

*“So Doctor Song, tell me I’m not going to have to use force. Torture is so passé.”*

*This one was new, I’d definitely not seen him before. He had a glint of unpleasantness in his eye, certainly an element that made me not want to tell him anything. I looked him up and down, trying to understand what reason they had in sending him in. Usually they tried psychology, psychiatry, anything they thought would work to burrow into my mind. Yet they really didn’t know me at all. Why did they think they’d have any success that way? And as for torture, I’ve experienced it all.*

*And it wasn’t all unpleasant, either...*

## Hell in High Heels

by Andrew Weston

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*“You want me to tell you everything? Would that make both our lives easier? That way we can go our separate ways and everyone’s happy.” I smiled at him. I had no idea if flirtation would work with this one, but it’s always worth a shot. I hadn’t time to retrieve my lipstick this time, so I was relying on my wiles – never failed before.*

*His face gave nothing away, though he looked as if he were thinking about the offer. Had I made it seriously? Would I tell him everything? I could imagine the questions tripping around inside his head. He sat there for minutes, rarely moving, as if somehow he thought he would be able to force my hand. I sat just as impassive, thinking back to what had happened.*

*Without warning, a guard approached and removed my cuffs. I stretched my arms and made the motion that people do without really knowing why, as if the bindings had been too tight and it was a relief they’d been removed. I’d barely noticed they’d been there, but I thought he’d enjoy the show.*

*He drew in a deep breath. “Okay, Doctor Song, I think we have a deal. You tell*

*me everything, and then perhaps – just perhaps – you earn a little R and R.” It was his turn to smile, a sinister image, rather like the devils of ancient mythology. I was amused that he thought this whole venture was his idea. He hadn’t realised how I’d manipulated him into doing what I’d wanted. This was on my terms, and yet he hadn’t realised that.*

*No lipstick required.*

*I watched as the guard left the room, just me and him left now. He stared at me, as if he were trying to see right down to my soul. Good luck, I thought. No one’s managed that yet, probably never will. The only one who comes even close is, well...*

*“Are you sitting comfortably? Shall I begin?” I raised my eyebrows at him, a mild diversionary tactic, but it seemed to work. He looked momentarily confused, as if he wasn’t quite sure exactly what I was going to tell him. But I’d already decided. I was going to tell him the whole story.*

*Well, almost the whole story...*

“Honestly, don’t you even get basic training before they send you down here?” He couldn’t hear me, or if he could he had no idea what I’d said. The guard lay on the floor of my cell, facing the ceiling. To him it could have been the most iridescent lights in the sky, a glorious meteor storm, but to me it was escape.

I had to get out of the cell for the vortex manipulator to work. They’d finally understood what had been happening and while knowing they could never guarantee finding it, they’d figured out how to put a dampening field to cancel out any signal. Lining the walls with black star alloy was all well and good, but if I stepped outside the cell... needless to say that escape was no more difficult than it had been before.

As I stepped out, I remembered what had happened the last time. A shiver ran down my spine as I tried to hastily bury the details in my subconscious. It was not something I wanted to dwell on, not least because I couldn’t use the information for any good.

I punched in the base code to the device, followed by the coordinates I’d been sent. I had no idea if they’d been sent telepathically or whether the dream I’d

had was entirely a product of my own subconscious. Either way I had to go.

I looked back into the cell again, the guard's face euphoric. He'd face disciplinary action, but that wasn't my concern. If they couldn't properly find a way to keep me contained then it was their own fault. What the Church would make of it I had no idea. They'd been threatening to visit me for some time, yet I'd seen none of these 'Clerics' they'd been telling me they would send to 're-educate' me. I think perhaps they'd finally realised what a pointless endeavour it would be.

I activated the teleport, and left Stormcage once more.

