

“Oh, transmission ending...”

“10, go ahead and have the surgery performed on Jon. Just in a case we need a backup plan,” 13 said.

Jon’s hands came off the console. His knees buckled under him and he fell. The Doctor staggered into the control console, gasping for air.

Chapter 8

“No. Absolutely not. I am no longer a kiss-a-gram, I am married,” Amy said, and saw Jon counting on his finger. “Just no is enough.”

Jon gave her three.

“It’s not going to matter if I can’t find a list of past companions, and places of interest,” the Doctor said. “Why do I keep everything in my head?! I should write something down at least sometimes.”

“Maybe to keep someone from doing what you’re thinking about doing?” Rose asked.

The Doctor stopped in his ransacking of the previous Doctor’s bedroom. She was more organized than he ever was, and the bed was even made. “Possibly,” the Doctor said.

“Well, if we were in my Universe, I would know exactly who we should ask for details,” Amy said. “She knows everything about the Doctor. She’s obsessed with you. She even has a diary. But, it doesn’t matter. There’s probably not a counterpart in this Universe.”

निर्मित

“Oh, hello, mother. Husband,” River Song said.

“Husband?” Rose asked.

“Who’s the floosy?” River asked. Her eyes widened. “Oh, hi, Jon. Is that Loxy? I thought Loxy was a brunette. You aren’t stepping out on her again, are you?”

Rose stewed. The Doctor took her hand.

“Um, hi, um, River?” Jon said.

“Oh, you don’t remember me,” River said. “Not that I am surprised. Do you remember any of the women you’ve slept with?”

“You slept with my daughter?” Amy demanded.

Jon wanted to retreat, but the Doctor put a hand on his shoulder and held him in place. Rose’s anger went away, and she chewed on her lip.

“I can see this is really complicated,” the Doctor said. “And I don’t wish to impose any more pain on you, but I am under the impression that you have a diary of sorts, and I need to get some very specific information...”

“Sorry. Spoilers,” River said.

“This is important,” the Doctor said.

“It always is,” River said. “Is the Universe about to implode?”

“Maybe,” Rose said.

“Not ours,” the Doctor said.

“Seriously, she didn’t need to know that,” Rose said.

“I can’t lie to her,” the Doctor said.

“You really can’t,” River said.

“People should always know the truth and be allowed to make a choice,” the Doctor said.

“We do not know the true scope of the problem. We only know that the Continuity of One is in danger unless we do something very specific. I need to introduce upgrades to the TARDIS in increments, requiring me to navigate to very specific space/time coordinates to ensure that I am meeting the TARDIS along its longitudinal, temporal axis, as opposed to random insertion points in the timeline.”

“Sounds fun. It sounds like something only I could assist you with,” River said. “And I am more than willing to help you.”

“Oh, that’s very kind of you,” Jon said.

Rose and Amy looked at Jon in disbelief.

“With two caveats,” River said.

“We’re not breaking you out, River,” Amy said.

“Oh, mom, I would never ask you to break the law on my behalf,” River said.

“What do you want?” the Doctor asked.

“First, I want a kiss,” River said.

“Um…” the Doctor considered.

“Um,” Jon echoed simultaneously.

“Not you,” River said to Jon. She pointed to Rose's Doctor. “You. Kiss me.”

“What do you mean um?” Rose said to her husband. “Don’t even think about it,” Rose snapped. To River, she said: “You’re not kissing my husband.”

“Would you consider Jon?” the Doctor asked.

“Absolutely not, I forbid it,” Amy said.

“This is not really your daughter,” the Doctor said.

“I don’t care,” Amy said.

“Hold up. Your husband? I thought you were Jon’s wife. This is really confusing,” River said. “But, let’s assume you’re telling me the truth. Most people tell the truth. Mostly because people are too stupid not to do anything but tell the truth. You married a time traveler. On marrying a time traveler, you realize you have the potential to meet future past wives, right? Wait. You could also meet future present wives, and even just present wives. Which means, you should be okay with me kissing our husband.”

“That makes a lot sense...” Jon started.

“Shut it,” the Doctor, Rose, and Amy said simultaneously.

Jon crossed his arms and retreated. The Doctor turned to Rose. “This is just a kiss. It doesn’t mean what you think it means.”

“It means exactly what it means,” Rose said.

“There are lots of cultures that use kissing as ritual greetings,” the Doctor said.

“I am sure. There are probably cultures that use ritual sex as a formal greeting, and we’re not engaging them. Ever,” Rose said.

“Oh, it’s just a kiss,” River said. “A little, little kiss. On the lips. Tongue if you want.”

“I will slap you,” Rose said.

“What happened to the...” Amy began.

“I am struggling,” Rose snapped.

“Fair enough,” Amy said. “River, come up with another request. Maybe ice cream.”

“I love Ice cream. Jon? Don’t you love ice cream?” River said.

They all looked to Jon. Jon chewed on his thumbnail, blushing.

“Oh, they don’t know?” River asked. “He uses it as a euphemism for oral.”

“Seriously?” Amy asked.

“Loxy and I use lots of code phrases for sex,” Jon said. “It makes it kind of fun, and safe for double talk in public.”

“Loxy, Loxy, Loxy,” River sang. “I am so looking forward to killing her.”

“River! We’re not killing people. And we’re not killing Loxy. I like her,” Amy said.

“Until she sleeps with your husband,” River said.

“Like you haven’t slept with a married man,” Amy said.

“That was business. Business is business,” Amy said.

“Until it’s your husband?” Amy said.

“Exactly, and this is business, I want a kiss, or we’re through talking,” River said.

“Fine. Get it over with. But don’t you enjoy it,” Rose said.

The Doctor and River drew closer together, only the bars keeping them from full on body contact. The Doctor was moving too slow, so River reached through the bars and brought his head forward too fast he bumped his forehead on the bar, and would have said ‘ow’ but she planted her mouth on his. There was resistance, then surrender, and the Rose demanding it be finished. River laughed into the kiss, and was laughing when she separated.

“You’re not my husband,” River said.

“There’s no way you could tell that from a kiss,” the Doctor complained. “Can you?”

“It’s okay. I will help you as if you were,” River said. “Now break me out. I am going with.”

“Mother,” Amy said.

“I am not asking you to break me out. I am asking the Doctor who isn’t the Doctor to break me out,” River said.

“I’m sorry, Doctor. This was a waste of time,” Amy said.

“It’s okay, Amy,” the Doctor said. He turned to the guard. “Let her out, please.”

“I am sorry, Sir, but I am not authorize...” The guard read the psychic paper. “Oh, of course, Sir, right away.”

“This is not a good idea,” Amy said.

The jail door hit the guard in the head and he was falling even as River was extracting his sidearm and rushing past. She had one hand to Jon’s neck, shoving him up against the far wall, with the gun to his temple.

“I told you, you home wrecking piece of shit, that I would kill you the next I saw you, and I don’t care that it appears that I am doing it before your actual transgression, in fact, I love it!” River said.

“Mom, put the weapon down,” Amy begged.

“Jon and I were intoxicated. Your father will understand,” Amy said.

“OMG, you slept with my mother, too!” River demanded, bringing her knee up into his groin, but not allowing him to fall.

“You didn’t know about that?” Amy asked. “What you did you mean by home wrecker?”

“He slept with my wife!” River said.

“You have a wife, too?” the Doctor asked.

“Doctor,” River said, her eyes not leaving Jon. “You are the only person I ever married. Let me restate that. You’re the only person I ever legally married. Let me restate that, you’re the only person I married that I love. When you marry the Doctor, you get what you get. Sometimes it’s a short fat man, sometimes an old man, and sometimes a woman. And I loved her to death.”

“You killed this timeline’s Doctor?” Jon asked.

“I would never do that. It’s a euphemism,” River said. “What do you mean, she’s dead? Something happen to her?”

“The Doctor is dead,” the Doctor said. “There is growing evidence that maybe she gave up her life to save our daughter. If you were married to me, her, any of us, then it is in your best interest to help her protect the continuity of the Doctor’s line. Please. Don’t do this.”

“I am not going to kill him today. But, before we do anything else, we are so going to get him doctored,” Amy said, coming away from Jon. She flipped the weapon over and offered the hilt to Amy. She took Jon by the arm and directed him towards where the Doctor always parked the TARDIS when he came to visit her in jail. “Come on. We need to go before they realize I knocked their guard out.”

“Don’t we need a key?” Rose asked.

River held the guards card key up for them to see.

“What do you mean by doctored?” Jon asked. “Is that like UK vernacular for fixed?”

“Shut up,” River said, pushing ahead of her. “And don’t look back.”

“I am not enjoying this,” Rose said.

“Just like old times, eh?” the Doctor tried.

“No,” Rose said.

निर्मित

New New York, on New Earth, on the 13th floor, in an office looking out over a luscious, green park, with the water way just beyond, seemed like a very pleasant place. There a statue of in the distance, reminiscent of the Stature of Liberty, only a humanoid cat in a habit. The Doctor and

their companions were waiting an insufferably long time, and River was talking about killing people, when three Sisters of Plentitude entered.

“Sorry for the delay,” said the lead. “I am Sister Argle, and my colleagues Sela, Taffy.”

Sela was the shorter of three. Taffy was a little more ‘plump,’ especially at the hips. She winked at Jon. It wasn’t lost on River, or Amy, and they did a double take. River stepped on Jon’s toe. “Stop flirting,” she said, aiming for a whisper, but alerting everyone in the room to what was going on. River smiled pleasantly, as if there was nothing going on.

“I wasn’t, honest,” Jon said. “I was just...”

“Staring?” Amy said.

“Staring is the primary form of foreplay amongst Catkind,” the Doctor said.

“Follow by growling,” Taffy said. “I really love a good, solid deep growl that goes up in several octaves, and crashes back down. Followed by some slapping. If the slapping’s good, anything’s game. Go ahead, growl for me.”

“Taffy!” Argle said. “Be professional.”

“Intimacy can be professional,” Taffy said. “I am a licensed sex surrogate.”

“He’s all played out today,” River said.

“Oh,” Sela said. “I herd he was insatiable.”

“I am sorry,” the Doctor said. “Do you know Jon?”

“We know of him,” Argle said. “It’s why we took so long to join you. We were hoping to find someone to serve you who wouldn’t be, um, biased.”

“Biased how?” Jon asked.

“You ever heard of Bliss?” Argle asked.

“Loxy?” Jon asked.

“Um, no, they’re referring to a mood altering drug that was sold on New Earth,” the Doctor said.

“Well, actually, the compound was discovered while doing a medical procedure on Loxy,” Argle said.

“Explain that,” Jon said.

“You brought Loxy to one of our medical clinics. She was suffering from acute appendicitis. Normally, a quick round of light therapy accompanied with antibiotics is enough to remedy the ailment, but because she was not fully human, and due to the progression of the

disease, we removed the appendix. You're no doubt wondering what does that have to do with the mood altering drug, Bliss. Well, no excised tissue is ever thrown away. It was sent to the lab. Cultures were made of the healthy cells, which were really curious, like a blend of human and plant. This is how we discovered the compound Bliss, and this also influenced its name. A portion of all pharmaceutical proceeds derived from a specific genetic line were put into an account for you and Loxy. You and Loxy are, by any measure, the wealthiest people on New Earth. Probably the richest in this sector of the Galaxy."

"Seriously?" Jon asked. "I am rich? I must be dreaming."

"Seriously? You finally get your twenty dollars, and you still think you're dreaming?" Amy asked.

"I only asked for twenty, and technically, I still haven't seen a twenty," Jon said.

"At least we have enough to pay for the procedure," Rose said.

"Whatever medical procedure you're wanting done will be done for free, courtesy of the hospital," Argle said.

"Well that's nice to hear," the Doctor said. "I thought I was going to have to ask you to do it for me as a favor, but free is good. So, no hard feelings towards Jon and Loxy for the Bliss drug being indirectly responsible for killing most of the inhabitants of New Earth?"

"The virus wasn't their fault," Sela said. "That was completely a failure with manufacturing the drug. Still, when that many people die, people get a bit spooky and look for conspiracies, even with medical staff."

"So, people don't want to serve him because they want to kill him," River said.

"No," Argle said. "But, things happen. People die during procedures. Sometimes they die with even simple procedures. That would look suspicious. It results in investigations. Jon is a celebrity. That means greater levels of scrutiny. It also means greater liability. And well, people are spooked easy. Even medical people. The three of us, we're not easily spooked. Coincidences happen, but the odds of something bad happening today are astronomical."

"I am having a change of heart," Jon said.

"No you're not," River said.

"It's brain surgery," Jon said.

"Really cool brain surgery," the Doctor said.

"We can't force him to do a procedure he doesn't want done," Argle said.

“We’re not forcing him,” River said, with a very pleasant smile. “He’s volunteering to help us out with a very peculiar mission.”

“I am still confused as to why you’re so game for me to have this done,” Jon said.

“It’s what my wife wanted,” River said.

“You didn’t tell us that,” the Doctor said.

“I don’t tell you everything. Spoilers,” River said.

“You can’t just keep saying spoilers every time you don’t want to divulge something,” the Doctor said. “And besides, that rule only applied for your Doctor, not me.”

“Why did your Doctor want him to have this surgery?” Rose asked.

“She didn’t tell me,” River said. “She said it was a spoiler.”

“When did she tell you?” Amy asked.

“After she slept with Jon,” River said.

“More precisely,” the Doctor said.

“I am sorry I didn’t write it all down. I was distracted. Angry actually, kind of like now. I think we were in Rome at the time. She said she ran into her granddaughter, which also made me angry, because I didn’t know she had a granddaughter.”

“Susan?” the Doctor asked.

“I guess, how many granddaughters does she have? At first I was like, I haven’t even given birth yet, how could I have a granddaughter,” River said.

“But you can’t get pregnant,” Amy said.

“Funny thing happened on the way to Rome,” River said. “Turns out, I was pregnant.”

“Really?!” the Doctor asked. “We have a child together?”

“It’s complicated,” River said. “A TARDIS human hybrid can actually get pregnant, given the proper conditions, and well, a particular type of human. A human who has mind melded with a TARDIS.”

“Oh, I had my mind merged with the TARDIS,” Rose said.

“Did you now? How nice for you,” River said. “Must be more common than I thought, Doctor.”

“Wait wait wait,” Amy said. “Jon was in telepathic contact with the TARDIS. And you said he slept with you. He’s the father of my grandchild?!”

“Yep,” River said.

“And you were going to kill him?!” Amy said.

“Yep,” River said.

“But he’s the father of your child, and my grandchild! Don’t you think the child will want to know its father?” Amy snapped.

“Probably,” River said. “I don’t always think clearly around him.”

“He’s the father of...”

“I know!” River snapped. “He’s also the father of my wife’s son! We gave birth at the same time.”

“OMG,” Amy said, and then looked at Jon. “You seriously need to control yourself.”

“Jon?” the Doctor asked. “This could be really important. Who took the photo of you and Jenny and the babies?”

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

The Doctor nearly walked away, the Sister were feeling very awkward and wanting to retreat, but he turned back. “Think, Jon! Not with your present brain, but with your subconscious. Access whatever future or past brain has that information set and tell me who took the picture. Was it Loxy?!”

“No,” Jon said.

Rose and Amy clinched when they doctor yelled.

“Was it 13?!” the Doctor yelled.

“No!” Jon said.

“Was it River?!” the Doctor demanded.

“Yes!” Jon said.

The Doctor was suddenly calm. “Okay then. We’re getting somewhere.” The Doctor took out the photo and showed it to River. “Remember taking this?”

River took the photo. She went and sat down. She started to cry. “No.”

“But you’re crying, why?” the Doctor asked.

“I don’t know,” River said.

“How did you know Jenny?” the Doctor asked.

“Who’s Jenny?” River asked.

“The woman next to Jon,” the Doctor said.

“I don’t know. I don’t know anything, other than I am angry and I want to kill Jon,” River said. “Can’t you yell at him some more and get the answers? Maybe pummel him some?”

“No,” the Doctor said. “What I did only works for yes and no questions, and only during déjà vu moments. The moment’s past. You are certain that your Doctor wanted this medical procedure?”

“Yes,” River said. “It’s the only thing I am certain of.”

“Then we’re doing it,” Amy said.

“It feels like this is important,” the Doctor said.

“I feel like time and circumstances are forcing it,” Jon said.

“Jenny, my granddaughter, her half-brother who is what, my nephew in law? Their lives might be dependent on this procedure,” Amy said.

“There’s a new possibility on the table,” Rose said. “The One. She could be River Song.”

“The One Song,” Jon said. “Uni-verse.”

“That makes sense,” Amy said.

“Too much sense. I am probably the distraction,” River said.

“How do you mean?” Amy said.

“In every hustle, there is always a mark, a point man, a fall guy, a distraction, miscellaneous insiders, and the actual thief,” the Doctor said.

“The problem with that theory is we don’t know who any of the players are,” Rose said. “Anyone could be anybody. We, this group, could even be the mark.”

“The only way to know is to play along,” the Doctor said. “I want more information, but I trust the flow. This feels right. Jon, I can’t compel you to do this. None of us can. And you need to make this decision without feeling guilt. This is huge, and if you come at from any direction other than love, it will have the potential of failing.”

Jon met the Doctor’s eyes. He hadn’t heard his speech earlier. Amy had. “I am not fighting this. I am not running away. I don’t know exactly what I am taking responsibility for, and I am conflicted, and scared, but I am embracing this as best I can. I want to do this. I elect to have brain surgery.”

The Doctor turned to Argle. “We would like his corpus callosum removed, and an artificial corpus callosum installed, one that will allow him to switch at will between hemispheres, and or, increase the coherence between both.”

“Okay,” Argle said.

“With or without professional...”

“Without,” River, Amy and Rose said.

Chapter 9

Amy found Jon in the Universal, staring in the mirror, searching for any hint that he had had a procedure.

“You can’t tell,” Amy said.

“I know,” Jon said.

Amy entered a stall. She didn’t speak while concluding her business. Jon’s thought was, “Oh, the honeymoon is over,” but then reminded him, this was a Universal, everyone came in here to do business. It didn’t mean what he thought it meant. She didn’t speak while doing her business, and continued with silence when she came up and washed her hands. She dried her hands under a light. She crossed her arms and leaned back against the lavatory’s cabinet. She stared at the stalls.

“I thought my life with the Doctor was complicated,” Amy said.

“It is,” Jon said.

“Oh, no, compared to yours, my days were just fun in the sun,” Amy said.

Jon gave up on the mirror, turned and faced the stalls. He crossed his arms, mirroring Amy.

“Thank you,” Jon said.

“For?” Amy said.

“For slowing this moment down, trying to relate,” Jon said. “Since I made, discovered, been with Loxy, this is probably the longest moment I have gone without her. I am feeling so lost. Alone.”

Amy turned to Jon. “I know that feeling. But that is a lie. You are not alone. You have met the Doctor and you’re now in a club and you will never be alone again. You only have to speak one word, and worlds will move to render aid.”

Jon didn’t meet her eyes. Tears dropped and rolled down his cheek.

“I really like you,” Jon said.

“I know,” Amy said.

“I like Rory, too,” Jon said.

“I believe you,” Amy said.

“And I did this awful thing,” Jon said.

“No, you didn’t,” Amy said. “Contextually, we did nothing wrong.”

“It doesn’t feel that way,” Jon said.

“No, it doesn’t,” Amy agreed. “But, Loxy will still love you.”

“I am not worried about me and Loxy,” Jon said. “Loxy is okay with me having special friendships. She has actively encouraged it. Of course, she was living in my head at the time and she said it was healthy for me and her to be social. That may change now that she’s real. I don’t know. But yeah, she will understand this situation.”

“Rory is the most understanding man I have ever met, outside of the Doctor,” Amy said.

“Yeah, he’s great,” Jon said.

“So, what’s the problem?” Amy asked.

Jon didn’t want to speak it.

“Jon, look at me,” Amy said.

Jon looked further away.

“Jon,” Amy said.

“I lied,” Jon said. He met eyes. “I don’t just like you. I love you. I don’t want our one and only experience to be drug induce mania. I don’t want it to end. I don’t want to go back to Origin. I want to rewrite my life and make you a permanent part of it. I want a plot contrivance big enough to contain the Universe, like the Doctor’s and Rose’s parallel option. I also know that I am not being rational, because it’s wrong to wish you to be stuck with me when you’re clearly stuck with someone else while wishing you were with another, and even if you agreed to my hysteria, I will fuck it up. I am not the Doctor. I am not Rory. A cat nun in a habit winks at me, and I guarantee she’s going to be kicked out of the nunnery.”

Amy laughed.

“What?” Jon said.

“I just imagined you holding kittens,” Amy said.

“This is not funny,” Jon said.

Amy laughed harder. “I know, I am sorry,” Amy said, wiping her eyes.

River entered. Her hands went to her hips. “I don’t think it’s appropriate for you two to be alone,” River said.

“River, I am not technically your mother,” Amy said.

“So you told me,” River said. “I still have feelings about your disclosure. As far as I know, there is no difference between you and Rory there and you and Rory here, excepting one. You’re still be married there. Do not break that union.”

“We’re working on it,” Amy said.

“The Doctor wants you,” River said to Jon.

Jon nodded. As he passed, she took his arm. “I am warning you. Stay away from my mom. Clear?”

“Clear,” Jon said.

Jon departed.

“That was uncalled for,” Amy said.

“Someone has to be the strong one in this relationship,” River said.

Amy came closer. “River,” she said, very clearly. “I have come to the conclusion that being strong all the time makes one brittle and cold. I am choosing to be human.” She hugged River. “I love you.”

River didn’t know how to respond.

“I love you more than you will ever know,” Amy said.

“I am not really your River,” River reminded her.

“I know. And maybe your mom was too strong. Maybe your father was too strong. And they broke because they were both too strong,” Amy said. “Sometimes, I am sad. Sometimes, I am afraid. I am angry a lot. But I love. And I want to love better. And I want you to know, I love you. I am sorry I wasn’t there for you when you needed me. I am sorry I might not be there for you in your future. Even so, I want you to do one thing for me. When you’re in those moments, by yourself, and you feel like everyone has deserted you, I want you to close your eyes, and you remember, I love you. Don’t always be the strong one. It’s okay. I got you.”

River’s arms came up. She hugged.

निर्मित

The Doctor showed him a holographic image of a former companion. “Her name is Zoe Heriot,” the Doctor said. Rose was there, suddenly brooding and sorting things within herself.

“Why is her image in black and white?” Jon asked.

“It was a period thing,” the Doctor said.

“I don’t understand? The TARDIS still had cameras that took colored pictures,” Jon said.

The Doctor ignored him. “She was born in 2069…” the Doctor continued.

“They don’t have color in 2069?” Jon asked.

“Stop focusing on the black and white,” the Doctor said.

“Why don’t you just give me a dossier on all the companions you think we’re going to meet, I will memorize all the important facts, and figure out a way to approach them,” Jon said.

“We don’t have time for all of that,” the Doctor said. “This is going to be just a hit and run. Here’s how we’re going to play it.” He pushed a bottle of what looked like perfume. “The contents of this bottle is made from the bubble love residue I got off yours and Amy’s clothes that Rose bagged. You and I will wait next to the target TARDIS, and when you see her, you are to spray this on your face and go right up to her. She will find you instantaneously attractive, so much so that she will lead you straight towards the TARDIS. Let her. Make sure the door stays open. Keep her so engaged that she doesn’t see me. I will sneak in, push an upgrade, and then exit. As soon as I am out, you end the distraction and apologize, and break it off.”

Jon considered the plan. He crossed his arm, pursed his lips, and finally shook his head. “I don’t like this plan.”

“Why not?” the Doctor asked.

“I get that I have a reputation,” Jon said. “But I am not adding rape to my list of social offenses.”

“I am not asking you to go all the way. Just, kind of make out and keep her entertained until I accomplish the mission,” the Doctor said.

“He’s got a point, actually,” Rose said.

“What point?” River asked, entering. Amy was with her.

“He wants me to use the bubble love extract to rape women,” Jon said.

“I didn’t say rape! Just engage them. Kissing is okay. Amy, tell him kissing is okay,” the Doctor said.

“You want me to tell him that because I was a kiss-a-gram?” Amy asked.

“I didn’t know that,” the Doctor said. “But see, there you go, this is okay. It’s like a kiss-a-gram.”

“No it’s not,” Jon asked. “They didn’t order a kiss. No one is lining up to pay me to kiss. That’s never the way the money flows.”

“And I didn’t use love bubbles to make someone. People wanted to kiss me,” Amy said.

“How much are kiss-a-grams,” Jon asked.

River slapped the back of his head. “Still, sometimes you have to sleep with the mark to get the gold,” River said.

“See,” the Doctor said.

“I can’t believe you just agreed with that,” Rose said.

“Do I even know you?” Amy asked.

“It’s wrong to use drugs to lower a person’s inhibition,” Jon said.

“Please. People do that all the time. It’s why we go to bars, to get drunk, to get laid,” River said.

“If you go to a bar and you drink to the point you can’t make a healthy decision, that’s on you,” Jon said. “If you go to a bar and you drink and someone slips something into your drink, that’s just wrong. If I go to a club and I spray this on me and the girls go home with me, well, that’s very wrong.”

“We get one shot at this,” the Doctor said.

“We have a time machine!” Jon said. “We just keep doing it till we get it right.”

“It doesn’t work like that,” the Doctor said. “One window. One shot. That’s it.”

“I am not using this on them,” Jon said.

“Oh, you don’t want use it on them. That would make you crazy for them, and that would be perceived as an attack,” the Doctor said. “But if you use this on you, it just makes you attractive.”

“So, it makes me more attractive, but they can still say no?” Jon asked.

“That’s a little ambiguous,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, just give me the bottle, I’ll do it,” River said.

“No,” Amy said, slapping her hand. “I know your ethics are questionable, but Jon at least cares. He has to do this.”

“Because I care?” Jon asked.

“Yes, because you care you’re less likely to take advantage of the situation,” Amy said.

“No, you’re seeing me with bad eyes. I am not Mel Gibson. You torture me, I am screaming like a little baby. You start kissing on me, kiss-a-gram or not, I am going to start kissing back,” Jon said. “This is a bad, bad plan.”

“It has to be you,” the Doctor said. “Part of the upgrades are to help you interface with the TARDIS, so the more exposure you gets in the TARDIS over time, the higher the probability the whole process takes when you finally plug in.”

“I don’t remember that in our initial discussions,” Jon said.

“I didn’t want to bog you down with some of the logistical technical challenges,” the Doctor said.

“Why don’t we just approach her and tell her the truth?” Jon asked.

“Zoe is one tough cookie, probably smarter than I ever was, so not only would your truth have to be compelling, you would have to convince her to keep this a secret from the very person she loves, the Doctor,” the Doctor said.

