

Chapter 42

The days were growing shorter, and the air colder with each passing morning. Waking up for work in the pitch-black darkness and returning home long after the sun had set was something Clara could never get used to. It gnawed at her mood, often souring her day before she even left the bed.

Her phone alarm buzzed insistently on the nightstand, its relentless tone cutting through the stillness for the third time in the past half hour. Clara groaned, blindly reaching out from beneath the duvet and smacking her hand against the snooze button. Rolling over with a muffled moan, she buried her face into Yaz's shoulder, seeking warmth and comfort in her embrace.

"How many more times are you gonna do that?" Yaz mumbled groggily, tugging on Clara's arm and wrapping it around herself tighter.

"Not sure," Clara murmured, her voice muffled as she snuggled closer, showing no sign of moving anytime soon.

The room fell quiet again, and Yaz's breathing started to even out as she drifted back into half-sleep. But ten minutes later, the alarm blared again, its shrill tone breaking the peace.

"Oh, for Rassilon's sake!" Clara groaned, throwing the covers off in frustration. She snatched up her phone, glaring at the screen as if it personally offended her. "Shut up!" she snapped, swiping her finger across it with a dramatic huff.

Yaz barely stirred, grabbing the duvet and rolling herself into it like a contented burrito, utterly unapologetic and unbothered by her wife's morning tantrum.

Clara sat on the edge of the bed, yawning as she rubbed a hand over her tired eyes. She glanced at the foggy darkness outside. "I hate getting up for work," she muttered to herself, her voice heavy with disdain.

.....

The soft morning light filtered through the thick fog, turning the garden into a muted watercolor of silver and grey. Now fully dressed and ready to go to work Clara stood by the kitchen window, her fingers wrapped around a steaming mug of tea, savoring the rare moment of silence before her busy day. The world felt still, as if even time itself had slowed down to let her breathe.

The fog hung low, clinging to the ground, and the TARDIS seemed to stare back at her, timeless and patient. It loomed through the mist like a forgotten monument, a testament to victories won and losses endured. Once a vessel for adventure, now it stood as little more than a garden ornament, a quiet reminder of a life that felt like it belonged to someone else.

She let out a quiet sigh, her gaze lingering on her beloved ship. It was strange, how something so grand, so impossibly alive, could seem so small and silent now. She finished the last of her tea, the warmth still lingering on her lips as she placed the cup gently in the sink. Picking up her bag and car keys from the counter, she hesitated for a moment, casting one last glance out of the window.

.....

The lecture hall was buzzing with students. Clara paced in front of a blackboard covered in chaotic equations, diagrams of planets, and what might be a doodle of a Dalek in the corner.

Holding a piece of chalk she was squinting at the board. "Right, GRAVITATIONAL WAVE INTERFERENCE" she announced underlining it sharply with a chalk "... simple enough. For me, anyway. Should be for you too. Humans, always overcomplicating physics when it's really just space wiggles and time jiggles. Piece of cake."

Suddenly she turns sharply to face the class "Right, pay attention! This is where physics gets interesting. Well, it's been interesting the whole time, but this is the really juicy bit. If you don't get this, you're missing the entire point of existence. No pressure." she turns back to the board scribbling equations.

One of the students raises his hand.

"Yes Martin?!" Clara asks without looking

"Um, excuse me, but that equation for wave interference is wrong"

Clara freezes mid-scribble, sighs theatrically, and turns around with a mix of annoyance and disbelief. "Oh, brilliant. We've got ourselves a genius in the room. Fantastic...Well, go on...let's hear it"

"It's missing a constant?"

"Really?...interesting...Please, Martin, enlighten us, what constant do you think I've missed? The Cheese Constant? The Coffee Constant? Why Did I Bother Coming To This Planet Today Constant?"

Martin, emboldened by his earlier comment, shrugs, "Well, it just seems like you might've skipped something..."

"No, Martin," Clara cuts him off, now irritated to the point of insanity. "What I 'skipped' was explaining it in excruciating detail so your wonderful human brain wouldn't implode. Do you want me to include the Tensor Factor? Shall we add layers of complexity until the lot of you are crying into your notebooks? No? Thought not.... right...can we continue now?"

She turned back to the board, mumbling to her chin "Honestly, one question and they think

they're Stephen Hawking. Bet Stephen never had to deal with this sort of nonsense in his lectures. Not me, though, oh no, I have to deal with Martin."

Martin raises his hand again.

Clara spins around dramatically "What now, Martin?! Did I spell your name wrong on the metaphorical certificate of me losing my patience?!"

"It's just... if gravitational waves bend space-time, wouldn't they also affect light waves differently depending on..."

She raises her eyebrow "Oh, I'm sorry, do I look like I need a co-lecturer? I've got this, Martin. The gravitational waves do affect light, and yes, if you'd let me finish my perfectly brilliant explanation without interruptions, we'd have gotten to that bit! But no, you had to jump in like a hyperactive squirrel chasing a math nut!"

The rest of the class started laughing but Clara was far from amused. The chronic lack of sleep was getting to her more than what she was ready to admit to herself by this point. She huffs turning back to the board in hopes she can get on with the lecture in peace.

"Now, where was I? Oh yes...gravitational waves! They're like the ripples you get when you throw a stone in a pond, only the pond is the entire fabric of the universe, and the stone is something catastrophic, like black holes colliding. Simple, right?"

Martin raises his hand again.