*He was listening intently, though I knew he wasn't really interested in this part of the story. He could watch the security feeds to see it all happen, and he probably had already. Though he didn't stop me, just sat there, listening, waiting for me to continue.*

*"Any likelihood I could get a drink?" I didn't really need one, but I liked to chance my arm on occasion, to see just how much influence I can have in these situations. It always gives a good indication of just how much control you can have. If they grant your request there's some leeway, if not... well you just have to work that little bit harder to get it.*

*He nodded. There was my way in. Now I had the smallest bit of leverage and I could use that to my advantage. Before I knew it, the drink had arrived. I sniffed at it, knowing they'd undoubtedly try to slip something into it. A sedative most likely, or some kind of relaxant to nullify my brain to make me blurt out everything they wanted to hear. Surreptitiously I sniffed at the liquid so as not arouse my distrust. It was such a subtle gesture that it appeared to go unnoticed, and the result seemed to be that the drink was entirely harmless. It never hurts to be cautious though.*

*I took a small sip. No hint of almonds, so they weren't trying to kill me. There was no tingle in my mouth or my mind, so it definitely wasn't some sort of 'truth drug'.*

*I looked up at him again. Again, not a flicker of emotion on his face.*

*"Thank you," I said, hoping to provoke at least some kind of response, but there was still nothing. The best course of action was to continue with what he*

*wanted to hear and see if that would goad him into reacting.*

It's always disorientating after teleportation. It's that sense of waking up somewhere you've not seen before, not really knowing how you got there and why you'd even ended up there in the first place. It passes fairly quickly the more you do it, but you never truly get used to it. That's why travel by TARDIS is so much better.

Unfortunately it's not always available so you have to make do with what is.

*"A TARDIS? That is this 'Doctor's' spacecraft is it not?" Now his interest was piqued.*

*"Oh, it's so much more than just a spacecraft. You've read my file, you must know that much at least." I gave him my best 'raised eyebrows' look. I could see him thinking, trying to recall details of exactly what he'd read.*

*"Yes, a 'time and space craft'. That's correct isn't it Doctor Song?"*

*I smiled at him. "If that's what you've read, then it would stand to reason that it must be correct." I was very careful to neither confirm nor deny what he thought. Of course it was true, but he didn't need to know that for certain.*

I looked around, attempting to discern where I might be, if I could in fact recognise my surroundings. The air smelled sweet, fresh and clean, which was no doubt largely due to the verdant foliage that surrounded me. I was clearly in the middle of a wood or a forest of some kind, yet there was also a tinge of something else that I hadn't noticed immediately.

And then I saw it.

Rising through the trees was a plume of black smoke, choking the greenery. I dashed through, trying to trace the source of it. I assumed that it must have been coming from a crashed ship or an explosion – or perhaps both. Yet arriving at the scene of the 'devastation', I was more than a little surprised by what I saw.

At first I wasn't sure if I was looking properly, as if my vision were somehow shielded from the true nature of what lay there. Yet it was no perception filter, rather exactly what it looked like. There was no wreckage, no sign of a crash of any sort. Instead, right before me, was a clearing in which sat an empty crater.

I walked towards it, eager to see what had made the indentation, not least as there appeared to be nothing nearby that could have done such a thing. As I approached it felt warmer, yet still there was no sign of anything that could have caused such damage.

“Now the interesting thing is where that gigantic hole in the ground came from. I mean it looks like it came from nowhere, but that’s not possible, so here’s my thinking... .”

I could feel a grin emerge on my face, my cheeks probably turning scarlet at the sound of that all too familiar voice.

“Yeah, yeah, mysterious hole. Still not Rio though is it?” And I knew that one too, oh so very, very well. It made my heart sing, knowing that she was here too. I wanted to rush over and embrace the pair of them, hoping that he was here as well. But then I realised, what had happened before, the lives running in reverse. The Pandora. Then I knew why he wasn’t here, but I knew it would be alright. I was proof of that.

“Hello sweetie!” I smiled my best, fullest smile, flirtatiousness turned up to 11. I knew he couldn’t resist. Though he appeared more than a little surprised to see me.