River suddenly took Jon’s hand in both of hers. “Oh, Jon. I know you don’t know me, but I am a time traveler and I have been the biggest fan of your work since as far back as I can remember, and I know you’re going to find this hard to believe, but you and I are destined to fall in love and have a daughter together, and I thought maybe we could just skip the whole prelude and just go at it now because I remember missing you before I even met you, as if your writing spoke directly to my heart.”

Jon bit his lip, a bit too hard, and then put his tongue out to lick the wound.

“Okay,” Jon said.

River slapped him. “No! I was trying to prove that wouldn’t work on Zoe,” River said.

“Ow,” Jon said.

“Seriously, Jon, there is no speech you’re going to give Zoe that will get her to buy into our reality,” River said.

“Or any woman,” Amy said.

“Why do men fall for that?” Rose said.

“Too much sci fi and sports has warped their social sense,” River said.

Jon turned to the Doctor. “How much of this do I have to use?”

“Just one little puff. Aim for your neck, don’t inhale it,” the Doctor said. “Once I am out, give her a nice pleasant hypnotic memory that she had a pleasant outing, it was kismet, but she

knew it wouldn't last, and have her believing she asked you to leave. In and out, nice and neat, no harm no foul."

"There's got to be another way," Jon said.

"Tell me quick, and we will modify our plans," the Doctor said.

"What if the Doctor comes looking for the companion?" Jon asked.

"Amy, Rose, and River will be running greater interference," the Doctor said. "Stick to the plan. Nothing is going to go wrong."

"Because nothing ever goes wrong with our plans," Amy said.

"Was that sarcasm?" Jon asked. "That was sarcasm wasn't it?!"

"Here we go," the Doctor said, engaging the control console.

Jon pocketed the bubble love perfume.

निर्मित

The Doctor and Jon were waiting it out in a wing of the hospital, at the end of the hall. From the end window, Jon could see the court yard below and a nice water fountain. A sound, a tiny grinding noise, followed by a discharge of spray drew Jon attention back to the where he was.

"Did you hear that?" Jon asked.

"It's not the TARDIS," the Doctor said.

"No, it's something else," Jon said. "Like a click, every six minutes?"

"Oh, that," the Doctor said. He pointed to a device on the wall. "The automatic perfume dispenser."

"We should leave now," Jon said.

"Because of the perfume dispenser?" the Doctor said.

"I don't like them. They're secretly medicating us with valium," Jon said.

"Do you feel calm?" the Doctor asked.

"No, but that's because I have an adverse reaction to people secretly medicating me," Jon said.

The Doctor took out his sonic screw driver and examined the contents of the dispenser.

"It's just perfume. Lavender, with some artificial counteractants that combine with substrate that tend to be offensive," the Doctor said. "Harmless."

“May I see that?” Jon asked.

“My sonic screw driver?” the Doctor asked.

“Yes, please,” Jon said.

“It’s not going to work for you,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, good, so you won’t mind if I hold it for like three seconds?” Jon asked.

The Doctor shrugged, handed the device to him. Jon pointed at the air freshener. The battery lid popped off and the battery fell out. Jon handed the screwdriver back to the doctor.

“Who taught you how to use this?” the Doctor asked.

“It’s just a screwdriver,” Jon said. “Everyone knows how to use one.”

“Well, no, and you can’t go around destroying public property,” the Doctor said.

“The public also has right not to be medicated against their will,” Jon said.

“It’s just air freshener,” the Doctor said.

“The public has a right to smell bad,” Jon said. “Seriously. People smell. Society needs to stop masking shit and being irritated when things aren’t perfect. Maybe if more things smelled bad and tasted bad and looked bad we’d be more proactive at cleaning up the environment. Are you sure we’re in the right place?”

“We’re in the right place,” the Doctor said. “The TARDIS will appear on the roof. The Doctor and Zoe will come out this exit. Zoe, will stop and talk to the Nurse, while the Doctor will to the lift and proceed down to the first floor. Would you calm down?! You’re making me nervous.”

“Maybe you should be nervous,” Jon said. “We’re about to do something wrong.”

“We’re doing something wrong to do something right,” the Doctor said.

“I think someone told me a wrong and right don’t cancel each other out,” Jon said.

“I think it’s two wrongs don’t make a right,” the Doctor said.

The sound of the TARDIS drew the Doctor to the window. The TARDIS arrived downstairs, ground level, right next to the fountain. Zoe, Jamie, and their Doctor exited the TARDIS. Jamie went to the street and immediately caught a Taxi. The Doctor parted ways, heading straight towards the hospital. Zoe went and sat by the fountain. Rose’s Doctor took Jon by the arm and led him to the stairwell and straight down the stairs at a good clip. They passed Zoe’s Doctor on the second floor, who was proceeding up with a medical Doctor. He was saying something, “People should climb more stairs. It’s good for the hearts.”

Jon's Doctor led Jon outside and gave him a little shove towards Zoe. "Go do your thing," the Doctor said.

"It's not my thing it's your thing and..." Jon said.

"Go," the Doctor said.

Jon took the bottle to spray himself.

"No!" the Doctor said. "You can't spray that on you next to me. You got to be next to her."

"I am seriously not cut out for this work," Jon admitted. "I mean, don't get me wrong, I love James Bond, and I love women, but I don't think I can do this for a living."

"It's not for a living. It's an emergency and an exception," the Doctor said. "A whole universe is dependent on us accomplishing this mission."

Jon put the perfume back in his pocket and advanced on the target. The only information Jon really had in his head was that this was the 1960's, and apparently the Doctor, Jamie, and Zoe had decided to investigate a string of robberies in London. Jon wasn't informed why they were making a stop at the hospital or why they had split up and why Zoe had decided to sit and wait for the Doctor.

Jon casually approached the fountain. In and of itself, no one would probably think anything of it, but Zoe met him with a pleasant smile and nodded kindly. His hand was on the bottle. The smile just about killed him. He instantly liked her. True enough, he came from a world where few people had eyes for other people, as most eyes were glued to cellphones, but Zoe, she was from another time, another world. She greeted people who entered her sphere of influence.

"Yours is the nicest smile I have seen in years," Jon said, engaging the target in conversation. He could only imagine the dismay on the Doctor's face. His entire world was Zoe.

"You're very kind," Zoe said. "Would you like to sit with me?"

Jon eyes water. Zoe became concerned, even stood up.

"Are you crying?" Zoe said, drawing a little closer.

"I am sorry," Jon said. "It's just, you remind me of my daughter, and I know you're not, she died in a car accident with her mother. I am dying. I have cancer, and you are just so... I wanted to believe, just this once, there is a little bit of magic in the universe. And I am really

emotional and wouldn't it just be amazing if your name was Zoe?! Could there be that much magic in the world?"

Zoe was in tears. "Oh, Sir! There is more magic and synchronicity than you could ever imagine."

"I wish I could believe you," Jon said.

"You don't have to believe me. I can show you something miraculous," Zoe said.

"I am convinced of miracles because I am looking at you," Jon said.

"Sir, my name is Zoe!" Zoe said.

Jon wailed. "You're just saying that to give me one last day of joy."

"No, it is really Zoe," said, hugging him. She took his arm. "Come with me. I want you to see something." She led him towards the TARDIS. The Doctor was about to pull his hair out. Jon could see him in his periphery vision. Rose was suddenly next to him. Zoe stopped. "The thing is, you have to promise me you will never speak a word of this to anyone. Not a soul."

"I can't imagine anything so wondrous that should be a secret, but I will honor that as if you were really Zoe, my angel," Jon said. "Besides, who could I convince I saw such a ghost with maybe a week or two of life remaining? It was all I could do today to go for this walk. And then, there you were. Oh. I must be dreaming. Or you're an angel, come to retrieve me."

"I am not angel, Sir," Zoe said. "What is your name?"

"Jon," Jon said.

"Jon, I am not an angel, and what I am about to show you is not a miracle, but it will make you believe," Zoe said. "Ready?"

Jon nodded. Zoe unlocked the TARDIS and pushed the door open. Jon stared. He looked past the TARDIS and back in the TARDIS. He walked around the TARDIS. He approached the door, staring in.

"It's okay. You can go in," Zoe said.

Jon entered. Zoe entered and closed the door behind her. She stepped up past him and looked at his face. "You okay? Doesn't it just make you feel young again?!"

Jon turned back to the door, opened and looked out, looked back, and the pushed the door almost shut. He walked past Zoe and down towards the control console. Zoe followed quickly, not wanting him to get too far ahead.

"It's..." Jon said.

“Go ahead,” Zoe said.

“How did you get this one room in here?” Jon asked.

“It’s more than one room,” Zoe said. “Come with me. I will show you the library. It’s my most favorite room in the whole place.”

“A library?!” Jon said.

Zoe took his arm. “A library. A swimming pool. There’s a gym. A levitation spa.”

“A levitation spa?” Jon said.

“Yeah. It’s this one section of the ship where gravimetric harmonics created a shadow, so to speak, where a person could be suspended in air, and the flow of energies around that shadow spot gives a person a sensation of a million feathers tickling you. If you’re not prepared for it, it can be kind of creepy,” Zoe said.

“You really are an angel, aren’t you?” Jon asked. “And maybe that means something different, like angels are really just space aliens. Are you an alien? Are you wearing a mask?”

“I am exactly who you see,” Zoe said.

“So, there are no aliens wearing masks?” Jon said.

“I wouldn’t say that. The Reptilians have been known to disguise themselves when visiting Earth,” Zoe said.

“They’d have to. I imagine we wouldn’t be nice to lizards,” Jon said. “Unless they’re hiding because they’re conspiring to take over the world.”

“The world is safe, Sir,” Zoe said. “That’s what I do. True, different reptilian clans have different motives, but most people in the Universe are peaceful people. There are always more good beings than bad ones. I can show you the math, if you like.”

“I don’t care what you actually say as long as you keep speaking to me,” Jon said.

“Well, we need to find a place to close, cause I do, seriously, have work to do,” Zoe said.

“But, the library first,” Jon said.

“Oh, of course!” Zoe said, taking his arm.

“Thank you,” Jon said, patting her hand.

“Come on,” Zoe said.

Altogether, Zoe’s tour lasted maybe ten minutes, and it wasn’t even a fraction of the ship. As they exited he saw Rose’s Doctor, walking away, and was worried Zoe would wonder why he had been so close to the TARDIS.

“Zoe,” Jon said , quickly, getting in front of her. “May I have one last hug?”

Zoe hugged him. He saw Rose, and she gave him a thumbs up and walked on. Zoe let him go. “Be at peace,” she said.

She returned to the TARDIS. Jon walked away.

निर्मित

“What was that?!” the Doctor said.

“It’s called acting,” Jon said.

“I only have one heart, you know,” the Doctor said, searching for something on the panel.

“And you gave it an attack.”

“Sorry,” Jon said.

The Doctor turned to Jon. “Jon, seriously. I get it. You care about people and you feel like this is an intrusion, and, yes, maybe it is, but I also know my companions, and maybe, just maybe, a little crazy distraction that they can’t explain in their life would help them not get stuck obsessing about the Doctor as the only man they could ever be with. Two ships passing in the night is a real phenomenon, though not the technical name of the thing, but you, Sir, are caught up in time, and sometimes inexplicable things happen to time travelers. They happen to everyone who’s open to encounters with weirdness once in a life time, but you and me and my companions, we’re kind of pushing the boundaries of the natural flow of time and weirdness, and that causes ripples and eddies and okay, I see it in your eyes, you’re not buying it, but I am telling you, just for today, just under my guidance, you get a pass for doing something wrong. There’s a lot more at stake here than you imagine. No more improvisation. Stick to our plan.” The Doctor turned back to the control panel.

“Doctor,” Jon said, sorting his words carefully. “I get that you know your companions. I get that you’re smarter than me. But I have to wonder, are you asking me to do this for the sake of the mission, or because you have an alternative agenda?”

“You got lucky with Zoe,” the Doctor said.

“No, he didn’t,” River said.

Amy put an elbow in her side.

“What?! Zoe only bought it because the TARDIS was parked at a hospital,” River said.

“You did great, Jon,” Rose said.

“So do I. You lie pretty good,” River said.

“It was acting,” Jon said.

“I am with you. I do it a lot of acting myself,” River said. “But a lie’s a lie, right? What’s the difference between that lie, and spraying yourself with a lie that would have given her a pleasant distraction for what, five minutes? That’s about what you’re worth, five minutes?”

“River, are you purposely being mean?” Amy said.

Jon was staring at River, clearly wanting to argue, his hands shaking.

“Oh, please, he can take it,” River said. “And he needs to take it. Because the Doctor’s right. That poor me sympathy ride, that wouldn’t have worked on me, and sure as hell won’t work on the other companions. Except maybe Peri. Peri would buy just about anything you tell her. Trust me on that one. If I could have chosen who I had the affair with, it would have been her.” River slapped Jon playfully on the cheek. “Oh, Jon, don’t get stuck on the five minute comment. It was longer than five minutes, and it was good. But that is kind of the problem, as you well know. If it’s good, it’s always kind of a distraction through perpetuity. It makes people wonder the rest of their life if there was something missing. Which is why I am angry. Because I liked it. And I like you. You’re not really good in a fight, except you don’t run away, and I end up having to rescue your ass, but you know how to lie well enough to avoid most of the fights. And, I am still a little sore you slept with mom, because, well, mom and dad have enough troubles in their marriage, they don’t need another distraction, and are you even listening to me?”

Jon was still apparently stuck, as if he wanted to say something.

“Jon?” Amy asked, touching him.

Rose was suddenly concerned. “Doctor?”

“Just a moment,” the Doctor said. “It’s got to be here. It should have been instantaneous. God, if we have to go back there and do it again...”

“Doctor!” Rose and Amy said, more insistent.

“Oh, Jon, I wished you had just kissed her, because she’d be up for more of that, but working your story is so problematic... yes! There is it!” the Doctor said, kissing the new light on the panel. “You’re beautiful!” The Doctor turned to them. “You got to see this! The upgrade took. Oh, what have we here?”

The Doctor pulled out his sonic screwdriver and circled Jon, stopped in front of his face, leaning close to look in his eyes. He spun the screwdriver and pocketed it. He crossed his arms, and then decided to chew on a thumbnail, with a scrunched up face of concern mixed with disbelief, and some evidence he didn't have a clue. Rose slapped his hand to remind him not to chew on nails. He fidgeted and straightened his jacket.

"What's going on?" Amy said.

"I think it's a side effect of the upgrade," the Doctor said.

"An upgrade to the TARDIS upgraded Jon?" Amy said.

"They're intricately linked somewhere and somehow," the Doctor said. He held a hand in front of Jon's face. "He's breathing, that's good."

"Linked how, like yesterday, today, and tomorrow?" Rose asked.

"Beatles' songs?" the Doctor asked.

"No, like days on the calendar," Rose said.

"I would prefer the Beatles," the Doctor said. "I keep trying to say this, but yesterday, today, and tomorrow only appear to be casually connected because of the present perspective. The only reason Time Lords are called Time Lords is that is because we can perceive the objectively subjective world, but we can also step out of that to see the bigger picture."

"So, Hindu's and Buddhist are Time Lords?" Rose asked.

"Oh, nice connections, but no, no, recognizing Maya, or that the world of illusions, isn't sufficient in and of itself, because you can't break out of time by rebelling against the flow, which just solidifies it all the more. The only way out is... Of course. Angela! You are absolutely amazing. I wish I knew then what I know now. Then again, if I knew then what I know now, then what I know now, wouldn't have come about, so it's all good."

Jon gasped as if coming up from an underwater after swimming the length of an Olympic size pool, by dog paddling frantically and not getting good momentum. His knees buckled and his weight took him straight down. Amy and River caught up and gave support till his strength returned.

"Jon," the Doctor said, up close in his face and smiling. "Can you speak?" Jon nodded his head and the Doctor nodded with him. "Yes, that's nodding, but I am wanting words."

"Fuck," Jon managed. He shrugged off his help and held his hands out for balance. Though he held steady, he didn't seem confident.

“Oh, not quite the word I was hoping for, but it’s a start,” the Doctor said.

“Son of…”

“Jon!” the Doctor said, snapping his fingers in his face. “Ever been diagnosed with Tourette’s?”

Jon was clearly struggling with the word, bit his lip and answered the Doctor in sign language.

“Oh, that’s not very nice,” River said.

“When did you learn sign language?” Amy asked.

“One of my marks was deaf,” River said.

“Oh, that’s not very nice, either,” Rose said.

“Oh, please, being deaf doesn’t preclude you from being a mark,” River said.

“Jon, let’s try this, blink once for no, twice for yes,” the Doctor said.

“I think it’s once for yes, twice for no,” Rose said.

“There’s not a formalized protocol,” River said.

“Once for no,” the Doctor said. “Are you okay?”

Jon gave one long blink, and sign language for something not repeatable.

“Oh, I agree with that,” River said.

“How come the TARDIS doesn’t translate sign?” Rose asked.

“It only does it for me,” the Doctor said. “In case a companion needs to alert me to some odd fact in the presence of an enemy. You wouldn’t want your message telegraphed to everyone, now would you?”

“I want to know what he’s saying,” Rose said.

“You really don’t,” River said.

“Jon, don’t panic. This is probably just a temporary artifact of the upgrade,” the Doctor said. “It is either because of your previous telepathic link to the TARDIS, or because of what happens when we plug you into the TARDIS in the future. Remember, change your future, change your past. This is it, you’re plug into the Universe tighter than Neo in the Matrix, and you’re in for the ride of your life, but you’re okay. Think of a number, any number.”

Jon signed ‘forty two,’ but said ‘Fuck.’

“Oh, 42 is a great number,” the Doctor said. “It comes up a lot. So does 108. I was actually thinking about putting 42 on the TARDIS door. Jon, I know this is hard, but I need you to focus. Have you ever had migraines?”

Jon blinked twice.

“Oh, I hate migraines,” Amy said.

“They suck,” Rose agreed.

Jon signed something that made River blush.

“Yes, it is interesting that Tourette ticks can bring out some of the most atrocious language, but I am not offended, Jon.”

“I am offended,” River said.

“You’ll get over it,” the Doctor said. “We understand, this is not you. It’s just a tic. Jon, do you ever get auras with your migraines?”

Jon blinked twice.

“Are you seeing anything now?” the Doctor asked. Jon tried to answer with sign, but the Doctor took his hands and folded them together.

“Is it getting hot in here?” River asked.

“Just yes or no,” the Doctor said.

Jon gave an affirmative.

“Have you ever been diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy?” the Doctor asked.

“Maybe you should get medical records on your companions before they travel with you,” Amy said.

“No. I am not going to limit who travels with me based on their limitations,” the Doctor said.

“Ever traveled with someone with a disability?” Amy asked.

“Yes,” the Doctor said.

“Name one,” Amy challenged.

“Steven Hawking,” the Doctor said.

“Please, tell me, you didn’t put Steven’s life in danger,” Rose said.

“Oh, he was never in any real danger. I souped up his chair and he was able to out run the Dahlek’s that were chasing us. And I gave it force fields.”

“Why don’t you ever give us force field?” Amy asked.

“You need a chair to carry the battery,” the Doctor said.

“Why didn’t you just take him to the Sister’s and heal him!” River said.

“Oh, I actually offered him that. But it came with a price. He could be cured, and ordinary, or he could remain the same and brilliant. He chose brilliant,” the Doctor said. The Doctor grabbed Jon by the arm. “Oh! Jon, you said you were never diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy, but have you experienced time slowing down or coming to a stop?”

Jon blinked twice.

“Do you ever have episodes where things seem bigger than life, or maybe smaller, or maybe as if you were in a bubble and everything is far away?” the Doctor asked.

“What the fuck is wrong with me?” Jon demanded.

“That sounded coherent, good for you!” the Doctor said. “You’re sort of having a stroke, but it’s not a stroke. It’s more like an epileptic slash migraine slash stroke, but it’s the really good kind of stroke that could potentially turn your brain into a virtuoso or an artist, as opposed to the not so good kind that just leaves you drooling.”

“I felt like I was at fucking two places at once and shit dreaming but it wasn’t shit... Fuck! Stop that,” Jon said, hitting himself.

“Oh, don’t hit yourself and don’t get mad. Mad just increases the recovery time. Go with the flow, compassion, love, peace,” the Doctor said. “Do you remember where you went?”

“Nowhere,” Jon said.

“The Nowhere we went and met the bubbles?” Amy asked.

“Oh, no this was much more... fucking involved,” John said. “The Quiet Ones want fucking talk to me when I am Touretting and I got into an argument with Zoe because she thinks there are no peaceful aliens because I accidentally bought a slave at Frenko’s Bazaar. And we ended up in this Nowhere place, The Land of Fiction. And this is peculiar, Zoe was there again, though she didn’t know how she got there. She didn’t remember me, fuck...”

“And?” the Doctor said.

“Why the hell did you wipe her memory?” Jon demanded.

“It’s complicated?” the Doctor said.

“Fuck complications,” Jon said. “She died alone. She spent much of her afterlife alone, because her memory problems were too severe to form relationships. She’s unpacking everything in her dreams and oh. I’m in her dreams. We’re unpacking this together. We...”

“Are never alone,” Rose said. “There’s a consortium of companions. We meet in our dreams. Sometimes it takes a while for us to find each other, but the group is growing. And the active members are looking for the others.”

“You never told me this,” the Doctor said.

“You’re not privy to everything,” Rose said. “My dreams are my dreams.”

“But,” the Doctor begin.

“You have your secrets, Doctor. The Companions have theirs. We have all had our own personal adventure when you weren’t present. Before you were here, I spent lots of time sorting my history, and the only place I could do it was in my mind. I began lucid dreaming, and revisiting places, and remembering things, and it brought me some peace,” Rose said.

“You can’t keep secrets from the TARDIS,” Jon said.

“I know,” Rose said.

“Yes, you can,” River said.

“You might think that, but it knows more than us. It’s not quirky because it’s broken, but because it’s sentient, and it’s actively involved in its timeline, and it’s the one thing that connects us all together, and, OMG,” Jon said.

“The Continuity of the One must be preserved at all cost,” Amy and Jon said together.

The Doctor walked to the console. “I didn’t know. I mean, I knew, but... Are you happy?”

“Doctor?” Rose said.

The Doctor turned to Rose.

“Ask again, facing Jon,” Rose said.

“Are you happy, Sexy?” the Doctor asked.

Jon blinked ‘yes,’ but said, “You’re asking me?”

The Doctor hugged Jon, and rocked him to and fro. “I love you so much, my one, constant companion, through my whole life,” the Doctor said.

“I am really uncomfortable with where this is going,” Jon said.

“You didn’t mind so much when it was my wife,” River said.

“This is really getting complicated,” Jon said.

“Welcome to our world,” Amy, Rose, and River said.

“Come on Sexy, next jump point, you know what you need and where to set us,” the Doctor said. “Jon, come here.”

Jon came closer and he touched something to his temple and it made a popping noise.

“Fuck, what was that for?!”

“So I can track you and listen into your conversations,” the Doctor said. “In case you try to improv again, I will know what’s going on. And, I can coach you if you’re in bad spot. Should have started with that, but we’re all on the same page now.”

Chapter 10

A TARDIS was visible in an alley. Jon was leaning against a building, facing the street. He was alone, but not alone. The Doctor was in his brain.

“Remember, stick to the plan,” the Doctor said. “See the girl in the rainbow top?”

A brunette was approaching. Her blouse was like a plaid shirt, only comprised of rainbows, and it was tied up, showing her belly. Her hair was short, bobbed, and there was head band that matched her shirt. She was wearing dark blue miniskirt, and black boots, and she was walking, almost in a trance, but a happy trance, as if she was in really good mood. The sun was shining and the feel of the street seemed like a spring day in New York.

“OMG, she is so hot,” Jon said. “I fucking love this job.”

“Stick to the plan,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, hell, yeah,” Jon said, reaching in his coat pocket for the bubble love perfume.

Peri paused before turning into the alley to size up Jon. Her smile broadened.

“Jon?” Peri asked. “Jon! OMG, what a wonderful surprise!”

Peri embraced him. “Oh, I have so missed talking to you,” she pulled back and kissed him on the mouth. “Oh, and I’ve missed that. How’s Loxy? Is she here now, or in your head here?”

“Um,” Jon said.

“Just go with it,” the Doctor said.

“Peri?” Jon said.

“It doesn’t matter. I promised Loxy the next time I caught you in this outfit, I would update your wardrobe,” Peri said, taking him by the arm and leading him to the TARDIS.

“You’re not the Doctor. You can wear more than one outfit in your life.”

“I like what I am wearing,” Jon said.

“Yeah, I know,” Peri said. She kissed him. “I am so happy to see you. What brings you to town?”

Peri led him towards the TARDIS.

“Where’s the Doctor?” Jon asked.

“Have you forgotten the rules? Rule one, if we are alone together, we’re not discussing the Doctors,” Peri said. “I know it’s difficult, but we have to have lives outside of the Doctor.”

We're not going to travel with him forever, you know. You and Loxy are still with the lady doctor, right?"

"Um, yeah," Jon said. "We're not talking about Doctors."

"It is so hard not talking about the Doctors!" Peri said, pushing into the TARDIS. "I wonder if there is like a word count on the number times a companion says the Doctor."

"That would be interesting," Jon said following her in and pushing the door almost closed. "Like, would the companion that said it the most be the favored one, or the annoying one."

"I don't want to be the annoying one," Peri said. "I want to be the cute one."

"Oh, you won, hands down," Jon said.

"You are so nice. I won't tell Loxy you said so," Peri said leading him back to the wardrobe.

"There are no secrets with her," Jon said. He was going to say 'she would agree with me,' but it came out, "and she agrees with me."

"Remember when she and I dressed up as Barbie Brunette twins for that Halloween Party?" Peri said.

"I can see it now," Jon said.

"Okay, get out of those clothes and hang them here," Peri said, as she went browsing. She picked up miscellaneous items that had been tossed carelessly as if cleaning up after the Doctor. Jon bit his lips watching her bend over. "Men, they can't just clean up after themselves." She paused and looked back at Jon. "I said, undress. You're not wearing that for the rest of your life."

Jon began to undress, putting his jacket on hanger. She pulled out a pinstriped suit, with a slim-lapelled, four button jacket.

"This is so you," Peri said.

"No, no, I think that's the Doctor's," Jon said.

"The Doctor would never wear this," Peri said.

"I am really not sure..." Jon said.

"It's this or a Kilt. I bet Jamie's Kilt is in here somewhere," Peri said. Jon agreed to the suit. "Now, a shirt. Burgundy. Here we go... Why are you still dressed?"