Clara turns, now at the absolute edge of her nerves "Martin, I swear on Rassilon's left sandal, if this isn't an absolutely essential question, I'm gonna personally invent a device to slow down time so you can think about your next question."

Martin looks at her timidity this time "Uh... never mind." he says quietly

Clara, relieved, nods with a wide grin across her face "Good choice, Martin. Excellent choice. You'll go far. Now, everyone else, back to work...unless someone else wants to challenge the Time Lord who's been doing physics since your species thought fire was a cutting-edge invention!"

The students stare at her as if she's lost her mind but Clara seemed oblivious to it, or just simply didn't care enough to acknowledge it "Right...let's continue" She grins turning on her heel back to the board and continues writing.

"What did she just say?" One of the students asks, leaning into her classmate

Her classmate rolls his eyes twirling a finger beside his temple, questioning her sanity "Mental that one"

"I heard that Jerome" she yells

The students sit up straighter, scribbling notes, trying their hardest not to laugh, or get called out.

....

Clara pushed open the bathroom cubicle door, muttering to herself as she headed to the sink. "Right, back to the chaos. Gravitational waves, overconfident students, and now I'm missing lunch. Brilliant day, absolutely stellar."

As she stepped forward, her foot landed in a puddle of water, soaking the bottom of her trousers. She freezes, looks down, and lets out an exaggerated groan.

"Of course! Cause why not...who doesn't want soggy trousers...Brilliant"

She shook her leg frustrated, flinging water around, then bent down to inspect the puddle. A slow drip echoed from the pipes under the sink.

"Leaking valve. Classic." She mumbled pulling the sonic out of her pocket aiming it at the valve.

The sonic buzzed as she tightens the loose fitting. Water stopped dripping instantly "There. Good as new. Well, as new as something that's probably older than the Dalek. You're welcome, sink."

Suddenly the door of another cubicle opens up and one of her students Ellie walks out. Clara blinks, sonic still in her hand

"Oh! Hello, Professor ..." her eyes zooming on a sonic

Clara straightens up quickly, casually slipping sonic into her pocket and leans against the sink flashing an awkward grin. "Ah, hello! Ellie, isn't it? Lovely to see you. Enjoying the lecture? Not that you'd say otherwise"

Ellie hesitated for a moment "Uh... yeah. Totally. Um... what was that thing you just had in your hand?"

Clara's grin stiffens "Thing? What thing? There was no thing. Happens all the time. Stress, probably. Exams coming up?"

"No, I definitely saw something. It looked like..."

"Oh, thaaat!" Clara interrupts, waving her hand dismissively "Pfft, just a... uh, spanner. A small portable... futuristic-looking... folding spanner. Very handy. Got it on sale. Two-for-one deal. You'd love it."

Ellie squints at her, unconvinced. "It made a weird buzzing noise."

Clara laughs nervously "Did it? Noo...just bathrooms, y'know, all these acoustics and plumbing sounds. Sometimes the pipes hum a bit. Nothing to worry about. Definitely not me fixing a sink with... whatever you thought you saw."

The girl folds her arms in front of her "You fixed the sink?"

Clara leaned closer conspiratorially "I didn't fix it. I just... encouraged it. It just needed a little pep talk. Sink valves are like that...bit temperamental. Anyway, no more puddles, so... you're welcome! Also...what are you doing in the professor's bathroom? Don't you have your own?"

"We do, but toilets are blocked... They've shut 'em down. I'm sure I heard buzzing" she persisted "How'd you know to fix the plumbing?"

"I know how to fix a lot of stuff including but not limited to plumbing. Let's just say I dabble in stuff. Lots of stuff. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got a lecture to finish. Physics doesn't teach itself!"

Clara steps past Ellie, pausing at the door. "Oh, and next time you're trying to cheat on the exam make sure you take the note with you...Or better yet, memorize it! The ultimate hiding place...Got it?"

Ellie nods slowly, bewildered. "Got it."

She gives her a thumbs up and marches out.

....

Clara was mid-sentence, pacing back and forth in front of the blackboard when she got interrupted by the sharp ring of her phone. She freezes, glancing at the screen, Jack.

"Uh, one moment, class," she says, already whizzing toward the door. "Don't touch anything." She points her chalk in the student's direction like a weapon before slipping out of the lecture hall.

She answered the phone as soon as she was out in the hallway "Jack, this better not be another..."

"*DOCTOR!*" Jack's voice comes through loud and panicked, nearly drowned out by a sound of explosions and metallic screeching in the background.

Clara blinks immediately, tensing. "What's going on? Where are you?"

"On an alien ship!" Jack shouts, raising his voice over the chaos. "It's crashing...like, right now... I need you to pick me up!"

"What? Why don't you just teleport off?" she asks, confused.

"I would if I could, but my vortex manipulator's busted! I've been trying to reroute it for the last ten minutes, it's fried!" Another loud explosion punctuates his sentence.

"Right. Of course it is," she mutters, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Great timing, Jack!"

"Doctor, I swear, if you don't pick me up, I'm gonna die! Literally! DIE!" Jack screams, multitasking as he fumbles with controls.

Clara looks skyward and sighs. "Well, here's the thing...bit of a hitch in that plan. I haven't got the TARDIS at the moment"

"You *what?!*" Jack practically roars, his voice crackling through the phone.