“River! What a... pleasure, yes, an unexpected one. How are you keeping?” He fiddled with his hands, a little flustered by my sudden intrusion.

Amy – oh, if only she knew! – gave a smile and a little wave and a “Hi River!” She’ll know soon enough, but not before...

*“Know what, Doctor Song? Is there some important information you’re withholding from me here?”*

*I sighed. “You’ve read my file. You know who I really am. I’m sure it doesn’t need spelling out to you who she is.”*

*I looked up at him again, but he gave no indication one way or another, seeming not to care. I also noticed for the first time that something seemed different about the room. I couldn’t quite place what it was and didn’t want him to think I’d seen something unusual, so I continued with my story.*

“You look a little confused? It was you who sent me the co-ordinates, wasn’t it?”

He looked at me, even more puzzled than before. “No. In fact I thought it was you who’d signalled us here.”

Amy nodded. “He did, he said as much. Well, that’s not all he said... ”

“Yes, well we don’t want to bother River with all that, do we?” He gave a nervous grin, and I wondered just what he *had* been saying. I didn’t question him though, just raised an eyebrow. That did the trick and he quickly changed the subject before I tried to interrogate him further. Not that I was going to, but he didn’t know that.

Quickly he pulled out his sonic screwdriver and scanned the ground, attempting to reach some sort of conclusion. He stood up abruptly and studying the instrument, backed away slowly from the area of devastation. “River, Amy, you see this movement I’m making, well it might be a good idea if you did the same. This ground is ever so slightly unstable.” He paused momentarily. “Well, in all honesty it *is* stable enough, but it’s giving out some very odd, very weird, very teleparty readings. So don’t go too...” The Doctor had been looking at the screwdriver too much, concentrating on that more than he had been on Amy. “Ah. So we’re all going for the teleparty option then?”

At this I turned and realised exactly what he meant. Moments before where Amy had been standing, there was now a distinctly Amy-less patch of ground. I looked at him as he raised his eyebrows. There was a definite look of mischief in his eyes, and Amy had made his decision for him. I gave him my best, my most glorious smile. “Oh sweetie, did we really have any other choice?” I said it in the most faux innocent tone I could muster and held out my hand.

Grabbing hold of me, we ran headlong towards the crater. “Geronimo!” he yelled as we headed straight for the gaping chasm in the ground.

Both of us closed our eyes tightly and we leapt...

*I looked up. Was he writing notes now? Did anyone still do that in the 52nd century? Apart from me, but then I was a child of the 20th. Well, sort of. He continued, even as I paused and drank some more of the liquid I’d been given. It seemed like... like tea.*

*I'd not had it in so long, and I'd not tasted it in so very long. Or rather it felt like that, though was probably mere days ago, when I'd 'stepped out', yet even then it wasn't like this.*

*Finally he stopped. I wasn't sure at first if he was ever going to realise I'd taken a break, yet when he did he didn't speak, merely gestured for me to continue as a teacher would a child.*

*I didn't immediately, making him wait – I was very good at that.*

With the Doctor, nothing is ever straightforward, nor could it ever be. Our lives are so entwined in the most complex of ways that even we don't fully understand all the intricacies. Yet I wouldn't want it any other way. So far I've been lucky, in so much as the Doctor has always known me, but at some point he won't have a clue who I am and that will cut through me like a knife. I know it shouldn't after everything we've done together, but it will, that much I do know.

We opened our eyes and the first thing I was aware of was Amy, safe and sound, looking at us with that look, the one I've used myself a thousand times. "So, what kept you?" She raised her eyebrows at the Doctor and flashed me a brief smile. In that moment I was so proud of her, proud to be her daughter, and it took all my willpower not to rush and embrace her as a child is wont to do. Yet I couldn't, and I merely smiled back... and then looked around.

