

Chapter 4

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" Yaz said going through the pile of rubbish on Seffilun 59

"You can't run through five miles of hallways to reach the control room Yaz. Terribly dangerous, not to mention highly impractical"

"I agree....but this is the only ship we have..." she said twirling some random part in her hand then threw it behind her back

"It's not built for what you need it for"

"Well what is it then?"

"More of a shuttle Yaz..."

"Hey...Look what I found" Sandy smiled pointing at the small robot wobbling around her "He's got cute chubby tummy....Can I keep him?"

The little thing looked up with big eyes which squeaked as his eye lids moved

"Aaaaa...HA575 or a house aid robot" Doctor said "...Very clever those little things"

"He is limping on one foot" Sandy said sadly "I think they just tossed him here...that's just cruel"

"Oh don't worry about it....We can fix that..
I once made a robo dog K9"

"Really?" Sandy smiled excited to keep her little find "Also is this what you were looking for?" she lifted a scrap above her head

"Aaaaa....ten points for Sandy...That's exactly what we need...." Doctor appeared right next to her in a second "Check if it works Yaz"

"Looks fine to me" she read the sonic

"Briliant..."

"I still don't understand what you need this for" Yaz said as they were walking back into the ship

"All in good time Yaz" Doctor smiled smug getting into the ship

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"The entrance is that way" Doctor pointed out

"If we go around from the back we can hopefully pass unnoticed" Sandy said showing at the 3d scan of the facility as they all sat around the console making a plan

"Good point Sandy" Doctor said

"Remember Yaz..." Doctor said "This is a very rough place we're going to. Be careful, both of you, and stick together no matter what"

"Don't worry" Yaz said

"I always worry" Doctor said "Being a hollo has its advantages....Don't get get me wrong...the gossip I hear..." she grinned "But it does have its limitations"

"Tell me about it" Yaz said glancing at her with sadness in her eyes then turned back to Sandy

"It's a com device in case we get separated" she said holding a small device in her hand "...Which we won't and we mustn't" she said putting little device just underneath Sandy's ear.

Her pink hair was growing out, it was revealing her real fire red Scottish hair underneath, just behind that ear and Yaz wanted to run her fingertip over it. She locked her eyes with her for a moment. They always looked like they were smiling or in wonder. She covered her freckles with makeup, why did she do that? Yaz missed looking at them.

"Well yeah...we have to stick together," she repeated, hoping she didn't sound condescending, but overall, she was worried.

She wondered if the Doctor felt that way, worried sick not knowing if the person looking at her will return alive. The Doctor also knew that one day she herself wouldn't... and one day she didn't. Yaz choked at that thought.

"Gotcha..." Sandy smiled looking straight at her and Yaz partially didn't want her to. Not now, not at this moment. Any other, but not now, moments before leaving.

"Don't wonder off, don't touch anything" Sandy said

"Exactly" Yaz smiled back "Okay... ready to go?" she looked down at Sandy's feet

"Like them?" she asked proudly showing off her new boots

Yaz was stuck for answer. They reminded her of children's Dr. Martin's, and the flowers on them made every cell in her body scream for help. But then she couldn't imagine Sandy any other way. And it was strange how pastel rainbow earrings could grow on a person. She wondered if she had a thing for

rainbows.

"Love them...Totally you" she wasn't lying. In some weird way she did like them but only because they were Sandy's

"Yaz" Doctor called

"Mmmmm?" she turned around

She didn't have to say anything. In more than a decade of traveling together, they could read each other's expressions well enough that they didn't need to verbalize much anymore.

"Don't worry..." Yaz said "I'll be careful" she said then turned towards Sandy again and pulled the goggles on her face "You look like a Minion" she chuckled

"Banana!" Sandy said and Yaz cracked up laughing

"Holly bananas?" Doctor added pulling goggles on her own face and they both laughed like crazy

"Ready banana?" Yaz said

"Always" Sandy nodded

Black dust blown by the strong wind hit their faces when the door opened. They parked in the quarry. Yaz looked up at the dark sky that didn't look too inviting, and neither did this Moon. Their boots scraped the gravel as they followed the faint lights of the mining settlement not far from where they landed. It eerily reminded her of another quarry, and she felt sick inside.