"Um," Jon said.

"What's going on, Jon. You're not shy," Peri said.

“Tell her you’re not wearing underwear,” the Doctor said.

“I am not wearing underwear,” Jon said.

“So?” Peri asked. “You and I have been naked together before.”

“What?! When?!” the Doctor asked. “Why don’t I remember this?”

“Peri, I am sorry, I am really embarrassed about this, but I am fully aroused, and...” Jon said.

Peri put down the shirt to hug and kiss Jon. “Want to play?”

“Do we have time?” Jon asked.

“Loads,” Peri said. “The Doctor won’t be back for hours. I just thought it might be fun dressing you up first so I can take them off again.” She was aware of the artifact between them. “You really missed me.”

“I was unaware of just how much till now,” Jon said.

“One of these days, you’re really going to have to tell me about the first time you meet me,” Peri said. “You’re just so easy going. I suspect you could play off our first time and I never even suspect.”

“Why, we could even pretend like this is my first time, if you like,” Jon said.

“That would be fun. But how would you explain our dialogue and the fact I brought you in here into the TARDIS?” Peri asked.

“I used my hypnosis skills and glamored you like a vampire?” Jon asked.

“Oh, I like that,” Peri said. “Hypothetically, if the Doctor were to catch us, can I use that as my out?”

“I bet our Doctors actually know,” Jon said.

“Oh, please, they don’t have a clue about sexual urges,” Peri said. “They’re like stuffy old grandfathers who you can’t ever imagine ever having sex in their lives, except for the evidence they’re your grandfather.”

“I think that it changing with each incarnation,” Jon said. “I mean, you can only charge the sexual tension capacitors so much before something sparks.”

“Kind of like now,” Peri said.

“Exactly like now,” Jon said.

“Did you ever wonder, if the Doctor suppresses his libido, does that naturally result in increased libido for the companions?” Peri asked.

“Why are we even still talking?” Jon asked.

“Oh, I don’t know, a British thing, I suppose,” Peri said, throwing herself at Jon.

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. “Would you like an experience?”

“Like erotic hypnosis?” Peri asked.

“No, more like, love bubbles,” Jon said.

“Is that like ice cream? Because, you’re really good at giving ice cream, and I miss ice cream,” Peri said.

“Please, not in the wardrobe,” the Doctor said. “I change clothes in there.”

“Maybe we should retire to the bedroom...”

“No. I like doing it in a pile warm clothes,” Peri said.

“Me, too. I never figured out why the clothes are always warm in here,” Jon said.

“Isn’t it the damndest thing?” Peri asked. “Tell me more about bubble love.”

“I’d rather just show you,” Jon said.

“Okay,” Peri said. “Wait!” She dumped a laundry basket of clothes onto the floor.

Jon retrieved the bottle. He sprayed himself and before Peri tackled him, he sprayed some on her. They fell backwards into a pile of clothes.

निर्मित

“Peri? Are you here?”

“Fuck,” Peri said. “Quick, get dressed.”

Jon and Peri started to get dressed.

“No, not those,” Peri snapped. “The new ones I set out for you.”

“Peri?!” the Doctor yelled.

“I am changing! I will be right up,” Peri shouted.

“Very well, then. I am shifting the TARDIS,” the Doctor yelled.

“No, wait!” Peri said. She grimaced at Jon, apologizing. “Let me come up first.”

No response.

“Doctor! Please wait for me to come up there,” Peri said.

“Very well, but please hurry, I want to get off as quickly as we can,” the Doctor yelled.

Peri straightened Jon’s collar, giving him a pained but humorous expression because of the Doctor’s funny but unfortunate choice of words. “You really need a tie,” Peri said.

“I hate ties,” Jon said.

“A bow tie?” Peri asked.

“Bow ties are cool,” Jon agreed. “I am not wearing a tie. I will wear this coat.”

Jon put on the coat.

“You look smashing,” Peri said. She kissed him. “Now, I will distract the Doctor, and you sneak out before we shift.”

“Okay,” Jon said.

“OMG, I so love you,” Peri said and hugged him. “Give Loxy love for me.”

“Okay,” Jon said.

“Peri?!” the Doctor yelled.

“Coming!” Peri shouted. She gave Jon the sign for quiet, and then a gesture that said give her two minutes. She left and came right back. “Oh, I forgot. Jenny said to give this to you next time I see you.” She handed him a photo, kissed him one last time, and then ran towards the Doctor. “I said I’m coming! Sometimes you so remind me of my father.”

Jon found himself holding the picture of him and Jenny and two children and wanting more information from Peri, but didn’t have time to ask. On the back of the photo, “Don’t forget, you were the one, love Jenny.” He quickly hung his original clothes, stuck the photo in the pocket. He started to leave, but came back, grabbed the bubble love perfume, dropped it in his coat pocket, and headed up towards the control room. Peri waved him off.

“You’re acting strange, even for you, child,” the Doctor said, throwing a scarf back over his neck.

“It’s just, I didn’t expect you back, and we’re already traveling, and you didn’t tell me we were traveling, and I wanted to make sure I am dressed appropriately,” Peri said.

“You’ve never cared about that before,” the Doctor said.

Peri started to cry.

“Oh my dear,” the Doctor said, embracing her in a paternal hug. “I am sorry. I forget how emotional you can be at times.”

Behind the Doctor’s back, she motioned for Jon to go for the door.

“You just don’t know what it’s like being a girl on the TARDIS, always in the Doctor’s shadow,” Peri said. She waved Jon away again as she felt the Doctor leaving the embrace. “No, please, just hold me.”

“Just let me make one more quick shift before we shoot off world,” the Doctor said. “I’ll take us somewhere exciting.”

“Can we go visit some friends?” Amy asked. “We haven’t spent time with friends in a while.”

“Okay, sure, that probably good for you. How about that chap, the one with the clever girlfriend. What was her name? Clara?”

“Loxy,” Peri cried, waving Jon to make a run for the door. “You don’t even remember their names.”

“Well, they’re your friends, dear,” the Doctor said. “I don’t know why I keep calling her Clara. She just reminds me of a Clara. I just don’t remember knowing a Clara.”

Peri wailed louder to cover the sound of the door to the TARDIS opening and closing.

Outside the TARDIS, Jon had a bit of a shock. It was no longer a cool, spring day in New York, but rather a cold, wet, raining day in Paris. River stepped up to him, not wearing what he had remembered. She pointed a gun at him.

“Oh, hello, husband,” River said.

The TARDIS shifted away behind him.

“Fuck me,” was all Jon managed.

“Anytime, anywhere, Doctor,” River said.

“FFF f fuck,” Jon said.

“What’s wrong? Experiencing bb bb brain freeze after regenerating?” River said. “I don’t really remember this face, though, and I thought I remember them all. Oh, is this the one I killed on day one and you just shifted to the next?”

Jon said something to her in sign language.

“I thought you would never ask,” River said.

River took Jon by the arm and led him to the Eiffel Tower, where she took a ‘private’ lift to the top, past the top, and into a private invisible suite. It was invisible on the outside. Inside, it was a single room saucer styled spaceship, with windows going around the room. She began to undress, throwing her coat to the floor.

“Come on, take it off,” River said.

Jon singed something.

“You have to be naked for that to happen, dear,” River said. “Fine, you want me to do all the work?”

River pushed his coat and jacket off simultaneously, as if going for an inside the jacket hug, and magically just sort of shrugged off his coat and jacket. She took him to the queen size bed just opposite of the control console and tossed him down.

“Finally, I can act on my fantasy,” River said, pinning him down and looking him straight in the eyes. “Sex during regeneration!”

“Fuck me,” Jon said.

“Oh, anything you want, you got it,” River sang, and kissed his neck. “Anything you need, you got it... Computer, play Roy Orbison, please.”

निर्मित

Jon woke to River facing him. Her eyes were closed. She was smiling. There was more bed sheets covering her than him. They were naked. She had one arm and one leg draped over him. Her face was close enough he could smell her breath.

“Someone’s awake again,” River said, moaning pleasantly. She opened her eyes, scooted closer. “You have always had the shortest refractory period than anyone I have ever been with.”

“River,” Jon said. “This part is going to be difficult...”

Someone coughed. It wasn’t either of them. They both sat up, River taking all the sheet. Jon found a pillow to cover his problem. In a rolling chair, at the foot of the bed, sat a woman wearing slacks, a simple blouse with suspenders, and a brown over coat.

“Honey,” River said. “I can explain everything.”

“I am listening,” she said. “Let’s start with, who’s the John.”

“Oh! He’s not a John. I don’t make money that way,” River said.

“Okay, who’s the mark?” the woman asked.

“He’s not a mark, he’s you,” River said.

“I don’t remember ever being him,” the woman said.

“This isn’t the one I killed so you could be you?” River asked.

“River,” she said very clearly. “He is not the Doctor.”

“Yes he is. I saw him come out of the TARDIS. He is wearing exactly what I have seen him wearing in the past. He was experiencing speech malfunction due to regeneration. His TARDIS went away to regenerate. Tell her...”

“My name is Jon, I am a companion, sort of, temporarily, kind of on a trial basis, not likely going to live through this,” Jon said.

River screamed and left the bed, taking the sheets with her.

“What the fuck!” River yelled. “How dare you?!”

“This is really awkward,” Jon said.

“Yeah, I am feeling all kinds of awkwardness. In all my incarnations, I don’t think I have ever felt so awkward,” the Doctor said.

“I am so sorry, baby. Please, don’t be mad at me,” River said.

“Get dressed,” the Doctor said.

Jon got up to get dressed. “Not you. Stay there,” the Doctor said.

“I would feel less awkward if I were dressed,” Jon said.

“I want you feeling awkward. The more vulnerable you feel, the more likely you will tell the truth,” the Doctor said.

“No, actually the inverse of that is true,” Jon said.

“So, you’re a liar, and a cheat, and you tricked my wife into bed?” the Doctor asked.

“No! I would never do that. Okay, maybe, lately, due to extraordinary circumstances, there could be caveats that might be construed as duplicity, but, ordinarily, I am really a nice guy,” Jon offered.

“Nice guys don’t lie to women to get them into bed,” River snapped, buttoning her blouse. The blouse was long enough to cover everything to her thighs. She saw his eyes wander and stopped buttoning to pull up her slacks. Bending over to get her slacks in a blouse not completely buttoned revealed more.

“Oh, please. I was inarticulate and you made assumptions,” Jon said, unable to look away.

“You clearly articulated in sign what you wanted us to do together,” River said.

“You pulled a gun on me!” Jon said.

“You said fuck me,” River said.

“Because you pulled a gun on me!” Jon said.

River pulled her weapon on him. The Doctor pointed her sonic screwdriver at her, flashed one green, and River went down for a nap.

“You killed her?!” Jon asked.

“No! I would never kill my spouse,” the Doctor said. “The only way I could get her released from prison was if she had a brain implant installed so I can make her sleep. I don’t know what universe you’re from, but here River is a very dangerous criminal. She’s also my wife. I love my wife. I understand she’s a bit crazy, because I understand her history. I don’t know how much of her encounter with you I can erase, or if I even should, but if I am going to make any life altering decisions I need to know what I am up against. So, unless you want River Song hunting you for rest of eternity through all the known Universes, I need you to start talking, and I want you to tell me everything. Now, let’s start over. I am the Doctor. Who the hell are you and why are you sleeping with my wife.”

Chapter 11

A knock on the TARDIS door proved to be the River's Doctor, the Wife. Rose's Doctor, residing in the TARDIS, was confused, then surprised. Jon was beside her. He stepped outside and pulled the door to.

"Doctor," River's Doctor said.

"Doctor," Rose's Doctor said.

"I think this one belongs to you?" River's Doctor said.

"Yeah, sort of, on loan," Rose's Doctor said. "Been working on getting him back."

"I heard," River's Doctor said.

Rose's Doctor frowned. "He talks too much. He's dressing much nicer, but still, too much talking is bad for a time traveler's companion."

"I compelled him," River's Doctor said.

"Really?" Rose's Doctor asked. "At point of death?"

River's Doctor handed him the potion. "I really don't approve of this. It's extremely dangerous. In the wrong hands, well, I don't even want to think about it. Even in good hands, the potential for addiction and abuse is unprecedented," she said.

"And yet, you used it on yourself in order to get information from him?" the Doctor clarified.

River's Doctor closed her eyes, a lengthy blink. "Not at first."

"I don't understand," Rose's Doctor said.

"I failed to explain that you spray it on yourself so she sprayed it on me, and well, the rest is kind of history," Jon said.

"Oh, clever. Like, you mislead her to spray it on you so that she would be vulnerable and you could extricate yourself from the situation," Rose's Doctor said.

"Um, yeah, exactly like that," Jon said.

"It was nothing like that," River's Doctor corrected.

"You sprayed him?" the Doctor asked.

"I was curious. I'm a Doctor. Why the hell didn't you put a label on this?" she asked.

"I didn't want to draw attention to it," Rose's Doctor said. "But if you sprayed Jon, he would have had the upper hand."

“He did,” River’s Doctor said.

“And you didn’t take the opportunity to escape?” Rose’s Doctor asked.

“I tried! Honest, but she realized really quickly her mistake and sprayed herself,” Jon said.

“So, she had the upper hand,” Rose’s Doctor said.

“It was really difficult tracking hands after that,” Jon said.

“Oh, God, Jon, what is wrong with you?!” Rose’s Doctor said. “I am the Doctor. It didn’t occur to you that sleeping with her is sleeping with me?”

“At that particular moment, I wasn’t really thinking very clearly,” Jon said.

“Okay, but you, you’re the Doctor!” Rose’s Doctor said.

“I couldn’t let him escape,” River’s Doctor said.

“And after the handcuffs, there was no escaping,” Jon said.

“Handcuffs? What handcuffs?” Rose’s Doctor asked.

“I think they belong to Amy,” River’s Doctor mused.

“No. They were River’s,” Jon said.

“You sure?” River’s Doctor asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “They shock you if you make noises.”

“Oh. That explains that,” River’s Doctor said. “Sorry.”

“Karma,” Jon said.

Rose’s Doctor scratched his head. “Stop, I don’t want to hear any more. I am struggling.” He suddenly realized.

“A lot of us are struggling these days,” River’s Doctor said. “Do you have this or do you need me to step in?”

“Are you busy?” Rose’s Doctor asked.

“I am having a marriage crisis, and I really want to focus on that, if you don’t mind,” River’s Doctor said. “Seriously, this is a huge distraction in my life I mean, if even half of what Jon alluded to is true, I really need to get some affairs in order.”

“You know where to find me,” Jon said.

“Not that kind of affair,” River’s Doctor said. She nodded to the Doctor. “Doctor.”

“Doctor,” Rose’s Doctor said.

Jon and Rose’s Doctor watched River’s Doctor walk away.

“Should I have told her that she and River are going to have babies?” Jon asked.

“You didn’t discuss that with her?” the Doctor asked.

“No, I just wanted to get out of there,” Jon said.

The Doctor closed his eyes for a long moment. “It will sort itself soon enough,” he sighed.

The Doctor opened the door to the TARDIS and entered. Jon followed.

“Who was at the door?” Rose asked. “Oh, Jon, you look nice.”

“Dressing up as the Doctor now, are you?” Amy asked.

“It could get you killed,” River said.

“Or laid,” Jon said.

River went for her weapon but it wasn’t there. “We will talk more later!”

“Oh you bet your sweet ass we will,” Jon said.

“Jon. She’s my daughter?” Amy asked.

“So?” Jon asked. “Everyone is someone’s daughter or mother, should we stop trying to have sex?”

“You should,” River said.

“What did River do exactly?” Rose asked.

“Honey, we should probably try to extricate ourselves from their affairs,” the Doctor said.

“It was not an affair. I was tricked,” River said.

“Tricked my ass,” Jon said.

“You took advantage of my vulnerability for the Doctor!” River said.

“You took advantage of the fact I was mentally incapacitated,” Jon said.

“You’re definitely a mental retard,” River said.

“And you slept with a retard,” Jon said.

Amy stepped between them to keep it from being a fight.

“Oh, would you two just kiss and make it bygones?” the Doctor asked.

“No,” Jon, River, and Amy said.

“This is your fault!” Jon snapped.

“Oh, don’t blame him!” River said. “You were supposed to engage and pull out!”

Amy and Rose both covered their mouths.

“Look, I have the coordinates for our next jump,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, I am through jumping,” Jon said.

“I will believe that when I see it,” River said.

“Jon,” the Doctor interrupted. “We have to finish what we started. You could die. The TARDIS could blow up. A TARDIS blowing up could wipe out the entire solar system.”

“Fuck!” Jon said. “That’s something you could have said up front, you know.”

“I just discover the harmonic imbalance in the sub dimensional manifold that contains the heart of the TARDIS,” the Doctor said.

“Fuck me,” Jon said.

“Already done that,” River said. “Next.”

“I am not happy,” Jon said. “I am going to go change back into my clothes.”

“Good idea,” River said. “It’s not wise impersonating the Doctor. Seriously, Cosplay conventions are just asking for trouble.”

“Hold on,” the Doctor said. “You left your clothes in Peri’s TARDIS, right?”

“Yeah, they’re in the wardrobe,” Jon said.

“No, I don’t think you’ll find them,” the Doctor said. “Wait.” He pulled the photo out of his pocket. “Damn it. I may have missed an opportunity to start a paradox.”

“Oh,” Jon said. “I see.”

“What do you see?” the Doctor asked.

“Um, Peri gave me the photo. Specifically she told me Jenny gave it to her to give to me,” Jon said.

“Wait, when did Peri see Jenny?” the Doctor asked.

“I was too busy trying to pull out to ask,” Jon said.

“Where is the picture?” the Doctor asked.

“I put it in my coat pocket so I would know where it was. I don’t remember thinking about it, I just kind of did it on automatic,” Jon said. “And I left it hanging in Peri’s TARDIS.”

“Good job,” the Doctor said, activating the controls.

“You’ve never said good job to me,” Amy said.

“Surely I have,” the Doctor said. “Or will.”

“No, I am pretty sure I would have remembered that,” Amy said.

“I am going to change,” Jon said, and withdrew as they were talking.

River followed him and caught up.

“I can dress on my own,” Jon said.

“I’ve seen you dressed,” River said. “You need my help.”

“I am mad at you,” Jon said.

“And I am mad at you first, so we’re tied,” River said.

Jon stopped. He closed his eyes, sorted. “River,” he said with eyes closed. He opened and looked at her. “I am sorry.”

“Okay,” River said. She took his arm and accompanied him to the wardrobe.

“Why did you put a gun on me?” Jon said.

“I really thought you were the Doctor. And I thought you were going to take me back to prison,” River said, letting go of his arm to sort clothes. “Parole stipulation required me to remain in line of sight of my wife for the duration of parole. I got bored, took the saucer out for a spin, and,” she paused and came closer to him, “well, the next thing I knew was that I was in Paris and there you were, looking all smart in your suit, and I was missing you and, well...” She slapped him.

“Please, don’t do that,” Jon said.

“You’re a menace,” River said, and began to cry.

River went and sat down on the shoe bench. Jon went and sat down by her. She leaned into him, just sobbing.

“My whole life has just been hell,” River said. “I was kidnapped at birth. Programmed to be an assassin. Programed to kill the only man I ever loved, my husband. Who, oddly enough, thereafter becomes my wife. I really thought I was going to struggle with that one, but being married to a woman turned out to be better than being married to a man. I still have a thing for men, but she and I, we were doing just fine without men, until you came along and ruined it all. You mark the point of the final decline. And I hate you and I hate myself for bringing you into my life. Her life. Our life. I swore, I would never make the mistake my parents made. I knew if I could ever have a child, I would be a great mother. No one would ever hurt my child or kidnap them because I am a warrior. No one gets the best of River Song. I didn’t really have to worry about it though, because, I couldn’t get pregnant. And then there was you. And I had a child. And my wife had a child. And we were happy. And I failed. I couldn’t keep us safe. No one could keep us safe. Even if all the incarnations of all the Doctors came together at one time, they could not have kept us safe. Even if all the Doctors in all the Universes could come together,

even they would not be able to keep us safe. The one thing the Doctor can't defeat is death. It comes for us all."

She cried some more, but finally quieted. Jon sat there with her, his hands in his lap. It was she that touched him, by leaning into him. Her hands were on his hands.

"Tell me this is all going to work out," River said.

"You want me to lie to you?" Jon asked.

"Please," River said.

"I don't do that, River. It's not all good. Something just suck. Dead puppies suck. Babies with cancer suck. People we love die and or have things happen to them and that just sucks ass," Jon said.

"You really suck at this part," River said.

"You want me to say something to negate your belief that the Doctor can't defeat death, but River, you're right. He can't do that. She can't do that," Jon said, taking her hand in his. "I don't care how good or strong or smart or fast he-she is, or anyone is, everyone fails, sometimes. Parents are supposed to keep us children safe. Most the time, that happens. If you're lucky, you at least end up with parents that don't beat you or fuck you. If you're really lucky, you have parents that pay attention to you and not their cell phones. Most children are kept reasonably safe and they make it to adult hood and they, on average, tend to do a little better than their parents. If that weren't generally true, there would be no people. Maybe we hear the horror stories of bad parents because they're the exception. Maybe we find fault with our parents because we had expectations that weren't met. Maybe marriages fail because we failed to let go of our expectations and see the person we love for who they are, faults and all. Maybe we need people like the Doctor, someone who can be the model champion who can save the world and people time after time, but with each rendition of the story, the people get wiser and smarter, and so the pitfalls and hazards have to get wider and deeper, which means the hero necessarily as to evolve, because we're evolving, and this is a never ending story of escalation, because the better the hero the more horrific the antihero. I mean, you can't have superman without kryptonite. What fun is that?"

"This is not fun, Jon," River said.

"It is not, but your beef isn't with your wife, or the Doctor, or your parents, or the man you had an affair with, but with God," Jon said.

“Really? You’re bringing religion into our conversation?” River said.

“No, I am bringing a metaphor, and pushing this to its extreme hypothetical conclusion,” Jon said. “Jump to the end game. This is a conversation you’re having with yourself and God. Why is there evil? Why is there struggle? Why is there anything?”

“Why?” River said.

“If anyone ever answers that, run away from them,” Jon said. “No one has a fucking clue, River. We cannot know from our present perspective.”

“I don’t understand,” River said.

“Imagine you’re the Doctor,” Jon said. “Oh, no better, imagine, you’re a companion. Oh, no, even better, imagine you’re married to the Doctor. This great man knows all the ins and outs of space and time. Imagine he is there, holding your hand on last day. What do you imagine he might ask you?”

“I would ask for more time,” River said.

“No, that’s what you would ask him, and I imagine he would respond, ‘I, the Doctor, have been with you, River, from cradle to grave. I have mapped out your best life, but you, my love, were the one who had to walk the path. Sometimes you walked with your eyes closed, because it was too unfathomable, unbearably preposterously painful. Sometimes you ran. Sometimes you fell, but you always got up, and you persevered against the greatest of odds. But you made it. Here you are. What did you learn?’”

“What do you mean, what did I learn? Life is not a game or a test,” River said.

“You’re right. I like that. There’s your answer,” Jon said. “You just absolved yourself from hurting. It is what it is, and you have done what you have done, that’s it.”

“But, I am still feeling,” River said.

“Oh, okay, let’s return to the question. What did you learn?” Jon asked.

“Life is pain and people abandon you or abuse you unless you get them first,” River said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “You learned to fight.”

“I am really good at it,” River said.

“Yeah you are,” Jon said.

“I am still hurting,” River said.

“Oh. So, what could you have learned instead of fighting?” Jon asked.

“I will not run,” River said.

“Good for you,” Jon said.

“Good?! I am still hurting,” River said.

“Oh. What else could you have learned?”

“What else is there?” River asked.

“How about love?” Jon asked.

“Oh, please. This game of yours sucks,” River said. It felt as if she might have gotten up, but Jon held her hand.

“Fighting didn’t work. Running isn’t an option, what else is there?” Jon asked.

“I have loved! I love so much it hurts,” River said.

“You feel pain because you love someone, or something, or some idea, so much that you want to preserve it at all cost and not let it change, but the very act of trying to keep it the same kills the thing you were preserving. You love someone to death. You love the Doctor, but the Doctor is all about change. The Doctor is not static. We are not static. The Doctor sees just a moment of us, a snapshot if you will, and then he’s off like lightening to see another face, another side of reality, and he’s putting together this picture, knowing full well that each of us, these little tiny threads are but strands in a greater tapestry. Every time you see the Doctor he’s different. Every time he sees us, we’re different. And I am not saying it’s easy. I love this Doctor. I am not so fond of Amy’s Doctor. Nothing against him really, except I like this one. I am seriously in love with your wife, too. Am I loving the same person, or a different person? Is Loxy Clara? Is Clara a Doctor? Do I love one Doctor or all the Doctors? Do I embrace all of them? Is Jenny the daughter, or is she a Doctor in her own right? What is Jenny to me? Oh, could Jenny be Clara, or become Clara. Oh, what if there was only one companion! Each companion could be just another incarnation of one eternal companion, and we keep bypassing. That would make Feynman’s one electron in the whole universe theory really interesting.

“Hold up, we have to revisit the one companion theory,” Jon said. “Did you ever wonder why the Doctor is obsessed with Earth? So many wonderful places in the Universe, and yet, he spends most of his time on Earth. Maybe some of the Galafreyans incarnated onto Earth and he’s looking for someone specific. Clara! That would explain Clara. Okay, wait, table that. Humans. Earth. The Doctor protects Earth. The continuity of the One could be the Earth. Humans are meant to become intergalactic species. We go everywhere. Every planet we terraform spreads humanity, but with each new planet, we add a new species. Humans change. Every humanoid

species may be the descendants of humanity. But people forget that, and if you blow up earth, you erase the entire universe. Oh, the continuity of one could be the human species. God, I hate riddles. Oh! Of course! The Galafreyans are our descendants! They're us in the future. Which is explains why they're so arrogant. They use to be us. But they've forget where they came from, which could be self-induced amnesia to protect origin, because if you tamper with origin, well, you could mess yourself up. It could be the other way around. Humans could be the descendants of Galafreyans, but that sounds like de-evolution as opposed to evolution, which isn't against the rules of evolution, one doesn't necessarily have to evolve an improved model. Which means what, the hybrids, you, Rose's Doctor, the doctor's daughter, our off spring! OMG, this is just the beginning which means, you're the forerunner for something so amazing that it's no wonder you're experiencing some pain. Birthing pains suck ass, so I have been told, I don't really remember my birth, and I don't want to personally carry and give birth, but I suppose, given current trends, that is a potential risk, but sorry, tangent, where was I? Oh! How awesome are you! You're heralding in the next generation of time travelers, because there can't just be one. Nature abhors one of just anything. It always finds a way to make more of something good. And you are all so good!"