Littering the floor were dozens of skeletons and other bodies not in such an advanced state of decay. We picked our way through them, the Doctor stopping to examine name badges and using his sonic screwdriver to ascertain the exact cause of their deaths.

I made my way to a flickering light on the console, Amy following. It was she who pointed it out before the thought was fully-formed in my mind. I knew where I'd got my astuteness from, without a doubt. "It's here, isn't it? This is where the distress call came from."

I nodded. "It does seem to point that way. But was it sent before or after what happened here?"

We both turned to the Doctor, who was still busily scanning the room. Amy

gave a cough, which he seemed to ignore, so I repeated it more loudly. With a start he stood up, popping the device back into his coat pocket. "Yes, well, that's the question isn't it? Which one of these poor unfortunates – and I'm guessing that they're poor unfortunates and not some criminal syndicate that were on the receiving end of some long overdue retribution – sent that message? Well..." He paused, as if for dramatic effect. "... none of them." He strode over to the controls that Amy and I had been studying. He turned on his heel and looked at us both. "It's the ship. It sent the distress call. Why, I don't know, not yet anyway."

I gave him another of my wry smiles. "I do." He almost took a step back, but didn't actually do so. I made sure I paused just long enough to give him time to think, wondering how exactly I could have solved the mystery while he still hadn't figured it out. Suddenly it was as if a light had gone on in his mind, yet before he could speak Amy beat him to it once more.

"It's obvious, isn't it? I mean look at the state of these bodies? Some are long dead, some not so – surely it's got to be some sort of time fluctuation?" She paused, looking at us hopefully. "Right?"

"Bingo! On the nose, and what I imagine River was also about to say. I'm right aren't I?" I nodded. "So, now we know what caused it, how do we put things right?"

Before Amy or I had a chance to answer, several small hatches opened in the ship's walls, and efficiently officious scuttling robotic creatures were fast approaching us. "I'm not usually the panicking type, but I'm sensing that we don't really want to be around whatever they are for long." Amy had already started edging away for them and I could sense that she was wanting to...

"RUN!" shouted the Doctor, and never one to question that particular instruction, we quickly moved to a nearby door, the sonic screwdriver sealing it behind us.

An image flashed across my mind, a split second picture that I must have seen as we darted across the room. "Was it my imagination, or did those robots appear to be taking samples from the bodies?"

Without warning, the Doctor opened the door momentarily, the robots instinctively scuttling towards it before he slammed it shut and sealed it once more.



He let out a yelp of pain and sucked at a finger. “You were right – look what they did to me! Little... .” He looked like was trying to think of the right word, when, just like him, he seemed to forget about it and carry on regardless. “Extracting DNA, which means that maybe they weren’t the original crew. Maybe they were lured here like us and for some reason it’s collecting samples.”

“What, like it’s trying to recreate the crew? Grow a new load of people to navigate the ship?”

She was brilliant. No wonder he took her along with him in the first place. My mother, Amy Pond, always ready with a theory about what had happened, and from my experience she was right more often than not.

“Pond, you’re a genius. But that does mean that we need to get away from here pretty sharpish or we’ll end up like our predecessors in there. River, any thoughts?” I looked up at him, but realised I wasn’t really listening, more focussed on the degeneration that was starting to manifest itself about Amy’s hand.

“Doctor, whatever we need to do it needs to happen quickly. Something’s causing time to accelerate and it’s affecting Amy already.” I looked at him, any traces of humour gone from my face. My future was literally at stake, but even if it weren’t, cellular degradation was an especially horrifying way to go.

Mother dear, as usual, was quick with a sarcastic comment. “I’ve got liver spots. Liver spots! Doctor, twenty-somethings have enough to contend with without LIVER SPOTS!” Then more quietly, “Plus I don’t want to die, obviously. So let’s find a way out, yeah?”

The Doctor stood for a moment, not doing anything. “Doctor,” I whispered, “we need to get Amy out of here. We need to save her, and if we don’t I will never forgive you. Not this time.”