Sandy looked down when she felt Yaz's fingers intertwine with hers. It was cold, dark and uninviting. She watched the black dust collect on her beautiful new boots, her face stinging from the sharp windblown sand. Not long after they were finally inside. They entered a small room at the back which seemed empty and led into a long corridor.

The noise of the machines could be heard all the way up and the ground trembled under their feet. The vibrations could be felt through the soles of their boots. Industrial lamps on the walls, connected only by a wire, illuminated the space with warm light.

Yaz was the first to step inside and her eye immediately caught a map on the wall

"Aaaa...look" she pointed

"It shows all the mining shafts" Doctor said "Down here through this tunnel"

"Those must be community quarters" Yaz pointed "What's that?"

"Looks like an old shaft Yaz. This place is very old many of the shafts are not used anymore, some even

collapsed. There was a terrible accident 50 years ago, many people died"

"It's stretching for miles" Sandy said "Where do we even start?"

"This place is old school Sandy" Doctor said "... very little is digital, we need to find their books, logs, manufacturing statements....I suggest we start here" she put a finger on a map

"We just need to avoid the communal area if we can" Yaz said "... or zoom through it as fast as we can. This place is big, but my guess is everyone knows each other. We will stick out like a sore thumb"

They mutually agreed on a route they will take and started heading towards the direction of the main building. On a way through the hallways Sandy spotted some wardrobe cabinets similar to the once used in gyms.

"Hey...look" she points "Maybe it would help if we just blend in more"

"Brilliant idea Sandy" Doctor jumped

Yaz picked the locks and they really did find some dusty old jumpsuits.

Yaz zipped up hers rolling the long sleeves and put a sonic in one of the pockets on a side then turned towards Sandy who was about to finish with hers.

"One more thing," Yaz said taking a cloth she found in one of the lockers and smiled tying it over Sandy's hair with a big bow on top of her head "Somehow I can't see many women in this place having pink hair...Sorry. .." she said tucking the last strands safely under the fabric

"Noo...I think you're right...I didn't think about that..."

"Yaz" Doctor turns to her "I also can't see many people walking around with AI hollo" she said pursing her lips

"Whaaa?...Noo"

"Yaz!" Doctor cut her off and her hand went up to the side of her neck "It's alright Yaz...You got this...One hour"

She took a big breath as her eyes filled with tears and exhaled deeply "One hour"

"It's alright Yaz...Don't worry....we got this" Sandy said with a smile "We could have a movie night later...Make popcorn"

"Aaaa...yes" Doctor smiled "...fantastic idea Sandy I love movie nights"

"I'd like that" Yaz said "Alright...let's get this done"

"Bye girls...don't get lost" Doctor grinned

Yaz rolled her eyes smiling and pressed on her arm

"200 meters down we have to go left" Sandy said looking at the map

"Alright...let's do this as quickly as we can...I don't like the feel of this place Sandy"

"I must admit it feels a bit creepy"

They soon reached the metal door and heard the murmur of people on the other side. Yaz grabbed the long bar and looked at Sandy

"Here we go...just keep walking. We need to get to the other end as soon as possible without being seen"

"Gotcha"

Yaz pushed open the door and they found themselves in the middle of what looked like a busy street or more like a massive courtyard surrounded by long low buildings.

"OMG...what's that smell?" Sandy said as soon as they stepped outside

"I don't know but I think I'm gonna be sick"

Sandy lifted her t-shirt over her nose trying desperately not to gag "Can we get out off here?"

"Absolutely" Yaz grabbed her hand and sped up the pace

Sandy looked at several people walking past her. Something seemed very wrong more she looked at the occupants of this horrible place. A lady passed by, her face half wrapped in a dirty cloth, she looked sick, a man who picked up a rusty metal barrel, stacking them in a corner, his face and hands completely disfigured. Yaz saw it too and looked around in utter horror, then her eyes met Sandy's

"Why do these people look....."