"Has anyone ever told you, you talk way too much," River said.

"I've heard that before, yes," Jon said, much more subdued than his manic rant.

"Interesting," River said. "I don't really remember what I was thinking or feeling."

"I tend to distract people from their stuff sometimes," Jon said. "I am sorry."

"No, actually, I am grateful," River said. "You should consider becoming a counselor. You're actually really good at this."

"Oh, no. Too much transference and counter transference, and it's against the law to sleep with clients, and that's a serious risk with me. Of course, I guess I could go be a counselor in the 50's and 60's when there was more of that going on. You know, if people really understood how helpful sex is for helping people heal, I think we'd be less restrictive on sex," Jon said.

"I am sorry, Jon," River said. "I was wrong."

"It's just a thing," Jon said.

"No, Jon, I am sorry," River said.

"Thank you, River," Jon said. "Want to do it again?"

"Do you want me to kill you?" River asked.

“With sex?” Jon asked.

River laughed. "If you say we'll always have Paris, I will kill you."

“Earlier, you asked me to lie to you and tell you we’re going to be okay, but I am in the thick of it with you and we’re turning and being twisted around each other, and this shuttle cock keeps knocking us back and forth. I don’t have clue where this is going or where this will end. But someone does. Hopefully the Doctor. The only reasonable certainty I can say is that right here, right now, I am with you. And I am grateful. And should you decide to kill me, I will be gratefully dead. Who knows, maybe I’ll even start a band. I know all their songs. I could even have an ice cream named after me.”

“Butterscotch?” River asked.

“That’s interesting,” Jon said.

The Doctor’s voice came from outside the room. “Are you two decent?”

“No,” River and Jon said in unison.

The Doctor came around the corner anyway.

“And yet, you came around?” River said.

“Oh, good, you were having fun at my expense,” the Doctor said. “Amy was worried you might be having sex, and we really don’t have time for any more sex games, we have work to do.”

“Which, means sex games,” Jon said.

“Possibly,” the Doctor said. “You have not really been cooperating with my script, and I becoming a bit cross about that, Sir.”

“Maybe this one will work out for you,” River said. She patted his leg and headed out.

Jon followed.

“I thought you came down here to change,” the Doctor said.

“I did,” Jon said.

“You did? Meaning, you did come down to change, or you did change, but I can’t discern a change,” the Doctor said. “Are you messing with me?”

“He was messing with me,” River called back.

“You’re a married woman,” the Doctor called after her.

“So are you,” River called back.

“Jon, you really need to constrain your impulses,” the Doctor said, passing him up. He handed him the bubble love perfume as he did. “Don’t forget this.”

Chapter 12

“There is a strange little man, wearing butler outfit from the Victorian era standing guard in front of the TARDIS,” Jon reported.

“That is interesting,” the Doctor said. “What color is his skin?”

“Orange, brown, a mix,” Jon said. “Kind of looks like a potato head, no discernable neck sort of fellow. Kind of weird, if you don’t mind my bias.”

“Which is it, orange or brown, it’s important,” the Doctor said.

“I’ll go with brown,” Jon said.

“Ah! A Sontarin, that’s odd,” the Doctor said. “But, the plan is the same. Use the potion, and get the Sontarin infatuated with you enough to take you into the TARDIS.”

“No,” Jon said. “Not doing that.”

“Jon, you are no match for Sontarin militarily,” the Doctor said. “You must use the potion.”

“I am not kissing a potato head man,” Jon said.

“They’re asexual,” the Doctor said.

“No, doubt,” Jon said. “Because I wouldn’t engage that, even if I was one. Well, I suspect that’s true. Maybe if I were one I would be compelled to like one, but then I know me, I would still want a human female. But since I’m not that and I am not doing that, the world will never know.”

“Get it done,” the Doctor said.

“What if there is someone inside?” Jon asked.

“No one ever stays in the TARDIS,” the Doctor said.

“Then why is there a Santana Guard in front of the TARDIS?” Jon asked.

“SonTARin,” the Doctor corrected. “Probably because the Doctor wanted to give it a job to keep it occupied and out of the way. Go. Once you’re in side, if you block the hole on the back of the next, it will go to sleep. Let me know when you think the area is secure.”

Jon thought about it.

“We don’t have time to think about it,” the Doctor said.

“Fine! I am not happy. I am going in,” Jon said. “I heard that, River! It’s a metaphor!”

Jon walked casually up to the TARDIS.

“Step away from the blue box, Sir,” the Sontaran said. “There is nothing to see here. Move along.”

“You’re a cute little fellow, aren’t you,” Jon said, spraying himself.

“You, Sir, will come with me into the TARDIS, where you will disrobe and allow me to pleasure you,” the Sontaran said, turning to open the box. It had to turn to its body to look back to see if the human was following him. It smiled. “I am overwhelmed by how suddenly compelling human male anatomy can be.”

“I am curious about yours, my little potato head, friend,” Jon said. “In a scientific sort of way, mind you.”

“We are monogender, male only, and rarely engaged in this particular past time,” the creature said, taking off its tie.

Jon came closer, turned it around, and put his hand over the hole on the back of the neck.

“Asphyxia can be quite pleasurable under the right condition,” the Sontaran said, going to his knees. “Would you like me to strangle you, when I recover?”

The Sontarin passed out, and dropped all the way to the floor.

“Oh, thank god, no fluids were exchanged,” Jon said. The air hole ejected slime out covering his hand and stray drops hit his face. “Ah, fuck.” He wiped the slime on the Sontaran’s clothes.

“Murderer,” came a voice.

Jon stood even as the female, with hardly any clothes on worth calling clothes, rushed him with a knife. He wasn’t sure what she was wearing, as it wasn’t a blouse, and it wasn’t a dress, nor it was a negligee, but it was all she was wearing. Perhaps if he had been less focused on what she was wearing, or more precisely what she wasn’t wearing, he could have focused more on the knife attack. He blocked poorly, and the knife penetrated jacket and shirt, and just missed a kidney. Jon held her wrist with both hands. She took him all the way to the wall. Her eyes were wide and fierce, and if he hadn’t been so preoccupied with pain, it would be the perfect state of mind to hypnotize her. He held her eyes with his eyes. She sought evidence that he was dying or surrendering, but he gave her neither. He let go of her wrist with one hand, sending it into the coat pocket for the spray. She pushed into harder, a trick to use his own strength against him. Her

sudden reversal gave her the knife back. She put the knife to his throat. “Who shall I tell the Doctor died today?”

“Jon,” Jon said, spraying himself in the pocket.

“Jon,” she repeated, sniffing his breath. “I’m Leela.”

He sprayed his hand again, not sure it was working.

“I am going to tell you this only once. Drop your pants now,” Leela said.

“Okay,” Jon said. He brought his hand out of his pocket, wiped excess spray off his hand onto his forehead, and then freed his belt and trousers. His pants fell His shirt and coat sort of kept things private. Mostly.

Leela took him by the shoulders and manhandled him to the floor, mounted him, and brought her knife once more into play, cutting the buttons off his shirt to expose his chest. She threw the knife down and ravished Jon. The Doctor peeped in. Jon sat up and drew her head to his, kissing her behind the ear, but nodding for the Doctor to hurry and do his thing. The Doctor ran to the panel, inserted the crystal, and watched it as it was absorbed into the panel matrix. The Doctor paused to see if Jon wanted help, but he waved him on. The Doctor departed.

“Leela, stop,” Jon said.

“No,” Leela said.

“Leela. Love. We need to go to the bedroom, stand up,” Jon said.

Leela stood up, took his hand to help him up, and then began to lead him to the bed room Jon pulled her to a stop. She came closer, as if they were only dancing.

“Listen to me,” Jon said. “Look at me. Let go of my hand. Look at my eyes. Look deeper. Use all of this energy you feel to be with me as a reason to comply. Complying with my request is easy. You want to help me. Helping me helps you feel even better. Now, eyes closed.” He touched her forehead, and she fell into him, her head hitting his shoulder. “I am going to ask you to stand. Your eyes will remain closed, and you will go even deeper. It feels really good to go deeper, and stay deep. Eyes closed. You are safe. Stand up. Eyes closed. That’s it. Deep and warm.”

Jon pulled up his pants and secured his belt. He ignored the blood stain that was growing. He straightened her dress down. There was no straightening her dress down enough, and if it weren’t for the fact he was likely dying from the wound, he definitely would have been tempted to explore more.

“Leela, you’re doing good. It was right for you to attack me. Right now, you’re just having a bit of a dream. Neither you, nor your friends will be harmed. This is just a really good dream,” Jon said. “I need you to listen, I need you to remember. It’s imperative that you remember this, on some level, because you have a choice to make. I am with the Doctor. A future Doctor. We needed to do something. No one was supposed to get hurt or violated. We had a plan. What happened between you and me, not part of the plan. It’s all fun and game till some gets hurt or violated, and we got both here. You don’t have to forgive me, but you have to choose. You can remember all of this, and keep it to yourself. You can remember this, and share it with whomever you wish, knowing that it could unravel the whole future. Or, you can remember it as just a pleasant dream. I prefer you just remember it as a dream. I am not fighting you. I am not running from responsibility. I am just trying to save the future. My name is Jon Harister. I prefer we be friends. I prefer you remember this whole thing as just a pleasant dream. Ten minutes from now. You choose what you think is best, ten minutes from now. In a moment, you’re going to open your eyes. You will not be able to see me. You are going to go get a shower. You’re going to go to bed. You will nap for exactly ten minutes. You will get up refreshed, and you will have a clarity and choice. You feel loved. There is no wrong decision. Be at peace. Now, open your eyes.”

Leela opened her eyes. She was looking straight at Jon and struggling with something, then her gaze went through him, then beyond him, and she turned to leave. “That’s weird,” she said, stopping to get her knife, and walked away. Jon then proceeded to wake up the Sontarin. Hypnotizing the Sontarin was just as easy, probably enhanced because of the bubble love. The Sontarin returned to his post. Instead of giving the Sontarin a complete dream, he had a daydream that was pleasant enough: a human came to inquire about the box, but that after a pleasant chat, the human went away. He didn’t give the Sontarin a choice. He gave only an ‘if/then’ option. If Leela chose to speak of the incident, he would remember it all and corroborate the story.

Jon completely failed to attend to the fact that he had left a trail of blood on the floor. Or, that there was blood on Leela’s knife.

निर्मित

Jon staggered away from the target TARDIS, and was immediately caught up by the Doctor and River. The ushered him towards their TARDIS.

“He is not a warrior, Doctor,” River said.

“He is now,” the Doctor said.

“I am through, Doctor,” Jon said.

“Oh, don’t be silly, it’s just a flesh wound,” the Doctor said.

“No!” Jon said. “I am not using that stuff again. I am not lying to another companion. I am not doing this. I am through.”

“Don’t worry, Jon, we’re done. You did it,” the Doctor said.

Upon entering the TARDIS, the upgrade immediately began to take. “No, no, no... Fuck!” The seizure was the most severe. The Doctor and River laid Jon down. Rose closed the door. Amy brought a medical box over.

“Amy, bring me that other box, the blue one, with the little red circles,” the Doctor said. “Hang in there Jon.”

River fished a fluid pack from the first box Amy had delivered. She held it in her mouth as she sought her knife to cut Jon’s trouser legs. She exposed his calf and wrapped the fluid pack around the leg and then she hit with a closed fist. “Lactic Ringer started, at 14:32,” she announced. She began rummaging through the kits for her next item. “Where the pressure bandages.”

“Someone must have been distracted and not replaced them,” the Doctor said. Amy delivered the box. “Ah, yes, I still have my nanites!” He opened the box and found one cartridge left. “Seriously!”

“You only need one,” River said.

“Not the point,” the Doctor said. He attached the cartridge to a deployment device and injected the full contents of the bottle into his stomach, near the wound. Jon’s seizure ended immediately.

“Your TARDIS,” River said. “Your job to attend to this stuff.”

Jon gasped.

“That stuff work’s fast,” Rose said.

“Coincident,” the Doctor said.

Jon arched his back off the floor and screamed. He collapsed to the floor, exhausted, “Fucking stop already,” Jon whimpered. “Please stop.”

“Stop what,” Rose asked.

“The white rabbit runs from the white robots, and the master brain will rise again,” Jon answered. “The Land of Fiction will enslave you all. Expanding, twirling voids of white and black, to the end of time and always back. Laura Corbett’s tulpa will lead the charge through Eastwold. Jon will be the next Master of the Land, empowered by fiction from all the fans. You will long for death, but there will be no escape, for my lovely angels weep your fate!” Jon said. He went unconscious.

“Oh, that’s really creepy,” River said. “Please tell me we’re not going there.”

“It’s not really somewhere you can go. It’s really nowhere,” the Doctor said.

“You mean, kind of like where we went before coming here?” Amy asked.

“Did you meet Alice from Wonderland?” the Doctor asked.

“No,” Amy said.

“Jessica Rabbit?” the Doctor asked.

“Oh, you wish,” Rose said.

“I admit that. Academic curiosity, of course,” the Doctor said. “Any fictional characters at all?”

“Just the love bubbles and balloon plants,” Amy said.

“Oh! I love balloon plants. They make your voice sound like Donald Duck, and you can get a nice little buzz to boot,” the Doctor said. “So, that was probably somewhere. It could have nowhere. There is a lot of nowhere available to go to, and it only take one artifact to spawn a whole universe around it. Nowhere space is richer than farmland covered with pig fertilizer.”

“You’ve been there?” Rose said. “And you didn’t tell me?”

“First rule of Fiction Land, never talk about Fiction Land. You want to minimize the energy it gets. Anyway, yes, I went there. Long time ago. A one in a million shot, like shooting an arrow randomly into the empty sky and catching an apple miles away from its orchard. I flipped an emergency switch, and well, we hit it like a bug on a windshield,” the Doctor said. “Once you hit it, it’s like catching bed bugs, you might as well torch the house. Of course, you can’t really do that because in this instance, the house is Earth. Pocket Universes are a real pain in the ass to get rid of. It only takes one person wanting to go there and meet their soul mate, or

their favorite character, and then suddenly, bam, every doorway, every window, and every crack in every side wall is leaking dream zombies.”

“Dream zombies?” Rose asked.

“Well, probably not the right term. It’s kind of disparaging and not accurate, because they are sentient beings. They can be really nice and lovely people, as long as you play along with the fantasy, but diverge from the script, and they start to get a little irritated,” the Doctor said. “And that’s nice ones. You forget that humans don’t like pleasant stories. Nursery rhymes can be a real bitch if you think about it. People like adversaries. It helps them feel better about reality believing someone is out to get them, so they don’t have to take responsibility for their reality. Now those kind, they’re real monsters. I shudder to think what would happen to Japan if one window opened onto Fiction Land. Not good. Monsters are tough to get rid of, because their power base spreads so quickly. It’s much easier to convince others that monsters exist than nice people. The more people you get to buy into your fantasy, the more solid the being becomes...”

“But you beat them before,” Amy said.

“Twice if I recall correctly. Oh, but that was way before internet and cellphones. If it happened in any major city on earth after 1999, it would be really difficult to contain,” the Doctor said. “Best solution would probably be to just learn to live with fiction. Not too different than what you’re doing now. None of you think the Cardassians are real people, do you?”

The TARDIS lights went off. Emergency lighting came on.

“Oh! No,” the Doctor said, running to the console. Nothing seemed to be working. “No, no, no. We were done! All we had to do was crossover! Jon, what did you say to Leela? We were home free.”

The TARDIS lights came up

“Okay,” the Doctor said. “We’re okay. Just a little scare.” The TARDIS started to rev up. “Oh, hold on. We’re you taking us. No no no no. We’re not ready to bounce Universes yet.”

The TARDIS came to halt and powered down.

“Traveling between was faster than I imagined,” River said.

“We didn’t,” the Doctor said. “We just shifted over to... Oh. Stonehenge.”

A voice came over the PA. “You, in the TARDIS. Come out. Now.”

River joined him at the console. “No sensors?”

“Being jammed,” the Doctor said. “Or, overwhelmed by... There’s a huge signal here...What?!”

“How do you know we’re at Stonehenge?” River asked.

“You don’t taste it?” the Doctor said.

“Butterscotch?” River asked.

“Uh? God, no. It’s more like Spicy Cinnamon,” the Doctor said. “Where did you get butterscotch?”

“Oh, just something I had a while ago and the taste his haunting me,” River said.

“Any left?” the Doctor asked.

“Um, yeah,” River said.

“Is there enough for all of us?” the Doctor asked.

“Oh, you probably wouldn’t want to eat after me,” River said.

“You should really try harder to consider others,” the Doctor said. “Alright, I am going out. Everyone else stay in the TARDIS. That is an order.”

The Doctor headed for the door. Rose intercepted the Doctor. “I am going with you,” she said.

“Absolutely not,” the Doctor said. “I don’t know what this is and I want you safe.”

“There is no safe. I am going with you,” Rose said. “I am an adult. I am your wife. And that is final.”

“Okay,” the Doctor said. “After you.”

“Just like old times?” Amy said.

“Really old,” the Doctor said.

They exited their TARDIS and closed the door behind them.

“Amy?” Jon said.

Amy and River came to Jon’s side.

“Help me up,” Jon said.

“You need to rest,” River said.

“She’s right,” Amy said.

“They don’t understand. I need to go,” Jon said. “It’s bigger on the inside.”

“What’s bigger?” River asked.

“Just get me on my feet,” Jon said.

Amy and River helped him up. Once he was on his feet, he staggered, but got his balance, and refused further assistance. “Oh. I need you both to promise me something.”

“No,” Amy and River both said.

“No games, please, do this one thing,” Jon said.

“Tell us, and we will consider,” River said.

“It’s going to go bad. Just like you said, Amy. It always goes bad. You two must not leave the TARDIS under any circumstances. Don’t even look out the door,” Jon said. He headed towards the door. He turned back to them. “You can breathe. You can blink. As long as you don’t go outside. Oh, and I promise you, Amy, if you don’t come out, you are going to have the most precious gift one could ever have. A gift that could end a life time of hurt and allow true healing to begin. River. Keep her inside, stay with her, and I will grant you your deepest wish.”

Chapter 13

A convergence point is usually where clarity arrives, serendipitously, but not without a lot of effort, some initial confusion, with each of the agents bringing only their tiny slice of understanding to the whole. Stonehenge happens to be a place of convergences. Frequent convergences, but usually spread out over time. And even when you think it's all coming together, patience is required, because, what you first perceive as clarity is really just a precursor to what's coming next. So, for example, if you were only reading this, or only half attending, assuming the editors of the 'One' were really good about not dropping spoilers, you might be confused by the following: at the beginning of the end, there were four Doctors, one Husband, three companions, and one wife. I know, right. You want me to be clever, and I could be, by saying, technically there were two wives, but one was the Doctor. We could break it down as follows. There was Leela, and her Doctor. Leela was aiming a crossbow at the Husband. Rose was standing in front of the Husband, asking her to wait. Accompanying Leela and her Doctor, was a Sontarin, heavily armed.

"That is not our mystery lover," the Sontarin said.

"I know that, Poke," Leela said.

"You agreed not to call me Poke in public," the Sontarin said.

"Sorry," Leela said. "I am angry."

There was Peri and her Doctor. Peri stepped forwards, with her 'peace:' "Let's discuss this rationally," she said.

There was Zoe and her Doctor. "As a fan of rationality, I would love for someone to start inserting a logical explanation for our forced convergence," Zoe said.

There was the River, and her Doctor; she was armed and not happy. "Where is he?!"

There was Rose and her Husband, and Rose spoke, because the Husband, and previous Doctor who was never a Doctor, was still going, 'What?!' "Would you three, please, lower your weapons."

"Someone has made unauthorized upgrades to my TARDIS," Peri's Doctor said, reigning in his scarf.

"Oh, I can explain that," said the Husband.

"It's my TARDIS!" Peri's Doctor said.

“Oh, isn’t it all our TARDIS?” asked the Husband. “Didn’t each of us all just sort of inherit it? And isn’t it also true, that some repairs require retrospective patchwork?”

“You could have asked,” said Leela’s Doctor.

“Oh, yeah, well, as a Time Lord, surely you can appreciate the fact that sometimes subtlety is necessary when navigating the convolutions of…” the Husband began.

“Rape is not subtle,” Leela snapped, coming a little closer.

“You have a valid complaint. It wasn’t supposed to go that far,” Rose said. She turned to her husband. “It wasn’t so supposed to go that far. Just a distraction, remember.”

“Where is he?!” Leela demanded.

“Where is my mystery lover I remember so fondly?” Poke asked.

Rose covered her mouth, fighting back the urge to be sick.

“Yes, where is my little home wrecker?!” River asked.

The TARDISes were parked outside a perimeter of Stonehenge, a grouping that marked their own circle in a way. The field they were in was flattened, and had someone seen it from above, especially a Doctor, the pattern would have been recognized as a brilliantly constructed crop circle with a mathematical message embedded into its design. Perhaps the group was so tense they hadn’t seen Jon, in his tattered clothes exit the TARDIS, but at ‘home wrecker,’ he stepped forwards.

“Hello,” Jon said. He became center of attention, the gathering unnoticeably shifting so that they surrounded him. None of the three holding weapons would have missed had they fired. “Don’t shoot,” Peri said.

“That’s him!” Leela said; her Doctor asked her to exercise restraint, a hand to the shoulder. The crossbow she held rattled as she tried not to shake. It was not from fear, but sheer rage, and the fact the arrow didn’t fly was evidence of superior restraint.

“Marry me or die,” Poke said.

“Or, just die,” River said, stepping forward to fire her weapon. River lowered her weapon and froze in place. Her eyes rolled. “Stop doing that.”

The Doctor Wife came forward, holding her sonic screwdriver, tapping her chin as she considered her words carefully.

“We have a serious problem we need to discuss,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Let me handle this,” River said. “My way.”

“No,” the Doctor Wife said. “You should not make decisions when you’re angry.”

“He raped you, too?” Leela asked.

“It’s complicated,” the Doctor Wife said.

“I remember you,” Zoe said. “Wait wait wait. It was a ruse! You tricked me to get in my box.”

“I did not have sex with you,” Jon said.

“That’s not what I meant! Wait! But you would have, just to get entry?” Zoe asked.

“Oh, hell, yeah, but, no, wait, that’s not the point,” Jon said.

“Neither you nor Rose’s husband are trustworthy,” the Doctor Wife said. “Surrender the love potion.”

Jon went to retrieve the said item, found his pocket empty, and telegraphed the fact he had lost it with pained expression.

“Seriously?” the Doctor Wife said. She turned to Rose’s Husband.

“He’s not really my companion, and I am not really a Doctor, you said so yourself,” the Doctor said.

“You can’t obfuscate your responsibility in this fiasco,” the Doctor Wife said.

“It must have fallen through the hole in my coat,” Jon said.

“From when Leela stabbed him,” the Husband said. “See, that makes sense. Probably in the TARDIS. It’ll turn up.”

“In a storage box in Torchwood,” River said.

“Torchwood?” Jon asked.

“UK’s defense against aliens,” River said.

“Created by the Doctor?” Jon asked.

“It’s related to the Doctor only in that it’s an anagram,” Zoe said.

“They’re a mail service for Doctor?” Jon asked.

Peri laughed.

“You can’t be that stupid and a companion,” Zoe’s Doctor said.

“He’s nervous and trying to be funny,” Peri said, seriously believing Jon was just being funny. “We all just need to calm a bit, and discuss this through.”

“Wait wait wait. Doctor,” Jon said to the Doctor Wife. “I get why Leela and her sidekick want to kill me, but you assured me if I told you everything, you’d smooth things over between me and River. She is still clearly wanting to kill me.”

“You didn’t tell me everything,” the Doctor wife said. “We were pregnant!”

“Oh, congratulations,” Peri said. She sucked in her lip when she realized the flavor of the attention she received in response to her expression of joy was a little bitter.

“Marry me and I will protect you from the wild hair female,” Poke said.

“My hair is not wild! It’s stylish,” River snapped. She managed to get her weapon back up and aimed at Jon.

“Wait, just wait!” Jon said, hands in a surrender gesture to River. “Before any of you kill me, you got to hear what I have to say.”

“We do not have to do anything, my dear boy,” Zoe’s Doctor said.

“No one wants to hear what you have to say,” Leela said.

“Humans don’t regenerate,” Jon said.

“You travel with idiots now?” Leela’s Doctor asked.

“Again, he’s not really mine. I was in the process of giving him back when you called this meeting,” the Husband said.

“We didn’t call this meeting,” Peri’s Doctor said.

“Oh, well, that’s interesting,” the Husband said.

“Sexy did,” Jon said.

Apparently, not everyone knew the TARDIS was called sexy. “Sexy who?” someone asked. Jon explained. Leela asked if he had sex with the TARDIS, too.

“That is inappropriate, Sir,” Zoe’s Doctor said over all the comments and questions.

“And you’re married!” Peri’s Doctor said. “To Clara.”

“What?!” the Husband asked.

“Loxy,” Peri corrected.

“So,” Jon said. “Aren’t we all in a relationship with each other and the TARDIS?”

“I am so going to kill you,” River said, her hand shaking as she resisted the Doctor’s Wife control.

“You have before. Probably will again. But, just hold off as long as you can,” Jon requested.

“Why here?” Zoe’s Doctor said.

“Sexy says that answer’s coming,” Jon said. “Sorry, I am sure she wasn’t making an innuendo. What?!”

“Are you talking to the TARDIS now?” the Husband asked.

“Oh my god, she just opened up and started going on and on about, well I can’t make sense it of it all, and she won’t shut up. It’s almost like you ignored all these years,” Jon said.

“I never ignored her!” the Husband said.

“Now? Seriously? Right now? Oh, okay. Do you know why humans don’t regenerate?” Jon asked again. The Husband seemed taken aback, so Jon repeated question louder, but made it available for everyone to consider.

“You are going teach us about human biology?” Leela’s Doctor asked.

“Yes. No. Maybe. It really wasn’t my idea, but sometimes you just got to speak what’s in your head or it will drive you nuts. Maybe this isn’t a talk on biology the kind you wish your parents would have had with you. Or, maybe it is that talk and they tried and it was really awkward and everyone involved just agreed it wasn’t time and walked away, which is really sad because we all get this thing and yet no one really wants to talk about it. So, maybe we have to sneak it in. That unfortunate phrase just fell out of my face, but insight based on perspective hidden in a metaphor which means I am what... Oh! I’m delivering information through metaphysical, archetypal mythology, which could be a metaphor, or it could be quite literal,” Jon said.