"I'm at work!" she snaps. "You know, earning a living, blending in... human stuff. But nooo, you just have to..." She stops mid-rant, blinking as an idea forms behind her forehead. "Wait... hang on. I might have a plan."

"Doctor!" Jack yells, another explosion shaking his voice. "Coordinates! I'm sending them! Just hurry up!"

"I'll be there in a sec," she says confidently, before hanging up.

....

Yaz leaned back in her chair, her eyes blurry from staring at the computer screen for far too long. A much-needed break was in order.

In the kitchen, she poured herself a cup of tea, relishing the quiet of her lunch break. The toaster popped, launching two golden crumpets into the air. Smiling to herself, Yaz hummed a cheerful tune as she transferred them onto her plate.

Her phone buzzed on the counter, cutting through the tranquil moment. Glancing at the screen, she saw Clara's name flashing. She picked it up with a small smile and leaned against the counter as she answered.

"Hello, butterfly." Clara chimed on the other end

Yaz picked up her tea smiling at the unexpected call. "Hey baby... what's up?"

On the other end, Clara grins, her voice full of mischief and urgency. "How do you feel about flying the TARDIS?"

Yaz nearly dropped the phone. "Wait, *what?* Clara, what's going on?"

"Long story, Yaz. Very long story. Big explosions, Jack, an alien ship about to crash, me stuck without the TARDIS. You know, the usual Tuesday. So... up for testing your flying

skills?”

Yaz set her tea down slowly, bracing herself.

....

Clara paced back and forth outside the lecture hall, her phone pressed tightly to her ear as she spoke urgently to Jack.

“Jack, stop screaming, I can barely hear you!” she shouts. “I said I’ll be there!”

Jack’s panicked voice cracked back, “Just get me off this ship before...” The line got momentarily drowned out by another explosion.

“Yeah, yeah, exploding ship, vortex manipulator broken, I got it!” she snapped, throwing her hands in the air. “I’m doing the best I can”

From down the hallway, Martin appears, clutching a stack of notes. He spots her immediately. “Arr... Professor!”

Clara doesn’t register him at first, still engrossed in Jack’s frantic shouting on the phone.

“DOCTOR!” Jack yells again. “There’s fire everywhere! I’m about to become immortal toast!”

“Well that’s what you get when you decide to crash when I’m at work! I’m working on it!” she barks, still pacing.

“Professor?” Martin tries again, a little louder this time, stepping closer.

Suddenly, the familiar sound of the TARDIS fills the hallway. Clara freezes mid-step, her expression brightening as the blue police box materializes right around her, the walls solidifying with a resounding thud.

“Oh, Yaz, you absolute genius!” she yells, spinning around to see Yaz standing by the console, looking baffled as she peers over her shoulder.

“Uh, who’s he?” Yaz asks, pointing past Clara’s shoulder.

Clara frowns, confused, and turns around to see Martin standing there, wide-eyed, gawking at the TARDIS interior.

“Martin?” she blurts, utterly stunned.

Martin looks like he’s forgotten how to breathe, his mouth hanging open as he tries to process the impossibly vast room he’s now standing in. “Whaaaa...? Where ...am I dead?”

Clara wheels around to Yaz, her hands on her hips. "You picked up my student?"

Yaz shrugged helplessly, glancing between Martin and Clara. "How was I supposed to know?"

Before anyone could say another word, Jack's voice bursts through the phone, loud and panicked. "DOCTOR! QUIT CHATTING AND PICK ME UP!!!" In the background, loud bangs and crackling explosions echo over the line.

Clara groans, pinching the bridge of her nose. "No time for this now," she mutters, shoving her phone into her coat pocket, then bolts to the console, her hands flying over the controls. "Hold on!" she yells, gripping the lever.

Martin clutched onto the railing "Wait, what's going on?!" he shouts, his voice trembling.

Clara glances at him briefly, her face full of manic determination. "Welcome aboard!"

With that, she yanks the lever, and the TARDIS lurches into motion.

....

Jack was standing at the helm, gripping the controls, his knuckles white as the tree line rushes closer and he could swear he saw a flock of birds flying by. Taking a deep breath, he closes his eyes, bracing for the impact.

Then, suddenly, the noise changes. The TARDIS's unmistakable sound surrounds him. He opens his eyes to see the interior of the TARDIS, its golden glow replacing the flaming wreckage of the ship.

Clara stood leaning against the console, grinning smugly. "Told ya I was gonna fix it."

Jack lets out a huff of relief and bolts over to her, sweeping her up in a tight embrace planting a dramatic kiss on her cheek.

"Oi! Stop slobbering all over me!" she squirms to free herself.

He lets her go, laughing, and turns to Yaz. "Oh hi, Yazee, sweetie. How are you?"

"I flew the TARDIS." she announces proudly with a mixture of pride and disbelief on her face

"Good for you." Jack grins, giving her a playful thumbs-up.

Before anyone could say more, a loud, frustrated yell comes from the other side of the console. "Will someone tell me what the hell is going on here?!"

Jack freezes, his grin faltering as he spots Martin, wide-eyed and clearly overwhelmed.

"Who's he?" he points at him, baffled.

Clara, still fussing with the controls, waves a hand dismissively. "Long story. Martin, Yaz... my wife. Jack ...the annoying best mate. Martin's a student. Yaz picked him up by mistake."

Jack blinked, processing the chaos before letting out a laugh. "Of course she did!"