"Sick" Yaz said horrified "We need to get out of here...fast" she tugged on her hand and rushed through the crowd bursting through the door of the building that was their destination and quickly closing the door behind them. She paused and looked at her hands, then wiped them on a jumpsuit in a panic.

"What's wrong with them?"

"I don't know but I touched that door...Don't touch me" she said to Sandy

"What?"

"Don't touch me...I don't know what that is I don't know how it spreads..." she wiped the sonic out and scanned herself then her hands "Clear" she sighed relieved then scanned Sandy all over "Clear...Let's get this done I just wanna leave this place"

"Here look" Sandy pointed to the filing cabinets

"Keep an eye out so nobody is coming, I'm gonna look around"

"Alright"

It took forever to browse through the huge amount of files, most of which were torn and dirty. Nothing was right, but Yaz managed to finally find method in the madness of archiving and somehow, she was getting there.

Sandy stood by the dirty window and looked out watching the people passing by. Almost an hour had passed, and she had not seen a single healthy person. The whole place looked like the world had forgotten it.

"May I ask you something?" Sandy turned to Yaz

"Of course you can" she raised her eyes from the files for a second

"What happened...to your friend?"

Yaz sighed, her hands stood still on the papers for a moment as the corner of her lips twitched "She regenerated"

"What's regeneration?...I'm sorry...you don't need to answer Yaz...I don't wanna be disrespectful I'm just trying to understand..."

"It's alright Sandy..." she looked down to the files again "When the Time Lord gets mortally hurt they don't die like we do...they regenerate, their body changes and...they get a new face"

"Is that why...is that why you left?"

There was a silence between them which couldn't be long, but it seemed as though it lasted forever and Sandy started worrying she went too far but then Yaz spoke again

"Yes...I had to"

"I'm so sorry..."

She didn't answer, she didn't have to and Sandy didn't expect her to.

"I think I'm finally getting somewhere with this stupid filing system"

Her answer led to more questions, but for now she was grateful for what she was told and it didn't take a genius to understand what it must be like to live with the pain of knowing that the person you love is still somewhere so close, yet so far away and you'll never be able to see them again. She watched as Yaz simply continued reading the files. She wanted to hug her, close her arms around her, say that the pain would ease with time. There was so much she wanted to say, but instead they both carried on as if the conversation never happened. Maybe later, much later, some other time she will tell her that she cares... and that she worries and loves her smiles. But for now, she turned to the window moving the dirty torn curtains. For a moment she wondered what they looked like when they were new, they had pretty little flowers on them, they must have looked cute when they were new, but like everything in this place, they had withered away.

"Do you think this is like a quarantine working colony? Sandy asked "...You know how historically they used to segregate people on remote islands?"

"Dunno...Maybe...did cross my mind. But the Doctor knows about this place...she said it was rough...she said nothing about this..."

"When was the last time she was here Yaz?...it could've been like 100 years ago for all you know"

"True...that's a very valid point...But either way now I wanna know...Cause if someone is doing this to them..." she looked up at Sandy "Then we need to stop it"

Sandy looked at Yaz. Literally ten different theories were going through her head for the last hour and she wasn't sure which one horrified her more.

"I found something...look....This is all the stuff we saw was ordered from that factory"

"OMG yes..."

"Look...manufacturing statements and delivery status...Some of the stuff was being delivered on regular basis each month...in their terms a month meaning every 60 days, mostly chemicals, a whole list of them"

"What chemicals?"

"I don't know what they are...Drexterfundatoxitate...I can't even read that and there's a whole list of them....And then there's this..."

"What's that?"

"Dunno....but they ordered 750 pieces of those" she looked up at her "That's a lot"

"I don't know anything about mining Yaz...but maybe some chemicals which are used for weapons are also used for this industry...We don't know that...I'm just being a devil's advocate here...You know like alcohol...it's widely used in all sorts of industries"

"Yes...you're right...we don't know...But what we do know is that the murdered man is closely linked to that factory and that the factory is somehow really closely linked to this place and that just makes no sense. It's like selling potatoes to a shoe shop"

"Where have those things being delivered to? Can you see what part of this facility? Does it say?"