He looked up then, a very stern serious face, the kind that he usually uses when he’s angry – and boy can he get angry – but he was calm and concerned. “It’s very touching that you want to save Amy, but is there something else going on here, something I need to know about? River, tell me. Just this once open up.”

I could feel heat stinging my eyes and I knew if something didn’t happen soon then tears would certainly fall, leaving me open to all sorts of questions. I fell back

on my standby, and it always, always worked. I put a finger to his lips and whispered, "Spoilers. Just trust me."

He was silent for a moment, and I knew he wanted more answers, but I couldn't give them. Suddenly, he whirled around, in frustration I thought at first, but then he dashed over to Amy. "Amy, hold up your hand, the wizened crone one." I could see the twinkle returning to his eye.

"Hey! It's more dilapidated hag thank you." She smiled at him, and then I knew it would all be alright. I don't know how, but a feeling of safety washed over me. As did the solution.

The Doctor looked directly at me, and I nodded. "It is, isn't it?"

We both looked at Amy's hand and impossibly it appeared both deteriorated and as normal at the same time. "Woah! What's going on?" She looked between us, knowing the answer would come.

I stepped up. "This ship is stuck in two different time zones. The people we saw back there were exposed to it for too long..."

He couldn't resist jumping in. "... after being anesthetised by those little robot-thingies, and their cells wore down. Now the ship brought them here to repair it, because it's stuck. Some of those people would have been the original crew..."

I wasn't going to let him take all the glory, so I interrupted once more. "... and some would have been those responding to the distress call. It was probably trying to use the DNA from similar life-forms to revive the original crew. Only it didn't work, and now they're all dead."

Amy held up a hand to halt the explanation. "Ok, get all that, but how do we get out of here and stop it doing it to anyone else?"

I looked at the Doctor. He looked at me. Amy looked at us both again. The Doctor scratched the back of his hand. "Well... I need to get back in that room there and check the controls. I think that the ship is trying to get into hyperspace, but it can't quite make it."

"You mean you've got to get through those little robots again? You'll never make it!"

"Amy Pond, I may be over 900 years old but I can still make a quick dash

when I need to. River, I'll need you to distract them." He held out his sonic screwdriver.

I didn't question him. My whole existence was hanging in the balance. I knew time could be rewritten, and the new pages of the universe might have no trace of me.

"Doctor, hurry up, I'm not feeling as young as I was." Amy was using the wall to prop herself up, her body seeming to have aged around fifty years in a matter of moments.

The Doctor needed no further prompting and I opened the door. As he dashed through, I pointed the sonic as best I could to confuse the robots' programming, and he made it to the other side of the room without a scratch.

"Doctor, hurry! Amy won't last much longer." My mother was now on the floor, flitting between her usual self and an aged version, tortured by time.

I watched as the Doctor tried desperately to adjust the control, but deep down I knew what it would mean. He turned, and he didn't have to say a word. The choice was simple: me or my mother. Without her, I'd literally be nothing. There was no real choice to make as I threw the sonic screwdriver to him, the robots advancing on me immediately. I backed away as fast as I could, the Doctor buzzing his device furiously at the control panel.

Within seconds a swarm of them were upon me. Some I managed to fend off, but I knew I couldn't hold out indefinitely.

Everything suddenly went dark.

*He looked up from his note taking. "Well, Doctor Song, I know the story has a happy ending since you are here in front of me. Why do you feel the need for a break here? A dramatic pause perhaps? There is no audience other than myself."*

*I blinked, very slowly. "Oh, I don't believe that for a second. And I know you're not really writing anything down. That pencil has barely touched the paper. In fact, why are you even here? What exactly is it that you want from me?"*

*I could sense that I was finally beginning to break down what defences he had left. "Just... continue with the story Doctor Song." He couldn't look me in the eye*

*when he said it and I knew there and then that I'd won.*

I opened my eyes. It seemed like hours had passed, days perhaps. How long had it been? The lights overhead were bright, as if I were in a hospital bed, and yet... the floor was hard beneath me.