Clara groaned, flipping switches frustrated. "I'm gonna drop him back in a minute, alright? Just... give me a sec."

"This is the weirdest lecture I've ever attended..." Martin mutters, still looking around in utter confusion.

"Doctor, I'm sorry but we can't leave yet. I've gotta get to *Ventraxia*. It's where I was heading.

"Ventraxia" Clara frowns confused

"Yap...I found the detailed instructions about the loom you're building. Trust me, it's all there...blueprints, schematics, everything you need. But they're on to me, so if I don't pick that up now, I'm afraid we're not gonna get another chance."

Clara freezes mid-tap on the console, her expression suddenly serious. "Ventraxia?" she repeats glancing at Yaz and Martin.

Having Yaz and one of her students onboard wasn't on her bingo card for the day. It was too risky, and the thought of venturing to an alien planet while still dodging the mysterious people targeting Yaz made her stomach twist.

She spins around abruptly. "Right. Here's the plan. Yaz, you and Martin stay on Earth. I'll take Jack to Ventraxia, pick up the blueprints, and we'll come right back. Easy peasy, no need to worry."

Yaz narrows her eyes, crossing her arms. "You're joking, right?"

Clara raises a brow. "Do I look like I'm joking?"

"Actually, yeah, you do," Yaz shoots back. "I'm not staying behind, Clara. Fucking forget it. I'm not gonna sit around twiddling my thumbs, worrying if you're ever coming back."

"Yaz, it's not safe. Ventraxia's crawling with guards, and whoever's after you might take advantage if we're caught out there. You staying here."

"No, I AM NOT!!! I'm not losing you again.... I'm not doing that...You promised me we're in this together...Fried or not, I'm not hiding at home...forget it."

Clara's face softened at Yaz's words, and for a moment, her usual confident exterior falters. She splayed her arms across the console, clearly losing this battle.

Finally, she threw her hands up in defeat. "Fine. You can come," she says through gritted teeth, pointing a warning finger at Yaz. "But on one condition...you're gonna stay inside the TARDIS. No wandering off, no sightseeing, no touching shiny alien stuff. Got it?"

"Got it." Yaz smirked, satisfied.

Meanwhile, Martin was staring at the group like they've all lost their minds. "What do you mean, alien planet?" he stammers, his voice climbing an octave. "Who the hell are you people?!"

Jack strolls over to Martin, clapping a hand on his shoulder with a grin. "Relax.... You're in good hands. Well, mostly. Except when you're not. Which is a lot."

"That doesn't help!" He looks at Jack with blank expression

"Stop winding him up, Jack." Clara rolls her eyes flipping a switch on the console, and the TARDIS hums to life. She turns to Martin, flashing him a smile. "Oh, and Martin? Congratulations. You've just earned yourself a field trip. Buckle up." Her eyes glisten as she pulls the lever.

The TARDIS lurches into motion, and Martin lets out a high-pitched scream, clutching onto the railing.

....

The TARDIS materialized with a wheeze, it's hum echoing faintly in the dense, foggy atmosphere of Ventraxia. Clara stepped out first, her black coat flapping dramatically behind her as she took in the surroundings. Sharp, jagged rock formations jutted out of the cracked ground, and the sky above was an unnatural shade of greenish-gray, swirling with ominous clouds. The air was thick and the faint sound of patrolling guards in the distance could be heard.

Jack followed close behind, glancing around nervously. "I really hate landing on planets where the locals have a shoot-first-ask-questions-never policy."

Clara gave him a side-eye glare. "Then why'd you come here in the first place?" She chuckled

"Because I didn't know it was a death trap *then*," Jack quipped, smirking. "Besides, you love death traps."

"Not when I've got Yaz back in the TARDIS sulking about me taking too long," she shot back, scanning the horizon with her sonic. "Now, where do we go?"

Jack pointed toward a towering, fortress-like structure in the distance. It was surrounded by a shimmering force field, and armed guards patrolled its perimeter. "Top floor of that

building. But, uh... there's a teensy little problem."

Clara squinted. "Let me guess. The guards? The force field? Or the fact that you didn't think to bring a plan?"

Jack shrugged sheepishly. "All of the above?"

"Briliant"

"Says a woman who never has a plan"

"I do...it's half baked" she points to her temple "Next time, I'm charging you for rescue missions. I'll call it the *Captain Jack Tax*. Now, let's get moving before they spot us."

They crept forward, staying low and using the jagged rocks as cover. Clara was surprisingly stealthy for someone who rarely stopped talking. Jack, however, was less subtle, his coat occasionally catching on rocks and making noise.

"Could you be any louder?" the Clara hissed as they ducked behind a particularly large boulder.

"Sorry, I didn't realize I was sneaking around with the Stealth Police," Jack shot back, rolling his eyes.

She pointed a finger at him, her voice low and sharp. "One more quip, and I'm leaving you here."

"You'd never leave me," Jack replied confidently.

"Try me." She raised an eyebrow

Before Jack could respond, a distant shout echoed through the air. The guards had spotted something, thankfully not them, but it was close enough to make both of them freeze.

"Move!" She said grabbing Jack's arm and yanking him toward the fortress.

They reached the edge of the force field, and Clara quickly scanned it "Ventraxian tech... primitive but effective. I can disable it for about thirty seconds. After that, we're toast."