“This man is clearly insane,” Zoe said.

“That is never a defense,” River said. “I’ve tried.”

“Agreed, it will not save his life,” Leela said.

“You may be right! I may be crazy. Maybe Amy’s Doctor was right, I have schizophrenia. Or maybe I am just manic because I am bipolar, or maybe, I am in the midst of giants and there are weapons pointed at me. Maybe I am just having a really good day, and yes, I am, having a really good day, you can’t be in the center of great people and not have a great day, even if some of those great people are trying to kill you, and even if I end up sounding like a fool, or revealing I am an actual fool, a dead fool, you can still kill me later, but please, let me get through my thesis,” Jon begged.

“What thesis?” the Doctor Wife asked.

“Yeah, where is all this coming from,” asked the Husband.

“Upgrades!” Jon said, pointing to his head.

“Oh. You got a telepathic download with each subsequent upgrade to the TARDIS!” said the Husband. “That’s really cool.”

“No, it’s not. I have serious headache and I just want to go lay down,” Jon said.

“Come with me,” Poke invited.

“Jon, just tell us,” Peri said.

“I’m listening,” Leela said.

“For the sound of wedding bells,” Poke said. “What? I heard humans like bells. I would be okay with grenades.”

“Okay,” Jon said, doing his best not to respond to Poke, much less make eye contact. His hands came up to help him speak, but then failed him because he’s not really Italian, but it could have been misconstrued as an imitation of William Shatner. “I am going to go off the deep end here.” He ignored the comment from Zoe, which was really harsh. “You don’t have to buy into it as an actual reference point in this reality frame. You need to hear the whole thing, though. It may even sound contradictory at points. You’re Time Lords. You’re use to that bit. You’re usually the one delivering that bit, but today, you’re listening to someone else, and my last statement, that one is the clincher. It seals the deal,” Jon said.

“Spit it out already,” Leela said. “My arms are getting tired.”

“Just lower the damn weapon, I am not running from you,” Jon said.

Leela lowered her weapon and took up a more relaxed posture.

“Really?” River demanded.

“He could have erased my memory, but he didn’t,” Leela said. “Lower your weapon, Poke.”

“My arms are not tired. And I have not received a commitment yet,” Poke said.

“Lower it,” Leela said. “That’s an order.”

“As you wish, Leelandredloomsagwinæchehesima,” Poke said. “Do not try and escape, Mystery Lover.”

“I never run,” Jon said.

The gathering became quiet. No one was arguing. And now, he didn’t know where he was. It is a true thing to say, the Doctor is a really good listener. He hears people. He hears

people deeply, usually hears them beyond words. Composing one's self under that level scrutiny is like coming upon a stage suddenly to find a full auditorium staring apprehensively at you, and in that reality, you had only come from the lavatory and taken a wrong turn, and you're lucky it isn't a dream where you find yourself also naked, and then a spot light clicks on and then there is moment, a brief second when you think, 'fuck, I lost it all,' but somehow you work it into the act. Jon closed his eyes and sorted.

"OMG," Jon said. "Loxy didn't prepare me for how intense the scrutiny of the Doctors would be."

"Jon, we got you," Peri said.

Jon looked to Peri, and was grateful. She was always more kind and loving than she gave herself credit for.

"Judgment from the Doctors or the Companions, is not something I would wish on anyone," Jon said, he turned, in their mist, taking in all their eyes. Rose smiled kindly, as if she felt sympathy. "Alright, here we go. Humans used to regenerate. We had two hearts. We were a species that was male and female. At some point in our history, we were divided. A foreign agency, or we did it to ourselves, it doesn't really matter at this point. What does matter is we diverged, becoming male and female. We still lived a thousand years, regenerating, or renewing, however you want to look at it, switching genders, and faces, and becoming a spectrum of ages. Relationships were much more complicated way back when. Until the guardian angels arrived and tried to force continuity. These guardians, they're not like the weeping angels. Maybe kissing cousins. Maybe they're not actually angels. Maybe they're tulpas. Maybe they're Daemons. You know how many people reported having one? You should really read Anthony Peake's books. Anyway, every human has one assigned to them. They are with us, silently watching us, all the time. They are with us for all eternity. They exist in our shadows. They live off the energy of movement. The Unruh Effect is a real thing, and they feed off that, and sometimes they're nice, and they help us out, sometimes they sabotage our lives. They're kind of human, in that they're good and they're bad and they're emotional, and you have heard stories of people who have had very direct encounters with them, like Blake, and Dick, that's Phillip K Dick, the author, he writes loads of stuff on time continuity issues, oh, and Joan of Arc; her angel loved her. Sorry. Back on track. At the end of the human life, right when we're about to regenerate, these weeping angel want-to-bees harvest a feast of our regeneration energy, sending

us back in time to the beginning of our lives where we do it all again in this thing called the Eternal Return and they happily continue to feed in our wake. The harvest of feasts wipes our memories.

“Maybe each time they improve our lives because they’re bored, or because they want us to live longer, but in the end, they send us back. We live for all eternity stuck in one moment, one life time. They send us back so much that the forced amnesia can’t wipe it all out. We get flashbacks. Déjà vu is the feeling you get when the angel of death is breathing on your neck. We get delusions of grandeur not because we’re psychotic but because all us are really much more wondrous than we were ever taught or allowed to believe, and even grandeur doesn’t last forever, and it can be chased with a dose of despair. Taste despair and amnesia becomes your best friend. I bet, even now, if you allow yourself to think about it you can feel something. The hair standing up on the back of your neck. That’s your invisible companion, breathing on your neck. They’re not happy with disclosure. Not sure why. I don’t think we can do anything about their existence. We have all been together so long now we actually need each other. Symbiotic relationship. If you live in dysfunctional long enough, it becomes the norm, and then sanity is actually crazy. But why, I hear you asking. Why is this so?!”

“That’s easy. Earth is a prison camp for Time Lords. Weeping Angels are Time Lords that escape the end of the Universe by quantum locking their state which sent them back to the beginning of the Universe. The Weeping Angels sent the enemy Time Lords to Earth, where the lesser angels kept them from living out their full incarnations. Every now and then, a prisoner comes up for possible parole, or release due to good behavior. And that, my dear people, is the Doctor’s function. He is not the Doctor. He is the Warden.”

“This is pure rubbish,” the Doctor said.

“I know, it’s so hard to swallow. Fan fiction sucks ass, especially when it’s better written than anything Hollywood puts out and they’re embarrassed about that, at the same time, they’re also borrowing from fan fiction, because their writers were zombified years ago. Seriously. 50 Shades of Gray. Fanfiction. Why do you think they keep turning out remakes? I’d much rather watch BBC than Hollywood. ‘Allo, ‘Allo, Waiting for God. Those were great shows, or are they just more metaphors I am throwing out?” Jon asked, pondering as he spoke. “Oh my head hurts so. Sorry. Forget the white rabbit. Here’s the thing. Things. More than one thing. I’m drawing really close to that final statement. The White Void is where all the good Dahleks go when they

die, and they become the white robots, controlled by the master. All the bad Time Lords, when they fail to regenerate, they go to the dark void, and join the Lonely Assassins. As long as they're in the dark void, they can interact with each other just fine, make babies, whatever they do in the dark, because you can't freeze what you can't see. The White Void and the Dark Void are in constant state of flux. A constant state of war. There is an energy conversion layer at the boundary of the dark and white voids. This is the Land of Fiction, the worlds between wars. The Citizens of the Land are manifestations of the archetypal energy manifest in the war, and they are innocent bystanders drawn up into a reality they did not ask for. They're just looking for an out from the Long Struggle. That so called pocket universe is a mirror of Origin. Earth is the world between two warring nations, Time Lords versus the Dahleks. One is either engaged in fiction, or the war, but both fiction and war keep us all enslaved. As above, so below. Our fiction is both a healthy respite from the war, and it is a distraction. Our fiction becomes their reality. Once a line of fiction gets started, it has to play itself out. Every human being touches that world, shapes it, influences it, sometimes causes it to spawn a new, completely tangential universe, and there are levels of contribution, which keeps the war going. This is so because we're all doctors, with a little 'D.' We are all players, agents in the game. Even here, the war has been held in check by continuity directors and copy right lawyers, which on the front of it all seems like a fair way to allocate resources and ensure people get their due credit, but in truth, once a song is in a brain, the damage is done. It can't be contained. It's bigger on the inside.

“Unfortunately, and ultimately, there are two paths we can go: we can go the way of Star Trek, which, in its' original pre Bergman pre Abrams form, was a utopian vision, or we can go the way of Mad Max, which is a dead end, extinction level event. Facts versus fiction. Fictionalized facts versus fictionalized reality. Fake news, fake science. Humans will be the playing field for this last battle. We are in a fight for our very minds. The deciding factors: will there be more loving, kind folks, or more hateful, vengeance sort of folks. In all of this, I can only think of one Ace Card to throw out on the table to shift the odds. Actually, it could be the death card. That is okay, if you believe that the death card doesn't necessarily mean death, but instead means change, which makes it a really good card to have and throw down.” Jon had to take a breath from his rant.

“Do you always talk like a madman?” Leela asked.

“Oh, stark raving mad,” Jon said. “But, I think you’ll all appreciate my card. It’s the Doctor.”

“That’s your clincher. You wasted all our time to tell us that?!” Zoe demanded.

“No,” Jon said. “I told you all of that so you can understand what you’re up against. It doesn’t matter if you believe it or not. But know this. The gates to the Land of Fiction have been opened wide. Everything I just told you is fan fiction. I know this because, I am the author. As of three months ago, nine thousand, seven hundred, and twenty two copies were downloaded. Assume half of those people liked it. They passed it on to friends and family. They’re all like, this is the best fan fiction ever, which is kind of nice, and I enjoy the occasional nice fan mail, and this one guy built me a replica of TARDIS and left it in my front yard! It’s actually a clever book share. I love that guy. Anyway. Assume the other people absolutely hated it and just deleted and went on about their lives. Assume half of those that hated it detested it so much that they actively rebelled and left nasty comments and started writing hate letters about my grammar, my age, my looks, things that I did with my mother, which is really just bad form, not even relevant, and or, threatened to blow me up, which actually happened in the other time lines. I am not disparaging them; their anger is valid because their world line is changing and they don’t want to give up on their version of reality, but they don’t understand fighting for consensus usually just causes more divergence; fighting the fiction feeds the Land of Fiction. Running doesn’t work, either. You can’t run from these monsters because you take them with you wherever you go.

“And it’s snowballing. It doesn’t stop with just the book. Two of the fans performed scenes from it, posted them on youtube and they went viral. Very much like the Doctors in the Hunger Games world. Very clever. Kind of funny. Sorry. Sad, very sad world. Copy right lawyers tried to shut it down which just brought in more viewers. Someone in the UK wrote an article about rape not being a comic relief plot contrivance to push a story, and certainly shouldn’t make a character more endearing, which is absolutely right but only got more people to download it. It started selling on Kindle, against my wishes. Hollywood is fighting with BBC to make an American spin off of the Doctor. Jon and Loxy. No, that sucks. The Counselor! No, too preposterous. Oh, I know. I/Tulpa and the Worlds of Crossover. You guys are like seriously screwed. I am not gloating. I really didn’t know what I was getting into when I made a tulpa. I am willing to help undo some of the damage, but, I am like really attached to Loxy, and so I

can't undo her, and I may have to fight for the other team's right to exist, which is complicated, because there are some seriously nice characters over there, even children, and though I really don't want weeping angels and Dahleks or even Darth Vader in my world, maybe it's a necessary evil. The proof of that this is all real, that we are caught up in this never ending war, is that every time the Doctor has a chance to end the war, he doesn't. Conversely, the Dahleks have had an equal number opportunities to end the Doctor, and didn't kill him. Conspiracy? Maybe. Plot contrivances? More likely. Which means, what, we're already in the fiction! This is all a dream! Does anyone have twenty dollars?"

Any serious person might have completely dismissed Jon as a raving lunatic, much less ever entertained such a long drawn out rant. What gave his immediate audience pause was that there was elements of truth, history, and things to sort. No matter how nice and neat you fold and pack away separate cords, if you put them in the same drawer they always come out entangled. The fact that the Doctor, and all the companions, have encountered so many outlandish threats, they couldn't dismiss the rant a hundred percent. Zoe and her Doctor particularly and recently gone up against the Master and the Land of Fiction, and so it was fresh in their minds.

"May I kill him now?" River asked.

"No," the Doctor Wife said.

"You will come with me and turn yourself into the authorities for breaking and entering, and rape," Leela said.

"Now, hold on," the Husband said. "The TARDIS is my property, too, so breaking and entering isn't quite accurate."

"We have jurisdictional rights over our individual TARDISEs to prevent future incarnations from interrupting the flow of the timeline," Zoe's Doctor said.

"How would you explain that to the authorities? He broke into your 'what?'" River asked. "If someone steals your TARDIS or robs it, that's on you for not taking better care of your ride. As for the rape, just kill him."

"Marry me, and I will protect you from the females," Poke said.

"Kill him," River said.

"You could have wiped my memory, but you didn't, why?" Leela asked.

"Because I don't run," Jon said.

The sound of another TARDIS arriving drew their attention. Loxy was the first one out of the TARDIS. She ran to Jon and hugged him, kissed him, and then pulled back to talk.

“Did I miss the speech?” Loxy asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said.

“Ah, I really like the speech,” Loxy said.

“Do you really?” Jon asked.

“Oh, absolutely,” Loxy assured him. “It is a bit wordy, and sometimes feels a bit preachy, but you do it so enthusiastically, and that’s the best part. Holding up?”

“I had brain surgery,” Jon said.

“Really cool brain surgery,” Loxy said.

“How did you know?” Jon asked.

“We watched it on the telly,” Loxy said, which wasn’t inaccurate, but it was just enough of an explanation to keep him from pursuing the deeper truth of it.

Rory joined Jon and Loxy. “Where’s Amy?”

Jon pointed to the Husband’s TARDIS, and Rory would have gone, but Jon took his arm.

“Hold up,” Jon said.

“I don’t want to know,” Rory said.

“Rory,” Jon said.

Loxy mouthed the words. “He didn’t.” Jon wanted to respond, ‘seriously?!’

“I don’t want to know,” Rory said.

“Rory, do you trust the Doctor?” Jon asked.

Rory gave pause. “Sometimes,” he said.

“With your life?” Jon asked.

Rory was hesitant. “Yes. Sometimes.”

“I am not the Doctor. I lie. I cheat. I steal. But today, I know something, and I need you to wait here, beside me. When I tell you to go, you go straight to the TARDIS and you don’t look back,” Jon said. Rory seemed hesitant. “This is important. More important than anything you can ever imagined. Trust me. The continuity of the one must be preserved at all cost.”

Rory looked to the TARDIS, looked to Loxy, and made a choice. He stayed. Loxy’s Doctor, nick named Hugh, stood by his TARDIS apprising the situation, even as the next

TARDIS arrived. Clara exited the TARDIS and she came straight to Jon and Loxy, followed by her ‘companion,’ dressed as a high end waitress in an Armani, Space tux waitress uniform.

“I don’t know what all the fuss is about,” Clara told her companion. “She looks nothing like me.”

The Husband pointed to the companion in the tux waitress costume. “Oh, I remember you now! You’re Astrid,” the Husband said. “Look, Rose. I told you about her.”

“No you didn’t,” Rose said through clenched teeth.

“Astrid, how have you been?” the Husband asked.

“Slumming it,” Astrid said.

“Excuse me?” Clara asked.

“Who is she to you for real?” Rose demanded.

“Just Astrid,” was the best the Husband had.

“Astrid Peth, the woman you said died saving your life on Christmas?” Rose asked.

“Oh yeah, that’s right,” the Husband said scratching his head. “I sort of remember that. Refresh my memory. How did you get out of that?”

“I didn’t,” Astrid said.

“I don’t understand,” Jon said.

“She fell, I caught her,” Clara said.

“Still not clear,” Jon said.

“Let it go,” Loxy said.

“I was a companion contender that failed to take,” Astrid said. “What happened, Doctor? Did you not like me?”

“Oh, it wasn’t me,” the Husband said.

“Slumming it?” Clara asked

“I was working a space luxury liner when I met him,” Astrid said, pointing to the Husband.

“You can’t just throw space in front of something and make it sound grander. A waitress is a waitress. We have some fantastic clientele and you get to keep your tips,” Clara said.

“You’re right, I am Sorry. It’s just, I really fancied him,” Astrid said.

“Isn’t he just the greatest,” Loxy agreed.

“Oh,” the Husband said. His “Oh,” was a lot softer and nicer than Rose’s “Oh!”

“He’s my Husband,” Rose added.

“We share the Doctor, don’t we?” Astrid asked, looking for the ‘tells’ being telegraphed between Clara, the Husband, and Rose.

“No,” Rose said.

“Well, they did let me keep my uniform,” Astrid said. “It super stain resistant.”

“It looks great. You look great. It’s great to see you,” the Husband said.

“That’s enough greatness,” Rose snapped.

“Oh, there is never enough greatness in the world,” Jon said.

Loxy kissed him. “I missed you.”

“Wait! You fell?! To your death?” the Husband said, suddenly remembering it all.

“Yes, Doctor,” Clara said. “From your perspective, she fell. But I was there to teleport her off. That’s what I do. I help the Companions and all of those who help the Doctor. I also run a mystery diner. But helping the companions is my full time job. We are putting together a Consortium of Companions. It was Jon’s idea, really. The Doctor can’t be there for everyone all the time. When the Doctor fails, the consortium is the insurance plan. Everyone and anyone who has ever died helping you, gets a second chance.”

“You admit to violating the time line by removing people from their timeline?” Zoe’s Doctor demanded.

“Yes. No. It’s complicated. From the perspective of the time line, no violation has occurred. The person or persons in question are shifted over to a nice little quiet spot where they can live a nice pleasant life,” Clara said. “Some of them come to work for me. Not me, precisely. We work for each other. We are the Consortium of Companions. None of ours will die alone, wishing we were back in the care of the Doctor. We are standing on our two feet. We even have really cool signet rings.”

“This is your doing,” Zoe’s Doctor said, pointing to Peri’s Doctor. “You were always so cavalier in the companions you chose, which clearly has affected our future lives.”

“Cavalier?” Peri asked. “You think he chose me just for my looks?”

“The Doctor would never be romantic with his Companions,” Zoe’s Doctor said.

Rose looked to the Husband for confirmation. “I was much older then. Still rather enamored with the Victorian mindset.”

Four more TARDISes arrived.

“What is all of this?” Leela’s Doctor said.

Angela emerged from one of the TARDISes, followed by Amy’s Doctor. Amy’s Doctor paused, and spoke to someone unseen in the TARDIS. “You’re already here, so you should probably just stay inside.” He closed the door and approached. “Oh, good, I always love a family reunion.”

“How can you have a family reunion of one?” Loxy asked.

“You just stand around talk to yourself?” Jon asked.

“Oh, that’s clever,” Loxy said.

“Companions are family,” Peri said.

“Of course, Peri, thank you,” Loxy said. “Are we officially companions yet?”

“I think that’s still being deliberated,” Jon said.

“Oh, wait wait wait, let me get this straight,” Amy’s Doctor said. “You’re Loxy. You’re my Clara. And you are... I am sorry, do I know you?”

“I am Astrid,” Astrid said. “Who are you?”

“I am the Doctor,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“I thought he was the Doctor,” Astrid said, pointing to the Husband.

“Astrid, I thought I caught you up to speed. He is the Doctor, and him, and him, and him, and I don’t know him or her, but based on their dress we can assume they are also Doctors. That is Rose’s Husband,” Clara said.

“Hello, Rose. It’s great to see you,” Amy’s Doctor said.

Clara continued: “He was never the Doctor. He’s the clone of the Doctor with all the memories of the Doctor, and the Doctor probably treat him too poorly. Is he here? The real Rose’s Doctor?”

“Not yet,” Loxy said. “And I prefer him, actually.”

“And what’s wrong with me?” Amy’s Doctor said.

“I don’t know. Maybe it’s the forehead, and the wave of hair that brings me back to the forehead, and I just want to hit it with the palm of my hand,” Loxy said.

“This is getting very complex and hard to track,” Jon said.

“I know, right,” Loxy said.

“It’s not just faces, the history is a bit convoluted,” Jon said.

“I know. But hang in there,” Loxy said. “You’re doing great.”

“I demand an explanation to all of this,” Peri’s Doctor exclaimed.

“Why does everyone always demand an explanation? Why can’t we be like Jon and just all go with the flow and just appreciate the moment for what it is before it explodes into chaos?” Clara asked.

“I love you,” Loxy told Clara.

“I love you more,” Clara said.

“Why have the others not come out to join us?” Jon asked.

“Oh, it’s a time thing,” Loxy said.

“Yeah, things are about to get really weird,” Clara said.

“Weirder than this?” Rose asked.

“Can it get weirder than this?” the Husband asked.

“Oh, seriously, never ask that,” Clara said.

“How weird?” Amy’s Doctor asked.

“You can’t have this many Doctor’s and TARDISEs in one reality frame and not expect some weirdness. You know that much, don’t you?” Angela asked.

“My whole life has been weird and it seems to be getting weirder,” Jon said.

“That’s because you’re the one,” Clara said.

“I am the one?” Jon asked. “I can’t be the one.”

“You’re still the one,” Loxy said. “For now. The one shifts about a nit. Kind of like a game of tag. Anyway, right now, time is starting to bog down around you, as you’re the epicenter of the Event; you can only put so many temporal elements into one scene at one time before things start getting convoluted, but you’re the designated fixed point, which means sometimes you’ll get these huge flashes, updates, and then sometimes, and mostly this, things will seem to just trickle into your awareness, and sometimes just when you think all is lost- that thing you need the most will suddenly be there. Try to ignore the miscellaneous information in your periphery vision, cause it’s not important right now. If it should seem as if some people are moving slow, that’s okay. The time lag will correct itself. And, if some people seem frozen, well, they’re not, really, but it’s going to seem like that from your perspective. Breathe. We got you. And whatever you do, don’t stare off into the distance. Focus on the right her right now. And don’t blink.”

Clara tapped him on the shoulder. “Oh, but if Poke moves slow, well that could be due to frame dragging, or because he is just really that slow, but don’t assume frame dragging, cause if he does pull the trigger and it’s not frame dragging, that’s going to sting a little,” Clara said.

“What’s it like from everyone else’s perspective?” Jon asked.

“All hell is breaking loose,” Astrid said.

“In expanding concentric rings,” Clara clarified. “You’re the designated driver, the eye of the storm.”

“You said tag. Can I tag out?” Jon asked.

“Sorry,” Clara said. “Once you’re it, you have to finish it.”

“Can you be more precise with what that means?” Jon asked.

“Oh, sure. Later. Much later,” Clara said. “We’re tracking other things at the moment.”

“A lot of things,” Astrid said.

“We’re still having fun, and you’re still the one,” Loxy sang.

Jon heard the Husband say “Oh, look, there’s Jamie.”

“Jamie who?!” Rose snapped.

“That man in the kilt,” the Husband said. Rose seemed to relax knowing it was a male ‘Jamie.’ “He’s wearing full regalia, he is.”

“I do so fancy a man in a skirt,” the Doctor Wife said.

“It’s a kilt,” River said.

“Eh, skirt, kilt, I like it,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Oh, so that answers that, Jon,” Loxy said. “Clearly her preferences changes with her gender.”

“No, I pretty much like it all,” the Doctor Wife said.

“We are so going to need therapy,” River said.

“Oh, have you met Jon?” Amy’s Doctor asked. “He’s a great counselor.”

“Oh, who’s the flight attendant?” Astrid said. “I love her uniform.”

“That’s Tegan,” Amy’s Doctor and the Husband said together.

“Oh, I thought that was Sheena Easton,” Jon said.

“Sheena turned me down,” the Husband said.

“Lucky for you,” Rose said.

“Oh! A reptilian!” Jon said. “I so want to meet her.”

“Her name is Madam,” Amy’s Doctor said. “And she’s married to Vastra there.”

“Oh,” Jon pouted. “Well that’s okay…”

“Jon! Tom Cruise,” Loxy said, gripping Jon’s arm tightly.

“No, way too tall for Tom,” Jon said.

“Oh,” Rose said. “Captain Jack! You remember Jack, don’t you Doctor?”

“Should I be jealous?” the Husband asked.

“Because he’s a better dancer?” Rose asked.

“Jon, he winked at me,” Loxy said, excitedly.

“I hope he was winking you,” Jon said.

Thunder peeled over the gathering, followed by the lightening. A person exploded onto the scene, not like a transporter beam, but as if delivered by a whirlwind of light. The process of orientating seemed painful, but there was the clear pained look of failure, and then confusion, and then joy. The young woman rushed Amy’s Doctor, shouting “Father?!” and embraced him as if they had been separated for ages.

“What?!” the Husband said.

“I guess the negotiations failed,” Astrid said. “It’s starting.”

“It started a long time ago in the future,” Clara said. “Hold on to your knickers, if you’re wearing.”

The Husband continued to protest. “Jenny! I am the Father.”

“No, you’re the clone,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Does that make you the Mother?” Jon asked.

“No, I am Jenny’s father, but when I give birth to Eston, I will be the mother,” the Doctor wife said.

“Jon, sort it later,” Loxy said.

Jenny released a confused Amy’s Doctor, turned to Jon and hugged him next and then kissed him the way a wife might greet a husband.

“Oh! I don’t approve of this at all,” the Husband said.

“Let me kill him,” River demanded.

Another peel of thunder boomed across the sky, much louder than the last. A single bolt of lightning branched down from a blue sky leaving a burnt spot on the ground.

“We should take cover,” Rose said.

“Wait!” Jenny yelled. She was counting. Her eyes got big, looked at Jon. “Everyone duck!”

Out of nowhere a dragon burst overhead, with a surprising swoosh of air as it pushed its wings to slow its descent. It went down hard on the ground. It staggered up to its feet, turned and roared at the gathering, then lowered its head, compliant to someone unseen. Its head touched the ground, revealing a rider. She dismounted and made her way towards Jon. River raised her weapon.

“Don’t shoot,” Jon said.

“Just getting ready,” River said.

The female, a blond, went to one knee in front of Jon. “I am sorry, Master, but we lost Eastwold,”

“What do you mean you lost Eastwold?” Clara asked. “You can’t find it on the google Earth?”

“The Ogres?” Jenny asked.

“Yes, my Lady,” the Dragon Rider said.

“Oh, well, that’s alright, then,” Jon said, taking the Rider’s arm and guiding her to stand up. “How much damage can Ogres really do?” Jon paused, really seeing her face for the first moment. “I know you.”