"Section 399H"

Sandy opened up a map looking for it "It's this one, right here. Not that I love walking around this place, but maybe we should have a look"

"Let's go"

They quickened their pace as they walked towards section 399H, making their way through the crowd as fast as they could and came to another locked metal door. Rusty and worn, it looked like a warehouse from the outside. Sandy looked up towards the small dirty windows with bars on them. The whole place sent shivers down her spine. The smell became unbearable and when Yaz opened the door and stepped inside, they both stood frozen, speechless. Only one lamp was lit, and with each step, a faint curtain of light slowly crossed the rows of massive tanks filled with people. The autopsy table in the middle of the room looked like a scene from a horror movie, dirty and covered in things their minds don't dare think about.

"OMG!" Sandy said with absolute horror

Yaz's mouth fell open and she felt a cold sweat sweeping her entire body. Her breathing quickened, and her heart was pounding out of her chest.

"750 pieces..." Sandy said looking at the tanks in horror as she took a step forward. Her foot got stuck and she looked down. There was a chain attached to the floor, and her mind rebelled against the thoughts what it was used for.

Yaz walked in front of the tanks, the people inside horribly disfigured, each tank containing different stages of this mysterious disease.

"Are they alive?" Sandy asked and she wasn't sure she wanted to know the answer

Yaz zoomed the sonic "Nooo" she shook her head "Sandy..." she turned to her pointing to the only piece of modern technology they saw in this place a small monitor in the corner of the room

"I'm on it"

"Be careful..." she turned back to the tanks and scanned them with a sonic "The chemicals" she said faintly

"Yaaaaz" Sandy said with a horror in her voice "I think I know what they're doing" she moved to the side showing the screen "Mycobacterium leprae"

"Excuse me?"

"Leprosy..."

"OMG...what...how?"

"Leprosy is caused by slow-growing bacteria. The disease affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes. Except they modified this bacteria into super bacteria completely resistant to any known treatment like what happened with MRSA and its also no longer slow-growing. They bio weaponized it by combining it with some alien bacteria"

"How do you know all this stuff?" Yaz frowned

"I might have a PhD in virology and immunology" she shrugged

"Excuse me whaaaat???"

"Arh...I come from a long line of doctors...it was expected of me to follow that tradition...I was just more interested in aliens"

"Sandy Mackay...what the hell" Yaz shook her head laughing completely speechless

"Yaz....That train doesn't carry explosive...it carries a deadly disease"

"Fuck....so these poor people were used as test subjects..."

"The question is who is paying for all of this? Any research like this one doesn't come cheap Yaz and it takes years..."

"And forgotten mining colonie in the middle of nowhere on some god forsaken Moon was a perfect place for it"

"That's very clever little brain you have" a voice behind them creepily said

Yaz turned around and the world around her went blank.

"Now....you be a good girl and wait here for me" the shriveled face leaned over Sandy and stroke her head while his other hand tightened a leather strap around her wrist. Her eyes looking at him in panic and darting down to where her hand was tied to the table. She felt all the muscles in her body going limp as pure panic swept through her.

"We're gonna have some fun later, your girlfriend can watch" he said with an eerily smile readjusting a dirty cloth gag he placed over her mouth and walked away. A tear dripped down the side of her face, her chest heaving as her eyes hysterically looked for Yaz

Yaz was cold, her head was hurting and something was digging into her hip, something sharp, and her face was wet, or not, she wasn't sure, her vision blurred for a moment as she opened her eyes.

"Sandy" she said faintly shaking her head and heard mumbled, muffled sound from not far away. She was still disoriented and her head was banging

Her hands were tied and blood was dripping from her head to her trousers and to even bigger horror she realized she was placed in a metal cage.