"Thirty seconds? Yap...I think we're fine"

The field flickered and fizzled out. "Go, go, go!" She tugged his arm

They sprinted through the now-vulnerable entryway and into the fortress. Inside, the air was colder, and the metallic walls glinted faintly under dim, flickering lights.

"Which way?" she asked, spinning around to face Jack.

He pointed down a corridor to the left. "There's a lift at the end. Top floor."

"Of course it's the top floor," she muttered, already running.

They reached the lift just as an alarm blared throughout the building. She slapped the button to call the lift, tapping her foot impatiently as it descended.

The doors opened, and they piled in. Jack hit the button for the top floor. The lift hummed to life, and Jack leaned against the wall, arms crossed. "You know, for someone who claims to love adventure, you complain a lot."

"For someone who claims to be immortal, you panic a lot," she shot back.

Jack opened his mouth to respond, but the lift doors dinged open, revealing a small, dimly lit room filled with shelves of ancient-looking scrolls and tablets.

Clara pulled out her sonic to jam the controls. "This should slow them down," she muttered

Jack grinned. "There it is!"

He rushed forward, grabbing a dusty tablet looking device scrolling through its inscriptions. Meanwhile, Clara paced nervously, listening for the inevitable sound of guards approaching.

"Hurry up, Jack. We've got about ninety seconds before this room is crawling with unfriendly Ventraxians."

"Got it!" Jack held up a small data chip triumphantly.

"Great! Let's go!"

They bolted back to the lift, but as they reached it, the sound of heavy boots echoed down the corridor.

Clara groaned. "Of course. I love when the universe times things perfectly."

Jack grinned, pulling out a blaster. "Shall we?"

She rolled her eyes, pulling out her sonic. "You handle the guards. I'll get us an exit."

.....

Martin sat awkwardly on one of the steps, flipping through a notebook of scribbled equations while Yaz was sipping a tea. His shoulders were slumped, and he had the distinct look of someone stewing in self-doubt.

"She hates me," he said suddenly, his voice flat.

Yaz turned from the console, her eyebrows shooting up. "What? Who hates you?"

"The Professor. She absolutely hates me," he said setting down his notebook.

Yaz snorted, shaking her head. "She doesn't hate you, Martin. That's just how she is. Bit snappy, bit manic. But she's really nice you know. You get used to it."

"I'm not sure I wanna get used to it," he muttered. "Who is she, anyway?"

Yaz paused, considering. "She's... complicated. But I'll give you the short version. She's an alien from..."

Martin blinked. "An alien? You're kidding, right?"

"Nope," Yaz replied with a grin, leaning against the console.

"And you?"

"It's complicated"

"And this?...What is this place?"

"It's her spaceship. Well, spaceship and a time ship, actually."

Martin's jaw dropped. "It's a time machine?!"

"Yep," Yaz said, sipping her tea. "Goes anywhere, anytime. Pretty cool, right?"

Martin stared at her, his mouth agape, as though his brain were struggling to catch up. "Yeah...pretty cool." he looked up and around "Blimey...What the hell is an alien doing lecturing physics in Sheffield?"

Before Yaz could respond, her phone buzzed. She picked it up, glancing at the screen. "Speak of the devil," she muttered before answering. "Hey babe...I was about to call...You're supposed be back by now..."

"Yeah, about that...Just called to let you know we're gonna be a bit late...shouldn't be that long."

Yaz straightened. "What? Why? Clara? What the fuck's going on? Where are you?"

"We got in a bit of a sticky situation..."

"What do you mean sticky situation?"

"We're... detained but..." Clara admitted, glaring at Jack as she said it.

"Detained?" Yaz exclaimed. "You mean locked up, don't you?"

“Semantics,” she said. “Look, Yaz, we’re fine. No need to panic.”

"I'm coming over"

“Nope! No, no, no. Stay where you are,” Clara interrupted firmly. “We’ve got this handled. Might take a bit longer than expected that’s all.”

“Clara...”

“Gotta go now.... just stay put.... Bye, Yaz!”

The line went dead. Yaz stared at her phone, her expression hardening. “Right,” she muttered. “Like hell I’m staying here.”

Martin looked at her wide-eyed, “Wait. What are you doing?”

“We’re going to find her,” Yaz said, striding toward the TARDIS door.

“We?” Martin squeaked.

“Yes, we,” Yaz replied firmly. But as she reached for the door, the TARDIS console hummed to life. A panel slid open, and something rolled out, a brand-new sonic screwdriver. Yaz's eyes widened in a mixture of surprise and excitement. She grinned, grabbing it. “Thanks, old girl,” she said, patting the console affectionately.

Martin, still reeling, followed her to the door. As they stepped outside and he saw the police telephone box, he finally blurted out, “It’s bigger on the inside?”

Yaz burst out laughing, tapping his shoulder. “Yep. Now come on, genius. Let’s go rescue your Professor.”

Yaz and Martin crept along the rocky terrain, the fortress looming above them. Yaz held the sonic in one hand, scanning for an entry point, while Martin trailed behind, nervously glancing at the guards patrolling nearby.

“This is insane,” Martin whispered. “We’re gonna get caught. Do you even know what you're doing?”

"No, not really...But her phone signal is that way" she pointed to the fortress

"How many times did you do this?"

"Allegedly many, I just can't remember...My brain's a bit fried..." she grinned looking at him over her shoulder "Long story...Let's just say I'm treating this as a chance to surprise myself."

"We're so getting caught..."

....