“The Dragon Queen,” Loxy said. “How could you forget her?”

Multiple rumbles of thunder, followed by multiple strikes of lightening.

“We need to get Jon to safety,” the Dragon Queen said.

“No, we hold here,” Jenny said. She turned to Amy’s Doctor. “Doctor we hold this circle here, or we lose everything we worked so hard to gain.”

“Hold for what?” River asked.

“We need this to hold this circle,” Jenny said. “Protect Jon.”

“What’s he to you?” the Husband asked.

“Red coats?” Jon asked, observing battalion of soldiers approaching. The forward line went to their knees, aimed, and fired. Jamie fell. The next line stepped up forwards past the first line, knelt, and fired. The first line began reloading. The third line past them and the second, and began to fire. Jack charged the line, firing his own weapon. Poke followed, slowly, firing his weapon as he went. Jon blinked, trying to remember Poke leaving the gathering.

“Jamie is always getting himself shot by Redcoats,” Zoe said.

“Karma, is a bitch,” Clara said.

“Oh, I remember Karma,” Loxy said.

“She was really nice to us, wasn’t she?” Jon asked.

“Enough of this,” the Husband said, taking Jon by the arm. “To the TARDIS.”

“No,” Jenny said, holding Jon by the other arm.

The circle of TARDISEs shifted further out, but not in the usual method of TARDIS travel. It was more like they receded away into the distance, or as if the space between Jon and the Tardis grew. It’s like those moments in a dream where you’re moving towards the end of a hallway and it lengthens with each step forwards.

“That’s interesting,” Jon said.

“What do you see?” Peri asked.

“The TARDISEs are suddenly further out,” Jon said.

The Husband looked back at his TARDIS. “No, that’s where we parked them,” said the Husband.

“Father!” Jenny said. “We hold this circle. Everyone gather around Jon, now!”

The closest companions, Leela, Peri, Zoe, complied; Peri was actually the first. She was wearing the Companion Signet ring. The Doctors held their placement, where their TARDISEs use to be. River sighed and joined the circle, saying she’d kill Jon later.

“Jon, look at me,” Clara said, snapping her fingers in front of his face. “Hey. No more commentary. You can watch, observe all you want, just ride the wave, and let us, the Doctor and the companions do the heavy lifting. If you ask a question, if you verbalize what you’re seeing, it will only solidify it in this Universe, and someone or something will try to impress their perspective of continuity on you.” A classic saucer shaped UFO passed overhead, followed by a Tie Fighter firing laser cannon. His mouth fell ajar. “No, look at me! Eyes, Jon! Yes, I saw it, you saw it, but seriously, you didn’t see it, and definitely don’t say you saw it! Just pretend you didn’t see it. You don’t want those bastards in this fight.”

From a different direction a large, monolith, rectangular spacecraft tumbled across the sky. Orbs of light chased after it. Jon observed two Roman soldieries rushing him. Rory charged them, without weapon. It was hardly a battle, as they ignored Rory in their efforts to reach Jon. That was a mistake. Rory tripped one, fell back on him, and quickly rendered the first

unconscious, taking his knife and tossing it at the second one. The second one fell to his knees, then flat on his face, dead. Leela came to assist, too late. She took the dead man's sword.

"Sorry, didn't see them till you were finished. Where did you learn to fight like that?" Leela asked.

"Two thousand years of service," Rory said.

River fired her weapons and whatever was charging her position exploded sending slime and water forwards, mostly missing her, but getting on Clara and Astrid.

"What are you shooting at?!" Jon demanded of River.

"I don't know," River said.

"Well, stop it! Everyone, these are sentient beings!" Jon said.

"It came at me! It seemed hostile," River said, defensively, aiming and shooting into her periphery vision. Again, whatever it was that died ejected a huge amount of material that rained down over the group, like sticky spray string and slime. Interestingly, very little got on River.

A contingent of bagpipers marched onto the field. They were wearing masks, and they moved like robots.

"Oh, I do love good band," Amy's Doctor said.

"Doctor," Rory said, pointing out the obvious. Along with the bagpipers were Roboforms Santas.

"What's wrong with you Brits?" Jon asked.

"What?" Rory asked.

"Who makes Santa masks?! That's just wrong," Jon said. "I hate masks. I hate clowns, and now I hate bagpipers. Damn it, what's wrong with you people."

Loxy touched his arm kindly.

A dozen spaceships shot over head, from all directions, and it was amazing that no one collided. More thunder, followed by lightening heralded Dahleks. Cavemen, Indians, monsters, aliens, pretty much anyone and anything you might throw into the mixed, minus the spaghetti monster, and all were converging towards the circle, fighting with each other as they went. River discharged her weapon, straight up, and spaghetti rained down on the circle. A World War I Ace pilot sent a stream of bullet like lasers through band.

"OMG, is that Gamara?" Jon asked.

"Fuck, we lost Japan," Astrid said.

“Ultraman!” Jon said, pointing.

“Stop making it real,” Clara snapped.

“This is going to get ugly,” Leela said.

“We should really leave now,” River said.

“We hold!” Clara and Jenny said.

“Doctor?! Clara?! Make it stop!” Jon pleaded. “They’re sentient beings! They’re confused!”

“They’re confused?!” Amy’s Doctor asked, pointing his sonic screwdriver at an orb. The light went out, revealing a simple toy drone that fell to the ground.

“Anyone have an extra gun?” Peri asked.

“That’s not your task today,” Clara said.

“What is my... Oh, no, no no. Why are they here?!” Peri asked. “They give me the creeps”

Jon followed her gaze and suddenly saw six weeping angels, frozen in place. Jon turned, and suddenly saw there was a circle of angels, frozen in place. He could discern their invisible trajectory. A trajectory that would intercept him. They were surrounded. There were several marble statues, a dozen granite, four bronze. The most interesting artifact was that they were all wearing cloth blindfolds. His eyes shifted to the Cybermen marching just beyond and when looked back one of the angels had advanced.

“Told you not to look at the horizon,” Loxy said. “We’re doing the heavy lifting, remember.”

“We’re fucked,” Jon said.

“You think?!” River asked.

“You guys leave now, I’ll stay,” Jon said.

“Fuck that,” Loxy said. “We hold!”

“Everyone without a weapon, you’re now angel watching,” Clara said.

“How do they know where I am?” Jon asked.

“You glow in the dark,” Clara said.

“Really?” Jon asked.

“I don’t know. Maybe they just naturally come to whomever is the one because they’re like pigeons delivering messages,” Clara said, pushing him back into the center of their circle.

“Stay put!” she pointed sternly. “And quiet! No commentary!” she turned back and grimaced that her Angel Watch had advanced.

A nearby explosion showered dirt down over them. Angela took Jon to the ground, covering him with her body. She smiled at him, knowing she had saved his life. She actually said, ‘thank you,’ and then vanished like smoke.

“No!” Jon said.

Loxy knelt down. “It’s okay, Jon. She’s okay. She will wake up on Ever. It’s okay.”

“Loxy, we need your eyes up here!” Clara shouted.

Jon stood up and took Angela’s spot.

“All these eyes on the field, they shouldn’t be able to move very fast,” Astrid said.

“What are we waiting for?!” River demanded. She fired what looked like three wild, random shots. Two hits resulted in two different colored slime baths; the third missed.

“Stop doing that?!” Jon shouted.

“What are we waiting for?!” River demanded.

“It should be here already!” Astrid said.

The oddest sound occurred, like the spinning up of an engine, only to be stopped, suddenly. The ‘stop’ was just the absence of sound. All sound was gone. The ground rumbled and suddenly everyone was thrown off their feet. Even Angels and Cyber men were thrown off their feet. Jon was dazed, and wasn’t sure of anything until Jenny and Loxy helped him up. They were leading him towards a new artifact, a short ways a way. Whatever it was, it was partially buried in the ground. The companions moved with Jon. The Doctor Wife appeared to recognize the artifact. The group was talking, but Jon couldn’t hear anything. The Doctor Wife’s hair moved in a silent wind. A bolt of light went by, illuminating their faces as it did, like a sustained camera flash. She took Jon’s hand and placed it on the biometric lock. The hatch sprung open. River was in the life pod. She was holding two babies, maybe six months of age. The Doctor Wife took one and handed it to Loxy. She took the other and gave it to Jenny. Loxy and Jenny departed with the children. They went with the Husband and Rose.

Sound popped back on, just a crackling like a broken speaker and the sound of shuffling cards over his ears. The sounds of war were distant, but distinct. Cannon fire. Weapons discharging.

“I am sorry, Rory,” Amy’s Doctor said. “There is nothing we can do for her.”

“What? This is not how I remember it ending,” River said.

“We clearly changed something,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Change it back!” River said. “I am not done yet. Look at me!”

“River,” the Doctor Wife said. “You know how much I love you, right?”

“No, this is not how it ends!” River said. She put her weapon against Jon’s head.

“Change it back.”

“River,” the Doctor Wife said. “Look at me! You’re right. This was not how it ended for you. You are not confused. You are the anomaly necessary for the continuity of the one. We ripped you from another timeline. I assure you, though. It was necessary, and your life was over, there. Sort of. You were stuck in limbo. You agreed to come here. We downloaded you from there to here.”

“I don’t remember any of this!” River said.

“I know. And I promise you. I will make this right,” the Doctor said. “Here or there, you are my wife and I love you and I will always love you and I need you to trust me, just a little further. Activate the initial program.”

River shifted the weapon away from Jon and pointed it at the Doctor.

“Five,” River said. “No! Stop this. What is this?! Four!”

“How long have you had River’s mind in a bio-droid?” Amy’s Doctor asked.

“I don’t have time for explanations,” the Doctor Wife said. “Jon, it’s time.”

“River, don’t do this,” Rory said.

“Quiet,” the Doctor Wife said. “Jon, take my hand, now.”

Jon took the Doctor Wife’s hand. They both took a hand of Rose’s Universe’s ‘real’ River Song. The Doctor Wife looked to Jon and smiled. “Thank you. You can have your memories back now.”

“Three!” River said. “Please, don’t make me do this.”

“Fuck, fuck fuck,” Jon began.

“Two,” River said. “Am I dreaming?”

Rory put himself between the Doctor Wife and River’s weapon. Amy’s Doctor pulled him out of the line of fire, requiring a bear hug just to hold him back.

“I love you, River,” the Doctor Wife said. “I give you your life back.”

“Run away from me!” River said. “One.” She discharged her weapon into the Doctor Wife.

The Doctor Wife arched her back and screamed up into the air. Jon did as well. The Doctor Wife became a glowing silhouette of energy that flowed through Jon and the dead River’s body. Amy’s Doctor pulled Rory back a safe distance. River, the bio-droid, collapsed to the ground. When the light receded, the Doctor Wife was lying on the ground, looking up into the sky, past the ships, past the moon. Jon was lying over the empty life pod. There was no evidence of Rose’s Universe’s River in the life pod at all. Her body suit was empty. It was not the same suit that the unconscious River wore. All sounds of battle were over for Jon. A baby’s cry filled every corner of his world. Jon rose, turned, and took a baby swaddled in River’s jacket. A picture fell out of the pocket. Amy’s Doctor picked it up.

“Rory, I would like to introduce you to River Song, yours and Amy’s baby,” Jon said. He put it in Rory’s arm. “You, Amy, and River are going to have a wonderfully normal life. Go, run, and don’t look back.”

Rory looked to Amy’s Doctor. He nodded and gave him the picture that had fallen from the jacket. “Go,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Oh, and Rory?” Jon said. “Nothing happened.”

Rory smiled, nodded, and ran. He wasn’t even half way there when the sound of battle returned.

“Oh, no, no no, I thought it was over,” Jon said.

“It was, for us, for a moment. We were in that magic zone when time inexplicably stops so that important events can occur,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Make them stop,” Jon insisted.

“Jon, I can’t rob people of free will,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Put us back the zone. Put the whole field in the zone,” Jon said.

“I can’t. I can get you safely off the field, and that’s it,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“You’re asking me to run from a battle?” Jon said.

“Yes,” Amy’s Doctor said, trying to wake the unconscious River up. “Run, go be with Loxy.”

“I am not leaving you,” Jon said. “You’ll need help with her.”

The Doctor accepted the help and they went to help the bio-droid River. A volley of lasers scored the Earth all around them. The Doctor shielded River as best he could, but he knew this was the end. Four Dahleks were coming at them. They each fired again, and again each missed.

“Fuck, how did they miss us?” Jon said.

“I don’t know,” Amy’s Doctor said, coming to his feet and aiming his sonic screwdriver. His back was to Jon’s back. More fire fell about them.

“You can’t hit us!” Jon said to the Dahleks.

“Exterminate!” was the chorus.

“But why?!” Amy’s Doctor said.

Another round of fire hit the ground. Smoke and dust and the smell of ozone filled the air.

“Fuck, but they can scare me,” Jon said.

“Run, Jon!” Amy’s Doctor said.

“No,” Jon said. He pointed at the nearest Dahlek and it stopped in its track. They all stopped. “Why can’t you kill me?”

“We cannot kill the one,” the Dahlek said.

“Oh, well that’s interesting,” Amy’s Doctor said. “But, why haven’t you killed me? You’re always trying to kill me and you got me cornered!”

“Exterminate, exterminate,” the Dahleks cried in frustration but none of their shots hit the targets.

“Stop doing that!” Jon said. “What is wrong you?!”

“We cannot kill the one. We cannot kill the Doctor when he is accompanied by the one,” the lead Dahlek said.

“Oh, well that’s useful information,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Doctor?” It was the Doctor’s Wife and she was trying to get up.

Amy’s Doctor and Jon helped the Doctor Wife to her feet. The Four Dahleks killed approaching Santa’s.

“Stop killing people!” Jon snapped.

“They are inferior,” a Dahlek said. “They must be destroyed.”

“The continuity of the one must be preserved at all cost,” another Dahlek said.

The Doctor Wife reactivated River with her sonic screwdriver. River woke, got to her feet and immediately came to the Doctors, pointing the weapon at Dahleks, but not sure which one to take out first. She seemed to have forgotten all about having recently killed the Doctor.

“Hold up,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Why haven’t they killed us?” River said.

“We’re with the one,” both Doctors said, as if that it explained it all.

“We have a message for the one,” the lead Dahlek said.

“Deliver your message,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“We will only give it to the one,” the Dahlek said.

“I am right here,” Jon said. “Give it to me.”

“Careful how you ask,” River said.

Steady beams of light emitted from the four Dahleks. Jon was the only one who duck, thinking they were deadly. They were simply informational beams of energy that when they converged resulted in a hologram. Clara, in a red dress, turned to Jon.

“If you only knew how difficult it was to get this message to you. I had to crash on Dahlek prison planet. I had to erase the name of the Doctor. And if you’re hearing this, well, your primary mission was accomplished. Now, Jon Harister, for once in your life, listen to the Doctor, and run! Run, and never forget!”

The Dahleks erupted into sparks and hologram faded. The Dahleks lowered their weapons, all power gone.

“You heard her,” Amy’s Doctor said. “This way, now.”

They turned and their eyes caught and froze the angel.

“Fuck,” River said. “Go, I’ll hold it here.”

“I never run,” Jon said.

The angel had removed her blindfold. Her eyes were wide opened and menacing. Her target was clear. He embraced the angel, putting his hands on either side of its face and kissed it firm on the mouth. His eyes were looking directly into hers. Until he closed his eyes.

“No!” the Doctors both said.

Both Jon and the Angel disappeared. Once Jon was absent, people began falling back their Universe of Origin.

“I am really confused,” River said.

“We won,” the Doctor Wife said. “That’s all you need to know for now.”

The only Doctors left were Peri’s, Zoe’s, and Leela’s. They gathered once more. The TARDISEs were much closer together, almost as if they had never left their original landing spot. Peri, Leela, Zoe, and Poke gathered as well. That, and the Doctor that no one knew, who called himself for their convenience, Hugh.

“I guess the others Doctors didn’t want to stay and chat?” Peri asked.

“They were likely pulled back to whatever universes they originated from,” Zoe said.

“We have unfinished business,” Leela said. “Where’s Jon?”

“He’s gone,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Clara and I know where he is. He’s safe,” Hugh said.

“He said he doesn’t run,” Zoe said.

“He didn’t,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Don’t worry, Leela. The next time I see him, I will kill him,” River said. She noticed the pain look that flashed over her wife. “You okay.”

“Yeah, just tired,” the Doctor Wife said.

“Well, delivering babies is hard work,” Amy’s Doctor said.

“Yeah. You will know soon enough,” the Doctor Wife said.

Chapter 14

The artifact on the screen showed the title, 'Continuity of One,' version 41.1. Jon closed it out. Sent the file over to the share site, and up loaded it. It happened almost instantaneously. A sticky note on the top of the screen said target, 11k. He turned the screen off, pushed away from the desk and headed towards the bathroom. There was no mirror in the bathroom. He brushed his teeth without looking at himself and returned to the bedroom, seemingly unaware of the stature that hadn't been present just a moment earlier. He paused, curious if he had seen what he had sen

"Are you there?" Jon asked, not looking back.

No answer came. He turned to see her. He saw her frozen in all her glory. He smiled.

"Oh, sorry to catch you like that," Jon said. As far as weeping angels go, she was quite stunning. She seemed happy. Jon blinked. She was closer, arms up. "Yeah, I just pushed it."

Jon blinked again and was in her arms. There was a sweet spot in the embrace where if his ear was against hers, and he was looking straight away, they could dance together. It was the weirdest sensation, as in truth, she wasn't stone, but if his eyes caught her, she would freeze, and he would be locked, frozen in her grip. He closed his eyes and he felt her lead him to the couch. When there was a moment of no activity, he opened his eyes to see. She was there in front of the couch. He sat down, blinked, and when he had vision again, she was beside him. It was a really sturdy couch, but one could discern flattened cushions from all the time he had caught her sitting. He caught her with a hand gesture, their code for leave eyes shut. Jon complied. She kissed him and continued kissing for a long moment. She was only heavy when she was stone, and so he had learned quickly that if she was applying any pressure, or if she was on top of him or leaning on him, he would have to keep his eyes closed until she was done. He suspected, the reason people close their eyes during kissing sessions was to keep reality from becoming solid. The session didn't escalate and he found himself wanting more, but when it didn't come, he opened his eyes.

He was always impressed by the amount of joy she radiated. The room could be almost dark, but her white marble skin shined as if reflecting moonlight. He listened to her in a special way. It wasn't always sign. It was never a voice, not even a telepathic voice, just something he sometimes got. Impressions. Intuition. Through the course of a conversation, there was some hand sign, there were the hints of words on her lips, and there were facial gestures. He would

blink and find different facial expressions. If they had any friends, and if those friends played charades, Jon and the Angel would always win.

“Why do you want me to go out?” Jon asked. “I don’t want to go out. It’s cold outside.”

The series of expression of gestures might have seemed angry to an outsider, but they were just normal conversations.

“I don’t want to talk to people,” Jon said. “I am happy inside. Amazon drones bring me food and supplies. I am good.”

Jon blinked to gather her part, and when changing stopped, he processed what she had given him into continuity. “Yes, it healthy to socialize. But I get really anxious outside. I don’t know why you insisted we come to Astoria. New York is noisy. I jump every time a train goes by. The neighbor still hasn’t replaced the battery in his smoke alarm. And I am going to take that damn automatic air freshener out of the laundry room. It sprays every ten minutes!”

Jon blinked several times. “I don’t need medicine, thank you very much. I feel safe here with you.”

Jon blinked. She spelled out LOXY in sign language, and conveyed “she would not want this life for you.”

Jon was tearful. He wiped his eyes and found her closer. One might interpret her pose as threatening, but he did not. He closed his eye and left them shut. She wiped his tears. She insisted that he go for a walk, get food, and talk to someone human.

“Give someone an opportunity to be nice to you,” the Angel communicated.

“They’re only nice to me because that’s their job,” Jon said.

“It is still real niceness,” the Angel said. “Allow people to shine.”

“Alright,” Jon said. “I’ll go. Promise me you’ll be here when I get back?”

“O. K.”

निर्मित

It was afternoon, and a surprisingly cold wind blew into his face regardless of which way he was facing. He walked with his head bowed, as if the weight of his own thought might drop him. He felt invisible most of the time, but more so when his eyes were down. It felt as if people were watching him. He ignored that feeling. In the past, he would have walked and observed everyone and everything; during those times, it seemed as if everyone avoided him. There were girls he

fancied, sometimes enough to say ‘hi,’ and yet they would have just gone by as if he hadn’t spoken. Now he feared even a single glance; it might result in engagement, a fiction. Invisibility was a good thing. It kept the tangents at bay.

He paused and casually found a way to look behind him, suspecting he was being followed. It was difficult to fake interest in the newsstand. He didn’t want to read any headlines or see any racy photos on gossip magazines. He didn’t need any help casting new recruits into his dreams. Something about the Doctor was on one of the covers nearly suckered him in, but he turned to the guy he suspected was following him. The guy from his dreams, Jack Harkness, identifiable by his coat and his ruggedly handsome face, was there.

A day ‘flash’ dream occurred. It was like cross between a flashback and a daydream. Jack Closed the distance and his partner came out of the shop, weapon drawn. “Gwen Cooper, Torchwood. You’re coming with me...”

And then he would blink or someone would touch him and he would be back. The cold wind reminded him this was real. The Continuity of One was maintained. He wondered what would happen if Torchwood met the X-Files. Dana and Gwen were suddenly next to him with ice cream.

Someone bumped him bringing him back. He shook it off and pushed on down the road. The smell of barbecue was suddenly overwhelming, and he turned and entered a café. He heard the waitress tell him to seat himself, she’d be right there. He stood for a moment, measuring the place with his periphery vision. There were other people here. He kept his eyes at the floor. He could go left or right. Left seemed less crowded. He went left, walked to the last booth, and sat so he could see the door and anyone who might enter.

The waitress brought a glass of ice water. He stared at the glass. Why anyone would want ice water when it was freezing outside made absolutely no sense to him. He was pretty sure she was staring at him. He was pretty sure her uniform was a costume. An antique radio on the bar was playing “You’re the one” by Orleans, a remake by a female artist. He wondered if it was Kylie Minogue.

“You okay?” she asked.

Jon didn’t want to answer. He found the napkin in front of him and started folding it. Condensation on the outside of the glass beaded and ran down, snowballing all the beads of sweat that burst on hitting the table, forming a ring that was expanding outwards. It seemed to be

in slow motion, and if he squinted just right, he saw the world inverted in the glass, and right side up within the ice. He saw the waitress splintered everywhere.

“Jon?” she asked.

“Um, yeah, I am fine, um, a coffee, please?” he asked.

“Anything in it?” she asked.

“No, no, um, yes, coffee,” Jon said.

She laughed and said ‘ok’ and was away before he realized she had used his name. Had he been here before? Had she recognized him from somewhere? Was she a William’s fan? He was well known within the William fan club, having been a huge contributor.

He looked up and wished he hadn’t. She was beautiful; not quite a Marilyn Monroe in a waitress outfit, but it took several blinks not to see Monroe. He didn’t want her in his head, but it was too late. She was there, unfolding both forwards and backwards and the only thing that kept him sane was the brunette that slid into the seat in front of him. He had been so focused that he hadn’t ‘really’ seen the brunette until she was seated and made eye contact, even though he would have had to been seeing through her to have continued to see the blond. Her ‘sudden’ presence startled him. She was wearing a blue waitress outfit with an apron. Their eyes met.

“There you are!” Clara said. “Always keep your head up. Oh, and Morn says hi. He wanted to buy you a beer, but I told him you don’t drink. Coffee’s on him.”

“Morn?” Jon asked.

“Big guy, at the end of the bar,” she said. She leaned in. “He travels a lot, and always has one of your books with him.”

Jon tried to understand what he was seeing, but the other waitress returned with his coffee, and slid into the seat next to him. ‘Distraction.’ Sometimes he felt his reality was being impressed by agents railroading him in a certain direction ‘Don’t pursue that,’ he told himself. ‘That just makes you crazy and there’s nothing you can do but go with it.’ He looked down, wanting to avoid eye contact, but his eyes diverted from his lap to the waitress, and so he brought his eyes back up to the water. He could see them and himself in the glass and in the ice so there was no escape. He stared into the abyss of his coffee.

“I am really uncomfortable all of a sudden,” Jon said.

“Like, you’re on the verge of an epiphany and you’re not quite sure you want to go, but you’re kind being drug forwards into it, and you start to back pedal because you know, this is a

game changer, but it's too late, you're falling, and this is it, you're falling, falling, falling," Astrid said. "And then you're flying."

"Okay that's not helping any," Jon told her. He wanted to be mad but he couldn't remain mad. Astrid's eyes were intense, her smile was genuine. He wondered if he had brought a big enough tip for such kindness. He knew he could never compensate for the smile that would be in his mind for all eternity. He turned his gaze and was again confronted by the brunette. She was equally intense.

"Go ahead, say it," the brunette said.

"Are you angels?" Jon asked.

"That's new," the blond said.

"Yeah, it is," the brunette agreed.

"What was I supposed to ask?" Jon asked.

"Oh, well, I suppose that isn't fixed yet, and we're still kind of surveying it out, but so far, the one we get asked the most is 'am I dreaming?'" the brunettes said. "Let's start over. My name is Clara Oswald. I'm a Doctor. This is my companion, Astrid. Sorry it took so long to catch back up with you. You were not forgotten."

Jon sorted. He tried to smile, went back to sorting, watched both Clara and Astrid for signs they were conspiring with a joke, noticed Morn saluting him with a beer, and then picked up his coffee and took a sip. It was surprisingly good coffee. It had a flavor he couldn't place.

"Oh, go ahead, say it," Clara said. "You'll feel better, and it will help us get to the next bit."

"The life changing bit," Astrid said.

"No, I don't think I will, Clara," Jon said, really biting into her name. He liked her name. He liked the flavor of it and how she just looked like a Clara. He was on the verge of becoming a little assertive. A personality was forming, solidifying in their mist. 'Chameleon circuit activated,' he thought, which was better than his standard fair: 'shields up, red alert.' "The coffee's good, really good, but I still don't want to play. And I don't want to unpack any of this because, well, I am tired, and I don't seem to get any traction when I try. I just keep ending up back here, and I am... Oh, damn it. Is this a dream? Am I dreaming? Please tell me I am dreaming, because, if you're just having a bit of fun at my expense, then, I get it, I deserve it, go ahead humiliate me, get it over with. I am a big boy, I can take it."

“It always goes there,” Clara told Astrid.

“The ‘big boy he can take it part’ or the ‘I’m dreaming’ part?” Astrid asked.

“No, the am I dreaming part. Oh, well, that other part, too,” Clara said. “Jon, you’re not dreaming. We’re not making fun of you.”