"Mmmmyaaaaz" she heard cries and got up pressing her face to the metal bars

"Sandy!!!" she cried out seeing her tied up to an autopsy table "OMG...Sandy"

"Mmmmm" Sandy looked at her crying petrified tugging hysterically on the restraints which held her hands and ankles tied to the table

"OMG...I'll get you out!...I promise... hold on in there" Yaz yelled "I need to think...I have to...Shit...sonic" she realized it was in her pocket and desperately tried to get to it but she couldn't with her hands tied behind her back. She started smacking the door of the cage with her leg but couldn't get it to open

"Aaaaaarrhhhh fuck...fuuuck!!!" she stomped her foot to the floor then looked towards the wall and slammed her shoulder to it as hard as she could crying out in pain but the hollow popped up to her relief

"It's been longer than...Yaaaz!" Doctor screamed "You're bleeding"

"I know"

"Saaandy!" she jumped "What? Hooow?...It's only been an hour "

"I knooooow...We're in trouble"

"Trouble is an understatement...Stars Yaz what's happening here?"

"It's a pit of fucking horrors...If you combine Josef Mengele and Jigsaw, it pretty much summons it up"

"Whaaa?" She scrunched her face confused

"Long story.... not enough time...Sandy"

Doctor jumped across the room "Don't worry Sandy...I know this looks bad" she said leaning over her

"Mmmm" she cried out completely petrified

"On a second though...it is bad...I know...also very challenging...I'm treating it as a chance to surprise myself but I'm certain we'll find a way. We're good in a tight spot...Historically we always have been" she wrinkled her nose then jumped back to Yaz

"I can't get to my sonic...it's in my pocket" she tried wiggling but couldn't reach it

"Right...well I'm a hollo...So I can't either" she glanced around the room then focused on the lights and wires going down the wall "...Unless....nooo...to risky" she shook her head

"Too risky?. Look at this place? She's gonna be chopped into pieces soon...That's pretty risky on my scale"

"It's a risk Yaz" She scrunched her face

"Just tell me what to do"

"Well...A short electrical current might overload my preceptors just enough to be able to move stuff around Yaz...like telekinesis..."

"Alright....won't that fry you?"

"Nooo...I might need time to reboot but..." she trailed off

"But what?"

Doctor glanced at the wires

"I need to electrocute myself?" She yelled and Sandy's eyes widened in disbelief

"I said it was risky Yaz"

"Right" she glanced towards Sandy looking at her in complete horror frantically nodding her head

"Mmnoooo" she was screaming through the gag desperately shaking her restraints

"Let's do this" Yaz said

"I'm sorry Yaz" Doctor frowned

"It's fine...." she turned her back towards the wall tapping with her hand looking for the wires

"Left" Doctor guided her to the wires "...little bit more...no right...more right"

Yaz rolled her eyes

"Aaaa...There Yaz!"

She took a long breath and tore them out of the socket then focused her gaze on the Doctor as her fingers brushed over. It was just a light touch, and a wave shook her whole body. She passed out again

She woke up on the floor, the Doctor must have pulled her away from the wires at some point or electric current just threw her across the cage, but she felt sonic in her hands which were still tied on her back. Her body hurt so much that even getting up was an effort. She managed to pry the lock off her cage, then climbed down and zapped Sandy's restraints with a sonic releasing her.

Sandy jumped off the table ripping the cloth out of her mouth "Yaaaz!!!"

"Take the sonic" she turned around "Get those off me"

"What do I do?"

"Just press on that" she said turning around and handcuffs fell on a floor. Sandy grabbed her shoulder turning her and cupped her face "You alright? Oh god you're really bleeding"

"Mmmm...I'm fine..."

"The Doctor? She really flashed"

"She's gonna be fine"

Sandy smiled and threw herself on Yaz hugging her tight "You're nuts...both of you...You electrocuted yourself for me"

"Just a little" she smiled as they pulled apart

"I think I might have peed myself" she smiled through tears

"Let's just get out of here"

"I have to copy data" Sandy said stopping her

"Saaaandy...we have to get out"

"We need those...It'll just take few seconds...We didn't go through all of this for nothing" she said hooking up the computer

"Pleaseeee hurry up..." she said looking at the bar on the screen counting down to zero and then towards the door

"There....done...Let's go" she quickly grabbed her case

Yaz grabbed her hand and pulled her towards the door.

"Wait!" Yaz stopped just at the door

"Whaaaaat?" Sandy frowned confused

"What's that?" she pointed to some gas bottles in a corner

"Medical oxygen"

"Is it flammable?" she grinned

They ran out of the warehouse and a massive explosion ripped through the air behind them.