Yaz and Martin crouched behind a jagged boulder, gazing at the glowing force field surrounding the fortress's main entrance. The hum of alien energy filled the air. Yaz examined the force field generator with her sonic, frowning worried.

"This thing's more advanced than anything I've seen," she muttered.

Martin peered over her shoulder. "What does that mean? Can you disable it?"

"Not sure yet. Clara could do it in her sleep, but I'm not her," Yaz admitted, tapping the sonic against her palm in frustration. "I'm still learning..." she said inspecting the generator "Or trying to remember...however you wanna take it"

Martin studied the glowing nodes along the force field. "Wait, those look like phase regulators. If we disrupt the synchronization..."

"English, Martin," Yaz interrupted.

"We knock the timing of the nodes out of sync, and the force field collapses," he explained, his voice gaining confidence.

Yaz raised an eyebrow. "How do we do that?"

Martin pulled a notebook from his bag, flipping through pages of calculations. "The Professor mentioned something about energy harmonics in her lecture last week. If we overload one node while counterbalancing the others, it should destabilize the field long enough for us to get through. Your sonic thing could do it."

"All right, Einstein. Show me what you've got."

....

Martin crouched by the generator, muttering calculations under his breath while Yaz kept an eye on the patrolling guards.

"Okay," he said, pointing to the three main nodes. "I'll overload the central one, but you need to use the sonic to adjust the frequency on these two."

Yaz glanced at the guards nervously. "How much time will this give us?"

"About thirty seconds. Maybe less," Martin admitted.

"Brilliant," Yaz muttered. "Let's do it."

Martin connected wires from his toolkit to the central node, adjusting them carefully. "Ready... now!"

Yaz activated the sonic, adjusting the frequencies as Martin worked furiously. Sparks flew from the generator as the force field began to flicker.

“Hurry up, Martin!” Yaz hissed.

“Almost there!” he replied, his hands shaking as he made the final connection. With a loud crack, the force field collapsed.

“Run!” Yaz shouted, grabbing Martin by the arm and pulling him toward the fortress.

....

Clara and Jack sat on the cold, metallic floor of the cell, both glaring at the shimmering force field that held them inside. Their faces were flushed, not from exertion, but from the heat of their ongoing argument.

“This is all your fault!” Clara snapped, pointing an accusing finger at Jack.

Jack raised his hands defensively. “Excuse me, how is this my fault?”

“I said we go left!” she retorted, jabbing the air for emphasis.

“And you said you could pick that lock!” Jack shot back.

“I could if I had more time!”

“Well, clearly, not that one!”

Clara huffed, crossing her arms. “Alright, fine. Let’s not get into details.”

Jack leaned back against the wall, grinning. “Details are kind of important when you’re the one who...”

“Don’t say it!” Clara warned, her eyes narrowing.

“...messed up,” Jack finished with a wink.

Clara groaned, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear

“Besides...if it weren’t for me, we’d still be stuck in that ventilation shaft.” he chuckled

“Oh, please, instead we're stuck here”

“Details, Doctor, details,” Jack said with a cheeky grin.

Before she could deliver a sharp retort, her coat pocket buzzed, interrupting the argument.

She blinked, then pulled out her phone, frowning at the screen. "Hold on, it's Yaz."

"Tell her to bring snacks. I'm starving."

She shot him a look and answered the call. "Hello, Yaz darling. We're working on it, shouldn't be that long."

Yaz's voice came through the speaker, firm but worried. "Where are you? We've been trying to track you down."

"When you say track us down...what exactly do you mean by that?"

"I'm coming to get you."

"No, you're not," she said quickly. "Stay put. It's too dangerous!"

"Too late"

"What'd you mean?...Yaz...Where are you?" Clara demanded.

"Inside the building," Yaz replied.

"WHAT?!" Clara shouted jumping on her feet "I told you to stay in the TARDIS!"

"Well, I didn't," Yaz snapped. "I haven't got much time, I'm losing the signal...pleaseeee where the fuck are you?"

"Cell block C, but..."

"Got it..." Yaz hung up and turned to Martin. "This way." She pointed to the sign on the wall.

They navigated the dimly lit corridors avoiding the guards, nearly having two misses. Finally, they reached the cell block, finding a reinforced door.

"Great...Now what?" Martin asked, "I can try..."

"Now we pick it" she winked pointing the sonic and the door clicked open.

"Now that's what we're talking about! " Thrilled Martin gave her a high five.

.....

Clara and Jack sat behind an energy barrier, the faint hum filling the air. They looked up as the door slid open.

"Yaz!" the Doctor exclaimed, rushing to her feet. Then her eyes landed on Martin. "You brought him? Really?"

"Nice to see you too, Professor," Martin shot back.

"Hi Yazee" Jack waived with grinning

"Hi!" She smiled back proudly

"Yaz..." Clara frowned "We're gonna have a serious conversation about this..."

"Yeah, yeah...Sure..." Yaz rolled her eyes smiling "Let's get you out first, ha?...Where's your sonic?"

Clara shoot a look towards Jack "Fried"

"How did you..." Yaz frowned "on a second thought, never mind cause...look what I've got" she raised a sonic proudly

"Aaaaa brilliant!....Smart TARDIS...Now let me explain..."

"Umm... hate to interrupt this love fest," Martin said, his voice slightly shaky, "but that thing's counting down." he pointed barrier's control panel display.

"What?!" Clara's head whipped toward the panel. She rushed to the barrier.