“And, we’re not going to touch the other part,” Astrid said.

“Address is probably more appropriate than touch,” Clara said.

“Except, we are actually addressing it, so touch is actually better,” Astrid said.

“Touch is always better,” Jon said, giving a flirty smile over his coffee.

“Yeah, we’re not going there, either,” Astrid said.

“But, good, you’re coming around. You want to play after all,” Clara said. “And we need you in the game. Your name is Jon Harister. You are presently living in the Land of Fiction.”

“No,” Jon said. “Yes. I am Jon Harister. No I am not living in Land of Fiction. I live in Astoria. I should have stayed in Texas. Land of Fiction is not a really a place, it’s more like a plot contrivance to push a story along that isn’t going anywhere.”

“Oh, it’s a real place, I assure you,” Clara said.

“There are levels to it,” Astrid said. “Very convoluted. That’s one reason it took us so long to find you.”

“And, why you should really walk with your head up,” Clara said. “It is way too easy for you to slip through the manifolds of space/time and end up where you’re not supposed to be. You don’t even need a TARDIS to travel.”

Jon closed his eyes.

“Oh, we’re not going to go away because you close your eyes,” Clara said.

“I am not special. These dreams of being the one- that is part of my psychosis. Delusion of grandeur, plot contrivance to move the story, self-installed to compensate against negative self-tapes,” Jon said. “It’s why my Doctor has forbidden me to attend Cosplay conventions. Very bad things happen at conventions.”

“Jon,” Clara said. “Eyes please. Thank you. Don’t ever close your eyes to me. You have beautiful hazel eyes. I love your eyes. I love the way you see things. I love the way you see me. I used to look at the Doctor with the same kind of eyes. And you’re right. Being the one doesn’t mean you’re Neo. You’re not special. You’re just an ordinary, mundane old human being who has been caught up in the most wonderful thing ever invented: life. Anyone can be the one.

Everyone is the one at least once. Not everyone can be the Doctor. It takes a special sort for that. You're more likely to be a companion than a Doctor, but even then, it's really hard to be a companion. It can be dreadfully hard just being a regularly old, mundane human being. That's why we all need help. You should watch some of my incarnations. I seriously needed some help back in the day. And I got some great help. And I finally graduated. You, Sir, have had some wonderful lives. You have had some shit ass lives, but you lived them with distinction. This present life you're living, well, it's just kind of a gentle respite, so you could recoup after the first battle."

"The Battle of the Rebirth of River?" Jon asked.

"Yes," Clara said.

"That was just a dream," Jon said. "I wrote it down and pushed it as fan fiction."

"Every dream you ever had was a window into a full life," Clara said. "Think about it. Take any sample of any past dream you ever had. In the moment of your dream, you never questioned your reality. You just followed the script, without question, and maybe you were aware that there was full back story, but even if you didn't, anytime something seemed odd, someone would step up and give you continuity and you would return to the dream. This present life it is not a dream, but you probably have encountered some dream like qualities. Maybe, sometimes, you were even on the verge of realizing, then something or someone distracted you, like a song, or a train going by."

"A pretty smile. A flare of a skirt," Astrid said.

"An accidental bump by a stranger," Clara said. "Sometimes, you felt as if you might completely unravel in your solitude and suddenly you had an old friend there to help ease the way."

"No, you got it wrong," Jon said. "It's not that I fear being unraveled, but that I fear all these tangents are real, full world lines of their own, and it's really hard to stay here, in the present world. I have a Doctor. She keeps me solid."

"I know. The reality is, we can't always travel with the Doctor. The Doctor can't always be there for us. We have to walk on our own two feet. We have to make decisions in our lives. But we never make a decision in a vacuum. We have each other," Clara said.

"Honest. We're not making fun of you," Astrid said. "We're really Clara and Astrid. Everything that you wrote really happened."

Clara reached across the table, offering her hand. He didn't take it. "Jon, look at my eyes. Stay with us. It gets easier. Breathe. Take my hand," she said.

Jon shook his head. She brought her hand back to herself.

"We should talk about movies. What's your favorite time travel movies?" Astral said.

"Time After Time, Somewhere in Time, and the Kid," Jon said.

"Great movies!" Clara said. "What if I told you the Kid wasn't a movie. I mean, it was a movie, Bruce Willis was in it, but what if I told you that was actually a documentary? The Diner that he meets himself in. That's my Diner. Isn't that cool? You're in a time machine."

"Why?" Jon asked.

"Why not?" Clara asked.

"Are you abducting me?" Jon asked.

"Maybe," Astrid said.

"You want to be abducted, don't you?" Clara asked.

"No!" Jon said. He tracked their disbelief and then corrected. "Maybe. Okay, yes, if you two are abducting me, I will go willingly. Hell, I'd go with the Grays if they invited."

"Oh, you really go with us instead," Astrid assured him.

"Why me?" Jon asked.

"You're the one," Clara said.

"Well, I don't want to be the one," Jon said.

"No one wants to be the one," Clara said.

"Lots of people want to be the one," Astrid said.

"No, everyone wants to be the one when they're not the one, but's once you're the one, you really don't want to be the one anymore," Clara said.

"Except the Doctor; he loves being the one," Astrid said.

"You know, he says that, but every time he's the one and it goes badly and someone dies or he ends up alone, he's starts moping and we end up having to find him a new compatible companion," Clara said.

"So, companionship isn't just happenstance?" Astrid asked.

"Oh, no," Clara said. "There's a committee and everything. And sometimes, you have these test runs, where you might finds yourself in the background and if the Doctor notices you, or engages you in dialogue, your companionship potential goes up, but then we still end up

waiting around for fan mail to validate the future reality frame. Kind of like the whole observer collapsing the wave front. You should have seen my incarnation before Clara. Just dreadful.”

“I am sure it could have been worse. You could have been the Queen,” Astrid said.

“Could still be. Let’s not rule that out,” Clara said. She smiled at Jon. “You have questions.”

“Oh, I never ask questions,” Jon said. He blinked. “Correction: I rarely ask questions. No serious questions, anyway.”

“Never asks questions. Never runs,” Astrid said. “Tell us more.”

“He kisses angels,” Clara said.

“Oh! That’s just creepy, even for him,” Astrid said.

“Yes, but how many people look death in the face and I say ‘I love you?’” Clara asked.

“He said he loved her?” Astrid said.

“You can’t kiss someone like that and there not be in love involved. Okay wait. I suppose you could be testing if it’s love, but if you kiss an angel and you both travel, there is some serious love there,” Clara said. Jon realized the song on the Radio was the B52’s “Roam,” but he was aware of it just as the lyrics went ‘around the world, the trip begins with a kiss.’ “That one kiss changed the tides of the war.”

“How?” Jon asked. “Damn it! I withdraw the question. I don’t want to be involved.”

“Too late,” Clara said. “You kissed a lonely assassin. You made a weeping angel weep for joy. The two of you spun this present world, which kept you out of the major conflict. Also, this world provided a lot of refugees a home. The Angels have been working overtime to populate it. The more observers, the more solid it becomes. For once, some of the angels are using their powers for good. When you first got here, it was just you and her. You spent a life time or two with the angel, healing her. And she, healed you. Healing relationships are always reciprocal. You’re fairing much better since origin, and this world is probably the most peaceful of all the worlds of fiction. It only takes changing the heart and mind of one to interrupt an internal war and let the healing begin.”

“I feel like she is pushing me away,” Jon said.

“There is some similarities between Doctors and Angels, in terms of trajectories. Angels live forever. Humans don’t,” Clara said. “Maybe you and your angel have been here a thousand years, reliving this reality over and over, making corrections as you go, incorporating more and

more lives of the newcomers, and now, suddenly, you have arrived at just the perfect life. Your life here cannot be any fuller. Your life here may be over, but that's not the end. When it comes to eternity, it doesn't matter how long a couple get stuck in a time loop. That's where we do the majority of our learning, stuck in loops. Eventually, you and the angel complete your task, and you both move on. The loop ends. You part ways. You get a new angel. The angel gets a new partner. The Doctor gets a new companion. The old companion gets a new life. Sometimes the Universe gets a new Doctor. Sometimes the Doctor gets a new Universe. The dance goes on and on."

"I don't want a new partner. I am happy where I am. I am happy with my angel," Jon said.

"As a Doctor, I have never heard that before," Clara said.

"You're being sarcastic?" Astrid asked.

"Yes," Clara said. "Jon! No one wants to leave the Doctor. But you only need a Doctor when you're sick. It's hard to move on after being with the Doctor or an Angel. I get that. When you're with the Doctor, everyone pales in comparison. You leave old friends and old ways and you step up to a new and exciting level of existence. When you're with the Doctor, you start to have amazing adventures that are compatible with your new, improved existence. Once you have healed, the Doctor goes on to the next patient. That's not just a metaphor. All relationships, every single one, whether it was good relationship or a bad relationship, was a lesson in learning to love. We all travel in constellations, and we influence each other's directions. We co-evolve."

"We're flying," Astrid said.

"We're high, that's for sure," Clara said. "High on life, Jon. Traveling with the Doctor is a high. Being the Doctor, super high. If you traveled with the Doctor for just a moment, if you even saw the Doctor in passing, then you have arrived at the next level of love. There are people who have never heard of the Doctor, not because they're bad or unworthy, but because they're not there yet. There are some people who have encountered the Doctor in fiction, in parodies, and they're closer to the truth. They have heard a glimmer of the call, the call of the Universe: step up, evolve, be better. And then there are people like us, the enduring companions, who have actually traveled with the Doctor for a spell. We're on the verge of graduating. Some of us graduate. Some of us get stuck. No one travels with the Doctor and just returns to their previous, mundane life. Things are always bigger and brighter, but if we crave the Doctor's company too

much, if we never let go and learn we are capable of flying on our own, we get stuck. That's where I come in. I am the Champion of Companions. The Doctor for companions. For now. It's kind of like being 'the one,' in as much as it's an office to hold."

"I feel stuck," Jon said. "I used to feel alone. Dreadfully alone to the point of wanting to end my life. And then I made Loxy. Met Loxy. And then I made a choice. I kissed an angel. Loxy's gone. I am here. The angel comes and checks on me periodically. She's been much more active in my life this time round. Or so it seems. I keep coming back to this is just a dream. I don't want it to be a dream. If this is a dream, then that means, what, that I am not just stuck, but that I am stuck alone. No, not just alone, but pitifully alone. I am a failure. I failed at life, so I daydream a life. Oh, but even in that I failed, because I put it out there, I share it, and it goes nowhere. Oh. I shouldn't be surprised. If this is a dream, then by definition it can't go anywhere, because... Why are you making me think about all of this?! I wrote it all down to get it out of my head and you all keep coming back at me and I just want... I just want... I want..."

"Jon," Clara interrupted. "Give me an argument for it not being a dream."

Jon hadn't consider such a position. It took a moment to process. "You would imagine, if I were dreaming, I would come up with something better than being the one. If I were dreaming, I don't think I would be broke all the time. If I were dreaming, I think I would be important. Like a Doctor. Yes, if I were dreaming, I would be the Doctor. So the fact that I live such a mundane life could be evidence that this is not a dream."

Clara reached out across the table. "Give me your hand," Clara said. When Jon hesitated, she repeated the directive. It was a directive. He could not resist her. He surrendered his hand to Clara. If she had said, give me your soul or your life, he would have surrendered it all to Clara.

"What do you feel?" Clara asked.

"This is not a good reality check. Dreams seem real. Hallucinations seem real," Jon said. "Pinching yourself in a dream still feels like a pinch."

"I am not asking you test reality," Clara said. "I am asking you, what do you feel?"

"The booth is comfortable. The table is cool. There is a heat vent blowing from the side of the wall, feet level. Sunlight streaming through the window touching the back of my neck, and head, and it is feels nice, like being in a sun warmed car on a winter day. Astrid's leg is touching mine. She feels warm. Your hand is warm," Jon said.

“I was starting to think you were avoiding me,” Clara said. “We are connected. In time, in space, from universe to universe. I don’t know what first inspired you to get in the game, but you got in there and got the hell beat out of you and you started running. When you got tired of running, you started fighting. When you had had enough of that, you started loving. And you are genuinely loving. You put yourself out there, and maybe right here, right now, it doesn’t look like you’re having an effect, because sometimes messages of love can’t be heard at the moment, but the bottle gets down stream and they open it and they’re like, oh! I wish I realized what he was saying back when. The message always gets delivered. The messengers always get remembered. You are presently in the Land of Fiction. That’s okay. Sometimes, when you have something really big to share, it needs to be here so more people can access it over time. It evolves here. It parallels reality, coexists with reality. Your contributions have intruded on a multitude of realities. Some of those realities are pushing back. They don’t like it. Some of them ignore it altogether. We, the Consortium of Companions, have heard you. We recognize your contributions. And, we need your help with something.”

“What something?”

“We need to tie up some loose ends,” Clara said.

“That’s a never ending job,” Jon said.

“Job security,” Clara said.

“Anyone can join the Consortium?” Jon asked.

“Oh, no. Most have to go through the application process. They have to be vouched for, histories confirmed, and they have to be affirmed, but I can give a pass,” Clara said. “We’re also opened to minor companions, people who didn’t really travel with the Doctor, but helped the Doctor in some way.”

“Especially those who gave their life for the Doctor,” Astrid said. “If they want, they can have a second life, which isn’t always a good deal, because you got to completely sever ties with everything and everyone from your past life. You’d be surprise how many people don’t want that deal. They consider their life complete and perfect just the way it was and don’t want it altered.”

Jon seemed to be sorting the offer, which wasn’t a full offer yet, because he suspected hidden caveats. He wanted to know what they do with people that turn the deal down. Re-kill them? “Hypothetically speaking,” Jon said. “Do I still have to be the one?”

“Afraid so,” Clara said.

“Do I get to pick the Doctor I travel with?” Jon asked.

“What makes you think you will travel with a Doctor?” Clara asked.

“I assumed...” Jon began.

“Oh, don’t do that,” Clara said.

“But, this is still kind of a hypothetical conversation, so do I really need to contextually spell out all the caveats to the hypothetical in order to have a conversation with you?” Jon asked.

Clara smiled sorting it. “Maybe. Continue.”

“Will I travel with a Doctor?” Jon asked.

“So many questions for someone who doesn’t ask questions,” Astrid said.

“I am trying to figure out exactly what I would be signing up for without being so direct,” Jon said.

“It would save a lot time if you were,” Astrid said.

“Never directly address the elephant. Hypothetically, if I were to travel with a Doctor, can I pick my Doctor?” Jon asked.

“No,” Clara said. “The Universe decides that.”

“What good is it being the one if I don’t get to choose the important things?” Jon said.

“Hypothetically, you realize you’re lucid dreaming,” Clara said. “You find yourself in a diner, and that diner is a really cool spaceship time machine that’s bigger on the inside, and you can go anywhere you want to go, in time, in space, where would you go?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” Jon said. “The Forest of Ever.”

The city scape of New York fell away and there were trees outside. Jon nearly looked but Clara tightened her grip on his hand and demanded his eyes.

“Stay with me, Jon,” Clara said. “We’re still in a hypothetical. Don’t look. Don’t blink. Don’t make it real, yet. Let’s finish what we started.”

“I want this to be real,” Jon said. “I want you to be real. I want us to be real.”

“I want all of that, too,” Clara said. “But we still need to sort something.”

“I am afraid of that. Hypothetically, can I ever not be the one?” Jon asked.

“Yes, circumstances and protocols exist for the one to tag out making someone else the one,” Clara said.

“Can you be more precise?” Jon asked.

“No. No companion can tell the one how to not to be the one, even if they knew the conditions that allows the one to pass the office along,” Clara said. “We have not sorted all the rules yet, as there seems to be some personality dependent variability in how the office is received or transferred. Almost anyone can volunteer to take over the office, but the person surrendering the office has to sort through a lifetime of information to determine motif and appropriateness. For example, we have come up with one firm rule: no person can take over the office of a loved one to relieve that person of unwanted obligation of office.”

“May I have an example,” Jon asked.

“Hypothetically, in the course of being the one you discover that you are obligated to jump into an active volcano. You could not pass the office over to anyone, even Meg Ryan, to avoid jumping into the Volcano.”

“But could Meg still volunteer to jump with me?” Jon asked.

“You would ask Meg to jump with you into a volcano?” Astrid asked.

“Oh, no, I would actively talk her out of it,” Jon said.

“I should hope so,” Astrid said.

“This is just a hypothetical,” Clara reminded them both.

“Can anyone be the one?” Jon asked.

“Everyone is the one at least once in their life. Some people seemed to get stuck in the office,” Clara said. “The Doctor is the only one who can assume the office at will.”

“But if only one person can hold the office of one at any one time, and the Doctor always seems to be the one, how come I am so stuck at one?” Jon demanded.

“It’s a time thing, Jon,” Clara said. “The Doctor is technically always the one, but he can’t hold the office indefinitely. He does actually sleep sometimes. We don’t usually get to see that, but he does. He doesn’t even have to be sleeping, though. Sometimes suddenly the office of one inexplicably jumps to someone else, and they become the one, probably because in order to be the Doctor you need someone to save. Inevitably, whoever is the one, they need to be saved. The Doctor is generally the only one qualified to save the one. Jon, really, you don’t want to dwell too much on the rule set, especially when you’re holding the office. Also, there seems to be a five minute rule, in which should the new office holder discover something they were unprepared for, that person can return the office back to the previous holder.”

“Oh, I remember that episode!” Astrid said. “The Five Minute rule. Very fast pace, convoluted, office shifting like a game of hot potato. No! More than that. It was like watching a basketball game and the Doctor was one of the star players, only even the Doctor didn’t want to hold the ball, and no one wanted to put it in the basket, because that would end the game, and no one wanted to seriously win because it was like that game the Aztecs used to play where the honor of winning was to have your heart cut out so you could be one with the gods, but you couldn’t throw the game to get out, because then everyone was forfeit...”

“Astrid, spoilers,” Clara said.

“I actually followed that surprisingly well like you and I speak the same language,” Jon said.

“Oh, it’s a TARDIS thing,” Astrid said.

“Spoilers,” Clara repeated.

“Oh, that’s right, he hasn’t written it yet,” Astrid said. “Sorry. It might not have been anything like that all.”

“Jon, hypothetically, why Ever?” Clara asked.

“I miss Loxy,” Jon said. “I thought maybe I could stay here awhile, with her.”

“How long of a while?” Clara asked.

“Forever?” Jon asked.

“Forever is a very long time,” Astrid pointed out.

“But Ever is just about right,” Clara said.

“So, I could stay here, with Loxy, and live happily ever after?” Jon asked.

“If people really understood what that phrase meant, they probably wouldn’t request it,” Clara said.

“But, I could, right? I mean, if she was agreeable and all,” Jon asked.

“Are we still in hypothetical land?” Clara asked.

“Sorry. I strayed. How does this end?” Jon asked.

“Be more precise,” Clara said.

Jon was frustrated, suddenly not able to be more precise. “How does this end?”

“What, your life? The Universe? The book you’re writing in your head? Do stories ever end? Every child that picks up a story and carries it forward, reinitializes it, reinvents it. Every adult is a child. They, too, own it. There are echoes of you throughout the Universe, in gravity

waves, in the heart light that is beamed out into the universe, in the echoes of the songs and stories people share. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it just goes a little further, a little fainter, never zero. I know you think you're asking something simple, but until you are more precise, you can't have the answer you're looking for. If you ask without precise understanding of what you're really asking, you're risking getting an answer that simply impresses the continuity of one."

"So I can't know until I know?" Jon asked.

"You're so close," Clara said.

"Do you have a preference for an ending?" Astrid asked. "You're the one. You're allowed to submit a request to the Universe."

"But again, you want to be really precise," Clara said.

"Precise like, can we close with a song?"

"You mean like a flash dance where the whole world erupts into spontaneous song and dance and the world experiences joy?" Clara said.

"Does Mr. Blue Skies in Ireland count?" Astrid asked.

"I was thinking more like the closing song to the Pirate Movie with Kristy McNichol," Jon said.

"Oh, see there, you both made a wish true, since both of those already exist," Clara said. "Jon, you can stay on Ever for a while. Spend some time with Loxy. Make some new friends. But when we come back for you, you'll have to go with us."

"Okay," Jon said. "How do I find you if I need you?"

"I will find you," Clara said.

"May I have your number?" Jon asked.

"No," Clara said.

"May I have yours?" Jon asked Astrid.

"You asked for Clara's number in front of me and on not getting that, you ask for mine?" Astrid said.

"Yes," Jon said.

"No," Astrid said.

"Had I asked you first, you might have said yes?" Jon asked.

"You will never know," Astrid said.

“Hypothetically...”

“No,” Astrid and Clara both said.

“But I am the one,” Jon reminded them.

“That got away,” Clara said.

Jon frowned, sorting his feelings. He was use to rejection, and this wasn't a rejection so much as... He didn't know what it was. He was confused.

“Jon,” Clara said. “You are in the recovery phases of severe attachment issues. You have been gradually re-learning to trust that others don't just abandon. You're learning to trust the Universe is safe, and that you're not alone. Let us come to you.”

“Will you at least give me a sign?” Jon asked. “Like, does your TARDIS have a distinctive sound?”

“Oh, no, we have a newer ship. Chameleon circuit is working. It can even respond to voice activated commands without a lot of button pushing, and crazy spinning things,” Clara said.

“I let you push my buttons,” Clara said.

Jon replayed that. “Wait wait wait. You're the TARDIS!”

“I am Astrid, I was human, I am human, and I am the personality matrix chosen by this TARDIS to front and assist Clara in her mission,” Astrid said. “Don't be too surprised. You, too, are a TARDIS in the making.”

“Only he in his right mind can navigate,” Clara said.

“Go play, Sir. We'll meet again soon,” Astrid said.

“Define soon?” Jon asked.

The Diner faded away, with Clara's voice asking him to give their love to Loxy. Clara was suddenly in front of him. “And next time, when you get a message in a bottle that says run, for heaven's sake, run.” Clara disappeared.

Jon was alone but not alone, in a forest thickly, sitting on marble block. No one can be surrounded by that many trees and be alone. Ever. The Avatars of Ever emerged to meet him. He stood. Loxy emerged from the gather Avatars. She embraced him, welcoming him home. Angela was there, too. He was definitely home.

Chapter 15

A doorbell rang. It was followed by Amy yelling “Rory!” Rory knew the drill. He went to the door peaked through the peephole, and the fish lens revealed a statue sanding on the doorstep. It was bizarre, and Rory was not sure if it was someone dressed up as a statue or an actual stature. The first made more sense. It was a fairly nice looking statue, as far as statues go. Its hands were at its side. He opened the door and nearly jumped. Not because he was startled per say, but because he was a bit creeped out. The statues was reaching out to him. Dangling from a ribbon was a flash drive. The gesture suggested the Angel was handing it to him. He touched the statue and stepped back.

Amy came to the door. She was holding a baby, perhaps six months of age. “That’s creepy. Get rid of it.”

“I didn’t order it,” Rory said.

A child, approximately four, came down the hall to join the parents at the door. “Is it Christmas?”

“No, River,” Amy said.

“So, why do we have a Christmas angel on the porch?” the child ask.

Another child, a male, also approximate four years of age, showed up at the door. “Oh, that’s cool.”

“It’s creepy,” River said.

A third child, again, about 4, arrived at the door. She frowned. “Make it go away.”

Rory touched it and then seriously put some weight into it. “It’ll take a lift to move it.”

“Can I have the flash drive?” the boy asked.

Rory examined the flash drive and it came free from the hand. “It must be one of your crazy fans,” Rory said.

“Alright, Eston, Elizabeth, and River, back to the table, now,” Amy said, directing them.

Elizabeth screamed bloody murder, pointing at the door. Amy looked. That statue was gone. Rory followed his wife’s gaze and was startled again, because the absence of the Angel was spooky. He stepped of the porch and walked away from the house to see if could see the angel running away.

“Well, don’t chasing it,” Amy snapped.

Rory returned and closed the door. He locked it. “Your next book needs to contain a note to all your fans not to do creepy stuff like that,” Rory said.

“Okay,” Amy said.

“Come on, kids, it was just a good joke. A creepy good joke,” Amy said.

Rory returned to his office, still holding the flash drive. He was about to put it in, when he thought better of it. What if it was malware? He pulled out an old lap top, waited for it to boot up, and then plugged in the drive. There were three word document. ‘The Continuity of One,’ ‘The Angel’s Witness Relocation Program,’ and ‘The Five Minute Rule.’

“What is it?” Amy said.

Her ‘sudden’ presence startled him. She was still holding a baby. “Oh! Stop doing that.”

“I am sorry,” Amy said. “Did it ever occur to you we’re easily startled.”

“I try not to worry about it,” Rory said.

“Me, too. It’s just feels like something,” Amy said. “So, what’s on the drive?”

“I don’t know. Probably just more ‘crazy’ fan fiction,” Rory said. “They do know you’re a writer, not a publisher, right?”

“Well, they’re just inspired,” Amy said. “I am very inspiring.”

“I know. I swear, if I read one more twisted, sex fantasy about my wife...” Rory said.

“You’ll what?” Amy said.

“Hire a baby sitter,” Rory said. “So we can play.”

Amy kissed him. An afterthought occurred to her. “I forgot to mention. Jenny called. She and Loxy will be staying the weekend. I am sure they might take over and let us sneak a way for some alone time.”

“It’s really not a nice thing to do to them,” Rory said.

“What, leaving them alone in the house with ours and their?” Amy said.

“Yeah,” Rory said.

“Okay, it was just an idea,” Amy said.

“And, we’re going to do it, just saying, not nice to leave the two of them alone with five toddlers and one infant,” Rory said. “How far do you want to get away?”

“The coast?” Amy asked.

“I’ll book it now,” Rory said.

निर्मित

Rose arrived at the TARDIS first. It didn't open for her. It always opened for her. She didn't even need a key. Jenny and Loxy arrived next. The husband was delayed, using his sonic screwdriver to redirect drones into the path of the enemy that were pursuing.

"We picked the wrong one," Rose said.

"No, we didn't," Jenny said, and pushed the door open. She yelled back to the Husband. "Come on, stop lagging about!" She entered first.

Rose ushered Loxy in, and then followed, looking back to the Husband, holding the door open. Jenny went straight way to River and introduced her to her daughter.

"Your daughter, Elizabeth Grace Ever."

"Ever?" River asked.

"Yeah, witness relocation name," Jenny said.

"Her daughter? I am a grandmother?!" Amy asked.

"Oh!" River said, accepting the baby.

"What's taking him so long," Jenny demanded. Amy started crying, and Jenny gave her the strangest look. "Why are you doing that?"