"Ruuun!!!" Yaz yelled pulling her hand as another explosion took out the whole building

People were running everywhere in panic and bumping into each other. They pushed through the crowd towards the tunnel they had come from and kept running without looking back until they burst through the doors of their ship and straight through the corridor to the control room...

"I really need that console closer!" Yaz winged as she was turning the dials and tapping the screens

"HOLD ON SANDY" she yelled grabbing the metal bar of the console and pulled the lever

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Sandy wrapped a towel around herself walking out of the bathroom and calmly combed her wet hair, finally feeling relieved, then heard a knock on a door.

"Heeey" Yaz smiled and looked down then got flustered "Sorry I can leave...I didn't..."

Sandy moved to side letting her in and closed the door behind her

Yaz was standing in the middle of the room not knowing where to look or what to do with her hands so

she just shoved them inside her pockets. Maybe she should sit down, or not, or maybe she looked like an idiot standing there speechless. She should say something, something she came for in the first place. Sandy had her hand on the edge of the towel. She smelled of coconut and chocolate and that was distracting, as was the wet hair stuck to the side of her shoulder. There were more of those cute freckles sprinkled over her shoulder and all Yaz could think about is how someone had almost taken them away from her. And her breath got caught in her throat for a moment when she looked up to the green eyes that were looking at her gently.

"Hi" Sandy smiled

"Hi" Yaz said quietly "Are you alright?" she finally spoke

"Not sure...but I will be" she said readjusting the towel

"I'm so sorry" Yaz said as her shoulders slumped

"For what?" she frowned "It wasn't your fault" she said continuing to brush her hair "Is your friend ok?"

"Yes...she's fine...Still glitching more than usual but it will stabilize till the morning..."

"How is your head? That was a pretty hard bump...Let me see that" she leaned over to have a better look "then electricity and...."

"I'm fine....Sandy..."

"Mmmm?"

She exhaled "Look...if you want...I can...I will leave you home..."

"Whaaat?...Nooooo!"

"I think it's for the best after..."

"Noooo..." she grabbed her wrist "Pleaseeee....don't do that" she shook her head

"You could've died!"

"But I didn't"

"You could've"

"But I didn't...we can die in a car, or crossing the road or..."

"But you almost did today....and I'm just...I can't do this....And I can't....I would never forgive myself...."

tears rolled down her face as she fell silent

Sandy tugged on her hand gently pulling her in and Yaz's arms closed around her tight, her heart beating on Sandy's chest

"I'm here" she said quietly as her hand went to her hair and Yaz's arms tightened around her "...It's alright Yaz" she pulled away slowly and her hand gently rested on a side of Yaz's face as their eyes locked in silence. A tear rolled down Yaz's face and she exhaled as Sandy wiped it with her thumb "I'm staying...no matter what" she said

"I can't go through...again...I..." she took a deep breath

"You won't..." she said stroking her face as her green eyes floated around Yaz's face in a moment of silence between them.

Yaz's hand stroke the side of her waist, why was she doing that?...She stopped embarrassed yet she just wanted to squeeze her, tight, as tight as you can possibly squeeze another human being without suffocating them. It was a scary thought, but she just needed to feel someone alive with a pulse.

"Come on...movie night?" she asked with a smile, her thumb still there, gently brushing over Yaz's cheek "I make killer popcorn"

Yaz gasped and smiled nodding. As she blinked more tears rolled down and Sandy reached for her hands gently holding them

"Deal?...Popcorn...you choose the topping" she smiled

"Butter?" Yaz said quietly

"You got yourself a popcorn date"

"Deal" Yaz said pulling away and released one of her hands

"I'll be ready in half hour" she said slowly releasing another hand as Yaz walked towards the door

"Alright..." she said leaving the room "Oh..." she turned at the door "Spoke with Kate...you got a raise" she smiled

"Good I can pay for the therapist" she giggled

Yaz smiled and closed the door behind her, then leaned her back against the wall. Her chest heaved and she exhaled, wiping her face as tears streamed down her cheeks.