"It's definitely counting!" Yaz looked at her horrified

"Counting up or counting down?" Jack asked, no longer amused

"Two minutes left," Martin added, backing away slightly.

"I've died enough times to know I don't like it" Jack said "Any ideas anyone?"

Clara's face went white, she stood in silence for a split second, her head pounding "Get out!" she suddenly shouted, her face a mask of urgency.

"What? No!" Yaz snapped. "We can do this...just tell me what..."

"No, you can't! Yaz, get out! Get to the TARDIS!"

"NO WAY!" Yaz stood her ground, frantically looking at the display

"Martin, get her out of here!" Clara barked.

Martin ignored her, his focus entirely on the panel. His fingers hovered over the controls "If I recalibrate the feedback loop and reverse the polarity..."

"Stop, stop, stop!" Clara interrupted, waving her hands. "You touch that without stabilizing the neutron flow, and you'll fry us all into very toasty crisps!"

Martin hesitated, glancing back at Yaz. "Neutron flow? That's not even a real thing!"

"Oh, brilliant! The student thinks he knows more than me," Clara said, throwing her arms up. "Stop playing smart and get her out of here NOW!"

"Clara, calm down," Yaz interjected.

"Yaz please...I'm begging you...He can't do this."

"He's actually very clever..."

"No he's not, average at best...honey...pleaseeee. Martin, if you wanna pass any exams in the near future you're gonna take her out of here!"

Martin ignored her and knelt by the panel, muttering to himself. "If I reroute the secondary power feed to the auxiliary nodes, it should disrupt the feedback loop."

"That's completely wrong!" Clara shouted. "You'll destabilize the quantum harmonics! Yaz, stop him!"

"Don't listen to her!" Martin snapped, looking up at Yaz. "She's trapped behind a force field. She can't see what I see.... What does she know?"

"EVERYTHING!" Clara yelled. "I'm the Doctor!"

"Great, fantastic! And yet, you're stuck behind this field while I'm out here trying to save your cocky ass" Martin fired back.

"MY WHAT?" Clara blinked in utter shock

"It will work"

Yaz held up her hands. "All right, both of you, shut it! Martin, can you do this or not?"

"Yes," he said firmly.

"No, he can't!" Clara protested

"Is he right?" Yaz asked

"He is...but he's got no practical experience in this..."

"Watch me," Martin said, his voice steady. "I've been paying attention in your lectures!"

"I hate kids!" Clara went on her tiptoe trying to see what he's doing "You need to jam that..."

"I knooow!" He yelled, typing furiously at the panel, reconfiguring the energy nodes. Sparks

flew as the barrier began to flicker.

"Martin, I'm warning you..." Clara started.

"No offense, Professor, but for once, just stop talking!" Martin snapped.

Clara's mouth opened, then closed as she gaped at him.

Jack leaned against the wall, smirking "I like him,"

"Shut up!" Clara yelled over her shoulder

Yaz knelt beside Martin, watching as the barrier flickered and fizzled. "What now?" she asked.

Clara threw her hands in the air, pacing behind the barrier. "Oh, brilliant. Fantastic. Let's all die together, why not?!"

Martin pointed to a glowing conduit. "That. Hit it with the sonic."

Yaz hesitated. "Clara?"

"No, no, no..." Clara began, but Yaz glancing at the countdown now at just 5 seconds sided with Martin and aimed the sonic activating it.

With a loud pop, the energy barrier collapsed.

"HA!" Martin shouted, jumping triumphantly. "Told you it would work!" he smugged giving another high five to Yaz.

Clara blinked in surprise, stepping out cautiously. She looked at Martin, her lips pressed into a tight line. "Well," she said, adjusting her coat. "Lucky guess."

Martin crossed his arms. "Oh, come on! Admit it...I just saved you."

"It stopped counting" Yaz announced haply but Clara just pulled her into a hug

"We're gonna talk about this" she said kissing her temple

"Yeah, Yeah" she rolled her eyes laughing as they pulled apart

Clara glared at Martin, brushing herself off. "You got lucky, that's all."

"Admit it, I was right," Martin said smugly.

"You were reckless," she shot back.

"And you're welcome," Martin replied with a grin.

Jack clapped him on the back. "I really like him."

"Not helping, Jack!" she snapped.

Yaz chuckled, shaking her head. "You two are like an old married couple."

Clara groaned, turning to leave. "Come on. Let's get out of here before the Ventraxians realize their prisoners are missing."

Martin fell in step beside Yaz, a satisfied grin on his face. "I think I'm growing on her."

"You're delusional," Clara called over her shoulder.

Jack laughed, slinging an arm around Martin. "Welcome to the chaos, kid."

"Now," Clara said, peaking out of the room. "Time to run. Everybody out!"

.....

The TARDIS hummed softly as Clara adjusted a few dials on the console. Jack stood by her.

"All set," Clara announced, handing him a newly repaired vortex manipulator "Recalibrated, stabilized the power source, and gave it a software patch. Shouldn't overheat on you again, if you don't abuse it."

"Much appreciated" he smiled fastening it around his wrist, testing the strap with a satisfied grin.

"Just don't blow yourself up," Clara replied, her tone light but laced with genuine concern.

"Can't promise" he grinned as he hugged Yaz "See you soon"

"We better" she smiled back

"I hope to see you too." Jack extended his hand to Martin then, as he accepted pulled him in leaning into his ear "I'll put in a good word for you"

"I appreciate it" Martin laughed

He turned back to Clara, saluting playfully "Doctor!"