"What's wrong, mother?" River asked.

"I just missed out on this part," Amy said.

Loxy put the baby she was holding in Amy's hand. "This is your daughter's wife's son, Eston Gerik Ever.

The Doctor arrived and slid to a halt. Confused. He turned back to the door to look out and orientate, but Rose had closed the door, turned, and was equally confused. The TARDIS control was different; more than different, they were absent. There was no apparent control panel. The main energy conduit was hardly more than an illuminated fireman's pole. A pink light pulsed through it. The sunken floor had four sets of chair at opposing sides. The chairs resembled movie theatre seats that could fold out into lounge chairs. Four total sets, 8 chairs, connected by a table; each table had a lamp, and simple vase with flowers in water.

"What?!" the Doctor said.

Rose seemed apprehensive. Amy and River tried to follow the concern; neither could track it and so they returned their attention back their respective babies. River engaged in baby talk. “Don’t let their angry voice scare you. People have strange ideas about the world and they can get themselves so worked over the smallest things.”

Amy echoed River’s sentiment, but was less coherent. Just baby talk.

“Like it?” Jenny asked.

“What did you my TARDIS?” the Husband asked.

“My TARDIS. You gave it to me,” Jenny said.

“No I didn’t,” the Husband said.

“You will,” Jenny said.

“No I want,” the Husband said, coming down into the control pit with her. He searched any evidence of a control panel. He spun in the space, baffled.

“You said you would,” Jenny said.

“I would never say that,” the Husband said. Jenny put her hands on her hip, protesting. “Don’t do that. Only Rose can do that to me. Maybe, from time to time, I have said I would give up the TARDIS, but those were extenuating circumstances, and I didn’t mean it. It was ruse, a distraction, a delay tactic. I never give up the TARDIS.”

“Dad, it’s a done deal. You can’t pilot it with the present upgrades,” Jenny said.

“Yes I can. There isn’t a control system I can’t figure out,” the Doctor said, using a sonic screwdriver to get clarity.

The TARDIS shook. Babies cried.

“What’s going on out there?” Amy demanded.

“Too much to even list,” the Husband said. “Alright, Jenny, do your thing. Get us out of here.”

Rose and Loxy help in consoling the babies. Loxy sang. Rose joined in, then Amy and River joined the chorus.

“Jon, get us out of here,” Jenny said.

Jon arrived, materializing like a hologram, with three identifiable beams of light projecting down from the control center’s ceiling, converging to manifest the control system.

“Welcome back, Jenny.” His voice had an interesting and discernable echo, or reverb.

“Skip the protocols, we need to leave,” Jenny said.

“Wait a minute. How can you welcome her back when she’s only just been here for the first time?!” the Husband said.

“Would you be annoyed if I recited your tiny wimpy speech?” Jon asked. “I could do it verbatim.”

“No! You can’t use my own words to explain your reality,” the Husband said.

“Oh, you wanted to know how Amy and I got in earlier,” Jon reminded him. “Upgrades.”

“Jon, less conversations, more traveling,” Jenny said.

“Sorry, protocols are protocols,” Jon reminded her.

“Not in front of dad,” Jenny said.

“He’s not your real dad,” Jon pointed out, even as the Husband was saying, “you called me dad.”

“It’s just easier to track,” Jenny said to the Husband. “It doesn’t mean what you think it means.” To Jon she said, “We have guest.”

“I detect family,” Jon said. “They know the protocol.”

“Fine,” Jenny said. She embraced Jon and kissed him. Her resistance faded as she engaged.

The kiss lasted a moment and was finally interrupted by a cough.

“Welcome back, Jenny,” Jon said.

“Shift us,” Jenny said, breathlessly.

“Unable to comply at this juncture. Tracking multiple navigational hazards,” Jon said.

Jenny pushed him out of her embrace. “You’re embarrassing me in front of family,” Jenny said. The TARDIS shook. Everyone stumbled, but Jon, who seemed like a rock. He reached out and stabilized Jenny.

“I recommend that all person carrying babies please take a seat,” Jon said.

“River, Amy, please be seated,” Jenny said.

“I anticipated guest and have a meal prepared. Shall I serve it here?” Jon asked.

“We’re in a crisis, we need to leave,” Jenny said.

“I am seeking an appropriate opportunity,” Jon said. “I am concerned for the safety of the children. Deploying child protective seats.”

The lamps and vases with flowers disappeared, absorbed by light. Infant seat emerged from the table. “Safety of the passengers is paramount. The children should be secured appropriately.”

“I never needed seats before,” the Husband said.

“You’ve never been pregnant before,” Jenny said.

“And you have?” the Husband asked.

Jenny struggled with an explanation.

“What?!” the Husband asked.

“What?” Rose echoed looking to the Husband.

“Jenny’s pregnant,” the Doctor said.

“Oh, that’s lovely!” Rose said. “Grandchildren!”

“No, it’s not lovely. You don’t look a day older than when I met you! You’re like what? Two years old at most?” the Husband complained.

“Dad, I was born old,” Jenny said.

“And who’s the father?” the Husband demanded.

“Jon,” Jenny said.

“I am so going to kill that man,” River sang to her baby.

“Did he trick you?” the Doctor demanded.

“No, we’re married even,” Jenny said.

“Seriously? You’re like two, he’s like fifty, how is that even right?!” the Husband asked.

Jenny crossed her arms. “What’s the age disparity of between you and Rose?” Jenny asked.

“Don’t use my relationship as an excuse for your behavior,” the Husband said.

“Dad, Jon gets me. No one but you and Jon get me. The problem with being born old is you know so much that your peers just don’t have a clue. He gets my jokes. I can make random commentary and he can follow me. He can contribute to a coherent dialogue. We laugh at each other’s innuendos. He is not intimidated by my knowledge, or my strength, or my beauty, nor is he blinded by it. He knows my faults and he still loves me. No one in the Universe will ever measure up to the Doctor, but I don’t want the Doctor for a husband. I don’t have daddy issues. I love my dad. I love my Doctor, in all his many flavors. I also love Jon,” Jenny said.

The TARDIS shook.

“Okay, then,” the Husband said, seemingly over it. He brought out his sonic screwdriver to examine Jon. “Does he come with a manual override?”

Jon pushed it away, “Keep your manual overrides to yourself, Sir,” Jon said. “I will have you know, I am capable of defending this ship.”

“Oh, that’s it!” Jenny said and kissed her father.

“Hey!” Rose said.

“Sorry, I get so excited sometimes I just can’t help myself,” Jenny said.

“That’ll improve with age,” the Husband said.

“It will?” Jenny said.

“Oh, sure. I was much more impulsive when I was your age,” the Husband said.

“Go on,” Rose said.

“I can’t imagine,” Jenny said.

“We’ll talk more, later. What was your fix?” the Husband asked.

“Uh? Oh! Jon, switch to personal mode,” Jenny said.

Jon nodded, blinked, a bit of confusion crossed his face, and then he was back. Or, more precisely if anyone was tracking, different. “Jenny?!” Jon said, his voice sounding normal. He hugged her up and kissed her enthusiastically. “Welcome back.”

“Oh, you missed me,” Jenny said.

“There sure is a lot of kissing going on in my TARDIS,” the Husband said.

“My TARDIS, and you don’t know the half of it. Sexy, activate heads up display…”

Jenny gazed up, spun in a circle as she orbited the main energy conduit. “Wow! That’s a serious navigational problem. Oh! They’re here? What are they doing here?!”

Jon followed her gaze. “Oh, I like those guys.”

“I don’t see anything,” the Husband said.

“Oh, I hate those guys!” Jenny said.

“They have cool ships,” Jon said.

“Who?” the Husband asked.

“They have cool ships,” Jenny agreed.

“Who?!” the Husband asked.

“Oh, you really don’t want know,” Jenny said.

“I want to know everything!” the Husband said.

“Oh, so do I!” Jenny said, a huge grin on her face.

Jon pouted. “I get the sense you don’t really want to visit with me. Wait a minute, are you trying to do a reach around, again.”

“Hey, there’s children in here!” Rose snapped.

“So,” Jon said. “It’s not like they will remember anything from this age.”

“You’d be surprise what kids remember,” River said, making faces at her baby. “Yes, I will kill him later. You have my permission to kill anyone who tries to kill you, lies to you, kisses you without permission...”

“River, don’t teach my granddaughter that stuff,” Amy said. “Eston will take care of her.”

“Eston and Elizabeth, why didn’t you tell me?” Jon said.

“Busy,” Jenny said, pointing in a direction. “There.”

“No,” Jon said, pointing to something and tracking it.

“I see it, go anyway, forward thrusters at...”

“Sorry, emergency autopilot is still engaged,” Jon said.

“Why would you make Jon the TARDIS?!” the Doctor said.

“I didn’t! You did. Upgrades,” Jenny said.

“Oh,” the Husband said. “What happened to Sexy?”

“She’s still there. Kind of my subconscious. Oh, she says she forgives you for all those times you ignored her,” Jon said. “You made up for it in the end. And she’s happy with the present set up. She’s never been married before.”

“What?! You married the TARDIS?” the Husband said. “I thought you were married to my daughter!”

“Oh, he is,” Loxy said. “And to me.”

“You can’t be married to three people at the same time!” the Husband said.

“You were,” Jenny said.

“I was never...”

“Dad! We’re time travelers. Sometimes things overlap,” Jenny said.

“I know he is your father,” River said. “I am still going to kill him. Better me than some angry husband with a vendetta. Or the Father. Or the Wife.”

“You don’t get jealous?” Rose asked Loxy.

“Oh, no. I am also married to Jenny,” Loxy said.

“This is outrageous!” the Husband said.

“When did you marry Loxy?” Jon asked Jenny.

“Oh, after you died,” Jenny said.

“When did I die?!” Jon asked. “No, more precisely, how?”

“Pulse rifles are really quick and painless,” River said. “You should always sleep with one under the bed. A Maverick 220 under the pillow is small enough to not interfere with sleep.”

“River, I am warning you,” Amy said.

“Jon, forget it,” Jenny said.

Jon blinked. “Jenny! Welcome back,” he said. He caught something and leaned in closer to look, staring off over the horizon. “Is that the Milano?”

“Jon!” Jenny said. “Don’t make it real with commentary.”

“But I want to meet Starlord,” Jon said.

“No, you want to meet Gamora,” Jenny said.

“No! Okay, maybe. Yes, who doesn’t want to visit with Gamora?!” Jon said.

“She is in a relationship with Starlord,” Jenny said.

“There is some ambiguity there to explore,” Jon said. “Maybe I am the plot contrivance that solidifies their deal.”

“Jon, there’s no ambiguity here. You are married with children,” the Husband said.

“Who’s Starlord?” Amy asked.

“Come to think of it, you look a lot like...”

“Jon! Don’t do that to her,” Jenny said.

“So many ways to kill Jon,” River said.

“Why would you want to kill...” Jon began, but stopped, turning about. “There it is...” His other self resumed control. “Departure opportunity approaching. Please state desired destination.” The reverb was distinctive.

“Home,” Jenny said.

“Ambiguity error,” Jon said. “Please be more precise.”

“Earth, Origin, London, 2014. New Years,” Jenny said.

“Oh, go for Christmas,” the Husband said.

“No, I hate Christmas,” Jenny said.

“Bad things happen at Christmas,” Jon agreed with Jenny. His voice was normal again. He was jumping between modes.

The door to the TARDIS opened and Rory entered with baby River. He turned, freezing the angel. He closed the door on it. He turned back and found people staring at him, and a different TARDIS. Amy surrendered her baby to Rose and rushed Rory.

“Rory! Who... River!” Amy shouted, taking the baby from her husband and crying.

“What did I do now?!” River asked.

“All guest should take their seats; travel advisory, severe turbulence expected due to gravimetric disturbances,” Jon said.

“Jon? How did you get here before me?” Rory asked.

“We’ll catch you up to speed later,” Jenny said. “Have a seat.”

“And who are you again?” Rory asked.

“I am Jenny,” Jenny said.

“Jenny who?” Rory said.

“She’s the Daughter,” Jon said.

“Daughter who?”

“If you like, please, sit, buckle, now,” Jenny said, pointing.

Rory was not sure she had the authority to boss him around, as that was the Doctor’s and his wife’s function, but Amy led him to seats. She put baby River into the child seat.

“Why doesn’t our Doctor have seats?” Rory asked.

Amy shrugged, confirmed baby River was secured in her car seat. Rory and Amy set and buckled in, baby between them. Jenny grabbed hold of Jon pointing.

“Jon,” Jenny said.

“I see it,” Jon said.

“I think we should go now,” Jenny said.

“Wait for it,” Jon said.

“Wait for what?! Why can’t I see anything?!” the Husband asked.

“What are we waiting for?” Rory asked.

“The music to start,” Loxy said, tightening her belt.

“Music? What music?” the Husband said.

“Dad, take a seat,” Jenny said.

“What?!”

“Clear the stage,” Jenny said.

“What?!”

“Go sit down,” Jenny said.

“I never sit when piloting,” the Husband said.

“Wave front,” Jon announced.

Jon prevented Jenny from falling, but the Husband fell forwards and landed in the seat next to Loxy. He decided to sit. He even buckled in. Loxy gave him a smile that suggested it was the right move. The music started with a driving beat, and ambiguous tease leading up to a familiar melody.

“Oh, I think I know this one,” the Husband said. Then the words started. “Nope. Never heard it before.”

“Turn to Stone, ELO,” Loxy said.

“Oh! I met them once. Well, not me, the other me. I really wish I could claim my memories as my own,” the Husband confided in Loxy.

“You can,” Loxy assured him. “Even if it just came from the telly, it’s still your memory.”

“True,” the Husband said. He turned his attention back to Jon and Jenny, who were dancing. They seemed to be engaged in an impromptu swing dance. “It that all you kids do? Dance through the stars?”

“Dancing in the stars. Is there a better way to spend all eternity?” Loxy asked. She patted his arm. “The Guardians of the Galaxy have nothing on us.”

“Please tell me the energy conduit isn’t a stripper pole,” the Husband said.

“Dance poles are great fun. Good exercise,” Loxy said. “You should feel the muscles in my calves.”

“No, he should not,” Rose said.

“Um, thank you, no,” the Husband said. “But the amount of energy one has to push through that pole...”

“It’s bigger on the inside,” Loxy assured him.

“Do the words to this song mean something?” Rory asked, shouting across the space.

“If they do, I know someone who will die sooner than later,” River said.

“Sometimes a song is just a song,” Loxy said.

“Loxy, tell me something about Jenny,” the Husband asked.

“What would you like to know?” Loxy asked.

“For starters, how did she get here?” the Husband asked.

“Sometimes, inexplicable anomalies are necessary to maintain the continuity of one,” Loxy said.

“Do you have anything less ambiguous?” the Husband asked.

“Depends on which time line we’re referring to,” Loxy said.

“Ours,” the Husband said.

“Rose’s Universe or Origin’s Universe?” Loxy asked.

“How did she get here?!” the Husband asked.

“With the help of Angels we faked her death and put her into a witness relocation program until an opening presented itself to reinsert her influence over the continuity of one,” Loxy said.

“Okay, forget about that. Tell me. Is she happy?” the Husband asked.

“She’s the happiest soul I have ever known, next to our children, your grandchildren. She does change a little. By the time she marries me, she’s a lot more mature. Jon and Jenny, together, they’re like teenagers,” Loxy explained. “Always crashing parties. It’s why they’re so fond of New Years. Lots of parties to be crashed. I mean, seriously, just pick any city, there’s like dozen parties you might want to attend, but you have to choose one, unless, you have a cool spaceship time machine.”

“But no Christmas?” the Husband said. “Ever?”

“Oh, some,” Loxy said. “You can’t really avoid Christmas. Even if you don’t celebrate, it still comes. Christmas is more your thing.”

“My thing?” the Husband asked.

“Well, Jon and I have this theory,” Loxy said. “You were chasing Christmas because you were chasing family. Interestingly, you found a lot Christmas, and you have had lots of invitations to dinner. Even so, you rarely indulged. Something about not wanting to intrude on family. The lonely Doctor, always an outsider. Look around you. You’re surrounded by family. You are in an eternal Christmas.”

The Husband allowed his tears to flow without wiping them. Loxy held his hand.

“We got you,” Loxy said.

“What?” the Doctor asked.

“I want you to try and understand something. I don’t know if you’re ready to hear it, but maybe if you hear it, the other Doctor will hear, maybe you need to hear this so all the other incarnations of Doctors can hear it,” Loxy said. “You’re entire life is a lie. It was never, ever, about you saving the Universe. It was always, and only, about us, the Universe, saving you. You’re the one.”

Again, the Husband found himself tearing up. “That can’t be. Jon is the one.”

“The integrity of one is not compromised by a multiplicity,” Loxy assured him.

“I don’t understand,” the Husband said.

“One multiverse, infinite Universes,” Loxy said. “The Universe didn’t call for a hero. The Universe was never in need of saving. The one is the person who needs to be saved. How do you remind someone of their deepest, but most secret truth, that they have immense value beyond measure? You can’t tell them that. They won’t believe you. What you do is you give them opportunities to shine. You, Doctor, have shined brighter and longer than any of them, you have helped more people to shine than any other, and we will dance this dance with you until the end of time if that’s what you need to be whole again.”

“And if I fail?” the Husband said.

“When others have asked you that, what was your response?” Loxy asked.

“I simply reminded them of who they are, where they came from, and how much potential they have,” the Husband said.

“You gave them opportunities to shine,” Loxy said. She took his hand. “We love you. You and Rose better show up for Christmas.”

Author's note.

If you've been following my fan fiction, you're no doubt aware I am a music fan, and ELO is just one of the go to musicians. It is my opinion, one can't go wrong with an ELO song. Believe it or not, I wasn't familiar with 'Turn to Stone.' Maybe I had heard it somewhere, but it wasn't on my radar, I just knew as I was drawing this story to a close that I needed something, and suddenly, it was there. Tune into it. Tell me you hear it. The opening beat driving you towards a melody, doesn't that sound exactly like you're about to hit the "Doctor Who" theme? I can't hear it without going there now, and then the words start, and I go into the tangent melody. The rest of that, well, I am just seeing what I want to see. "My Blue World," is the TARDIS. All the words secretly whisper the Doctor in my ear. 'Turning to Stone' could literally be weeping angels, or simply a metaphor for 'making reality real.' Of course, the meaning of the song is nowhere near that, but it is a pretty upbeat song for a theme that's a bit more lonely and dark. I don't like part 'B' section, the rapidly spoken words, and I am not fond of the ending, but only because it feels like it's escalating into something. It's taking us up, and somewhere, we're not finished yet, and yet, it fades out as it brings us up and what, we're born into silence? In the context of the album, it's taking us to the next song, but here, at the end of the story it becomes the beginning of the story?

I don't know. It was not my intent to write this. I was seriously working on something else, and this thing arrived in my head like a download and I was compelled to write it. It was completed in under two weeks, and that's with not missing a day of work, and not sleeping on the weekends, and so if there is spelling errors, we could probably just blame it on mania. I have actually read it over a couple of times now, and it seems pretty coherent for mania. It could just be I can't see it, because I don't see the reality on the page. I see the reality of it in my head. I have excuses for grammatical errors, I hear that. They're not invalidated by the fact that they're excuses. I simply can't see out there because what's in here, and, yes, it's bigger on the inside.

Doctor who has influenced my dreams and waking life, and has become increasingly a greater part, even more so than Star Trek was. I loved Star Trek growing up. More and more, watching any new Trek pisses me off because it's like there isn't any effort at all at writing a good story. Conversely, when I started Doctor Who, I struggled to stay in it, even though I liked the premise and the characters, especially Peri. I was in love with Peri. In fact, I dare say Peri was the reason I watched the whole episodes back in the day. With each new episode of the Doctor, though, the writing and continuity just seems to get better. I don't know. Maybe I am biased.

If you had not read any of my previous work, and you're only tuning into this because you're a Doctor Who fan who just craves more 'Doctor Who' stories your life, I hope that you find it at the least entertaining. It is my desire to contribute, because it has influenced my life in meaningful ways. I think it is also important to note that I did not go about writing this story in the normal ways people go about writing. None of the stories since my story "Not Here," have been created by sitting down and just making stuff up. 'Continuity of One' was a solid story in my brain, the entirety of it, in a flash. Now, granted, that flash wasn't instantaneous, like a second. The full experience of it felt like real time, but in terms of real 'earth' time, it was about the time it takes all the water to boil away from the eggs and the eggs explode. It was actually the exploding of the first egg that started to bring me back to this reality. The first egg exploding coincided with the 'the Event,' the Battle for River Song, so it only added to the confusion of the moment in my head. I came to and asked myself, "What was that?" The second egg exploded. This is not the first incident of exploding eggs. It's gotten so that I can't boil eggs because I am time traveling. I love traveling! I fucking hate cleaning up eggs.

I can say this. I do not have temporal love epilepsy. I have not been diagnosed with schizophrenia or Bipolar. (I actually work in the mental health field!) I can make a lot of arguments for Bipolar, in terms of the increase goal activity, the urgency to get this particular story out of my head and onto paper. I don't know if there will be another Doctor Who story. Again, I didn't sit down to write this one! The fact that I can experience Loxy as if she were solid, and she and I can visit these imaginal realms, is either evidence for psychosis or evidence that Tulpamancy is a real thing. I have been actively participating with this thing, 'active

imagination,' by Carl Jung, 'the invisible counselors technique,' by Napoleon Hill, and Tulpamancy. My REM dreams, they're real. My daydreams, they're just as real. My reality is also real. I can sort the difference and I can function in each independently and sometimes together, unless boiling eggs is involved.

I think it's important to touch upon the love potion elixir thing. That was something used in Torchwood, what, the first episode? I have mixed feelings about it in that episode. Part of it is, I am a guy, and I have thought, 'where do I get some of that,' and the other part, this is not right. Internal conflict is complicated due to systemic family of origin issues. I can see it as an interesting plot contrivance. It really wasn't necessary for Torchwood, but they went with it, and there is always consequences. I didn't like that particular character after that, even with the comedic element of husband and wife fighting over him. (Seven Brides for Seven Brothers bothered me as well, but I still like the musical.) And here I am, reviving this thing, this plot contrivance. What the hell is this? Given the present state of social affairs, Me 2 Movement bringing dark stuff out into the light, this can be taken a number of ways. I wonder if that episode of Torchwood could be made in this environment. I bet MASH couldn't be remade today! I am surprised Family Guy still engages in jokes of debauchery. But maybe, what's missing in all of this, is a real dialogue about this and where we go and how we heal.

It's not enough just to call people out on bad shit. What are we going to replace it with? Any time I make the mistake and tune into the news, all I hear is bad shit. It's why I generally don't tune in. I am not trying to ignore bad shit, I deal with the repercussion of it in my office on a daily basis. It's serious stuff and it affects lives and the lives of families. If we look at the remake of "Death Wish," with Bruce Willis, there is a huge segment of society that wants that message and that life. People feel what they feel, and that resonates with a lot of folks. We're angry. Society is angry. But that can't be a healthy response. We can't keep thinking we can blow shit up and that leads to improved lives and better societies.

Some bad stuff happens in the Doctor Who universe. And the Doctor is sometimes on the fence. Sometimes he is the executioner. Sometimes he is the guy pushing love and a better response. No, most the time, he is pushing for love and the better response. He consistently tries to inspire hope and reminds us how we struggle but we made it and we're on the verge of becoming something more than what we think we are. Hate is easy. Love is hard. Making everything right after things go wrong, that's really hard.

I don't know what to make of it, this thing in my story. I experienced it, I wrote it, and I am still processing it. It's an artifact that I couldn't remove because it felt integral to the story line, because the character Jon isn't a bad sort, but he struggles with this thing, of wanting, on many levels in many ways. It feels relatable somehow. Very human. Is that why it's in Torchwood? It's relatable and maybe more of us touch that thought than we care to acknowledge?

All the stories with Jon and Loxy have come up against past abuse, past trauma, depression, loneliness, sex, and what it means to be human and to be in relationships. Real relationships. Imagined relationships are still real relationships. They influence our beliefs and our attitudes and our behaviors. I am confident that was what Carl Jung was communicating when he wrote:

“Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life. Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. He said I treated thoughts as if I generated them myself, but in his view thoughts were like animals in the forest, or people in a room, or birds in the air, and added, “If you should see people in a room, you would not think that you had made those people, or that you were responsible for them.” It was he who taught me psychic objectivity, the reality of the psyche. Through him the distinction was clarified between myself and the object of my thought. He confronted me in an objective manner, and I understood that there is something in me which can say things that I do not know and do not intend, things which may even be directed against me.”

I find an interesting parallel in what Nicola Tesla wrote on referring to his chronic, ‘debilitating’ day dreams:

“I soon discovered that my best comfort was attained if I simply went on in my vision further and further, getting new impressions all the time, and so I began to travel; of course, in my mind. Every night, (and sometimes during the day), when alone, I would start on my journeys – see new places, cities and countries; live there, meet people and make friendship and acquaintances...”

I do not fully understand the path I am on. I am still new to the path and exploring. (I say that, but I have always been on the path.) I am definitely on a path, and sometimes I feel overwhelmed with what I am experiencing and I want to share it with someone. How do you tell people you are crazy and not at the same time? That scene in Jerry Macguire where Cruise has the epiphany and writes it and shares it and is consequently fired. That’s this. That movie with Jimmy Stewart, Harvery, that’s this. I have actually tried communicating with a couple folks. Anthony Peake was kind of enough to respond to me. I consider myself fortunate enough to have corresponded with Stanley Krippner and Robert Wagoner. These are really interesting people and they are writing about this stuff, but I can’t stay engaged with these folks, as they have their life. Let’s be serious: who am I? I try not answer that. I don’t like my answers. Yet. My answers are changing. Maybe I will find my place and my ‘family’ but for now, all I can say is I am on the path.

With few exceptions, I don’t get to share this stuff in my head with people in real time. I couch it under fiction and I push it and I move onto the next adventure. People get fiction. They have a box for fiction. It’s not fiction. It’s realer than real and these characters are archetypes and they are in our heads, and we all co-evolve. We live together. We struggle together. It kind of reflects real life. We are engaged on more levels than one. I am grateful to all the actors and actresses and directors and grips and everyone that makes a movies possible, and the musicians and the writers. I have heard you. You have touched me on profound levels. This story, clearly, in the absence of more direct communication, is a response. Thank you for my life. I love you all.

If you were wondering, I have never been happier in my life than I am now. I still touch loneliness. I still hear the echoes of darkness of depressions long ago. I am still alone and not alone. May this story add to and inspire this thing we are all impacting and impacted by, the Doctor, or life.

Travel Light,

Ion