"Take care of yourself, Jack. And keep me posted."

Jack smiled with softness in his gaze. "Always." He tapped the vortex manipulator, and in a flash of light, he was gone.

Clara stood there for a moment, staring at the empty space where Jack had been, before turning to Martin. "Right then, you. Let's get you back to University. I think your professors might miss you."

.....

TARDIS landed with a thud.

"Thank you" Yaz smiled as she hugged Martin

"Couldn't do it without you....We make a good team" he smiled as they pulled away "I hope I see you sometimes"

"Course you will...I'll pop over checking on her" she smiled glancing at Clara lovingly

"I hope you get your memories" he said

"Me too" she smiled softly

With a final waive he turned towards the door.

He raised an eyebrow as they stepped out of the TARDIS together onto the university grounds. "You're not sticking around, Professor?"

Clara smirked, hands in her pockets. "I've got one more thing to do." Her gaze softened, drifting toward the TARDIS where Yaz stood in the doorway, watching them.

Martin caught the look and chuckled. "Right. Well, for what it's worth... you're not a terrible teacher. Probably the best I've had, I think you're kinda cool actually."

Clara tilted her head, pretending to be unimpressed. "High praise coming from you, Martin." But then she smiled, the warmth breaking through her teasing exterior.

"Also, that's a really awesome ship." he added

"The best" she smiled "You did good today...." she bumped his shoulder with a fist "Now go on...off you go...I'm sure you got lectures"

"Aren't they past by now?" he frowned confused

"Time ship" she winked "Only 5 minutes since we left"

"Man that's so cool! " he grinned impressed

"See you later Martin"

"See ya" he gave her a crooked grin and disappeared into the building.

As the door shut, the humm of the TARDIS filled the silence. Clara returned back to the console, soft amber light bathing her face as she slowly flipped the switches, getting ready to take off.

Yaz leaned over the console, wide grin across her face "Home?"

"Yap, home" Clara nodded

"Sooo...That was my first alien planet" she grinned haply

"In this life" Clara smiled, flipping another switch "Did you like it?"

"I would've preferred some tropical beach!" Yaz she giggled

Clara laughed, putting her hand on the lever "Let's go home" she said pulling it down.

As soon as the ship hummed to a stop, Clara darted across the control room, grabbing her hand.

"Come on!" She beamed, pulling Yaz toward the door.

Yaz laughed, following her. "Home already? That was fast."

Clara grinned but said nothing, swinging open the door.

Yaz's laughter caught in her throat as she stepped towards the open door. They weren't in Sheffield. They weren't even on Earth. The TARDIS floated serenely among the stars, surrounded by a tapestry of brilliant nebulas and swirling galaxies.

The vastness of space stretched endlessly around them, and Yaz's breath hitched as she took it all in. "Clara..." she whispered, her voice trembling with awe.

The other woman stepped behind her, wrapping her arms gently around her waist and resting her chin on her shoulder. "What do you think?" she murmured.

"Waaaw" she exhaled quietly, "I thought... it's not safe?" Yaz whispered, her eyes wide and glistening as the starlight danced across her face.

"Just for a moment," Clara replied, her voice soft and full of emotion. "You've earned this."

Clara's arm tightened slightly around Yaz's waist as she lifted her other hand, pointing toward a gleaming blue star shimmering to their left.

"See that one there?" she said softly, her voice carrying a mix of awe and excitement. "That's Vega, one of the brightest stars in this part of the galaxy. It's part of the Lyra constellation. On Earth, it's almost 25 light-years away, but from here... doesn't it feel like you could just reach out and touch it?"

Yaz tilted her head, her eyes following Clara's gesture. "It's beautiful," she breathed, her voice barely above a whisper.

Clara shifted slightly, pointing farther to the right at a cluster of faintly glowing stars surrounded by a faint pinkish hue. "And there, that's the Pleiades. A star

cluster. Some cultures on Earth call it the Seven Sisters. You can barely see them through the light pollution on your planet, but here? Look at how they shimmer.”

Yaz smiled, her gaze transfixed. “They’re stunning.”

Clara chuckled, her voice low and warm. “And over there...” She pointed to a faint, reddish orb surrounded by swirling dust clouds. “That’s a young star, still forming. Give it a few million years, and it’ll light up the galaxies like the ones around us. Right now, it’s just a baby.”

Yaz leaned back slightly against Clara, her eyes wide with wonder. “You’ve been to all these places, haven’t you?”

Clara’s smile softened. “Some of them. Not all. There’s always more to explore. But seeing them like this... it makes everything feel so small, doesn’t it?”

Yaz nodded, her gaze drifting across the vastness before them. “Small, but... infinite at the same time.”

Clara pressed a light kiss to Yaz’s temple, her voice a whisper. “Exactly.”

Yaz turned slightly, just enough to meet Clara’s eyes, and then leaned in, pressing her lips to hers in a deep, gentle kiss. Clara tightened her hold, the universe spinning around them, yet in that moment, it felt as though they are the only once in it.

They pulled apart slowly, resting their foreheads together. "Thank you," Yaz whispered.

Clara smiled, her gaze filled with love. "You deserved it...Gold star for Yaz...Just don't do it again"

Yaz giggled lacing their fingers and returned her gaze back towards the stars.

....