I propped myself up on my elbows and the Doctor helped me up. "Well that didn't last long! Very fast metabolism. If I didn't know better I'd swear you were part Time Lord!" He grinned, obviously meaning it as a joke but not knowing just how close to the mark he was. I scanned around, trying to find her, and there she was, helping me up by the other arm.

"I wondered if you were still under there. It was like you were wearing a robotic overcoat!" She smiled, back to her usual self, no sign of any ill effects from the time disruption.

"So, you managed to fix it then?" I looked at the Doctor curiously.

He rolled his eyes. "Well obviously. A couple of quick zaps and the computer core was fully operational again, all ready to begin the journey back by itself." He bent down and picked up one of the now deactivated robots. "These things were doing their job a little too efficiently, but luckily the amount of anaesthetic each one managed to inject into you was minimal as they'd already used up most of it. Which is why you've been out for... Amy?"

Amy looked at her watch. "Ooh, about ten minutes, give or take. After he sorted the ship out the ship sorted them out. So you're fine!"

I dusted myself down. "Yes," I smiled, "I guess I am."

"So Pro..." I watched as Amy made a 'shushing' motion to him as he spoke. "... Doctor Song... River. Need a lift?"

Now, I wasn't going to turn down a free trip in the TARDIS. And I didn't. "Alright, but I'm driving."

Amy laughed. "Oh, she's good. Mrs future Doctor and she is good."

The Doctor looked incredulous. "Hang on, who said anything about her being my wife... ." His words were cut off as he stepped back into his ship, pushed forward by Amy.

She turned to me, a rather serious look on her face. “River, who are you? Can he... can I trust you?”

I couldn't say much. I knew she didn't know, not yet, not this Amy at any rate. “Amy Pond, you can trust me with my life, and I know I can trust you. You'll know me a lot better soon, trust that.” I gave her a wink and a smile, and because I couldn't hold back any longer, a hug. She didn't seem as puzzled by it as I thought she would, but after the embrace she nodded and smiled back – possibly out of politeness.

We walked into the TARDIS, and... .

*He stood up. Didn't say a word, just stood up and left the room. I realised then who he was working for. How had I not seen it before? They may have changed – they said they'd changed after what happened, but I could never be truly sure.*

*I sat there, sipping at the glass of 'tea', wondering how long it'd take before he'd come back or send in someone else.*

*I didn't have to wait too long.*

*Within minutes a younger man entered. Middle-aged at a guess, and a face that'd seen its fair share of combat that's for sure.*

*“So, you want to use me again, is that it? To kill the Doctor. I didn't have any choice in the matter last time, but this time I do. What makes you think you can...” I got up, so indignant at what I knew was coming.*

*Yet it never came.*

*The man put out a hand. “Sit down Doctor Song. I feel I need to explain the capacity in which I'm here.”*

*I righted my chair, and sat back down. “One chance. That's all. After what you people did to me...”*

*That hand again, this time in a gesture designed to placate me. “Doctor Song, our order in the past has undoubtedly wronged you, your current circumstances clearly indicate that. Those of our members involved with the Silence are no longer welcome within the Church.” I sat back. This sounded a very entertaining tale.*

*“However, your act, while a victim of others' whims, was done ultimately under your own free will.” I really had to hold my tongue at that part. “That is why*

*the order has tasked me with offering you a possible way out – a pardon. We need you and we need the Doctor.”*

*This really was proving an offer difficult to turn down. “Say I do take this offer – what is it, and who are you? You’ve not even told me your name.”*

*He gave a slight smile. “There’s a ship, the Byzantium, with a very interesting and very deadly cargo. We need you to confirm what it is in order for us to neutralise the threat it poses. From what we know of him, the Doctor will be vital.”*

*I sat up and gave him one of my best smiles. “Oh, absolutely. But I’m going to need a few essentials, Father... ”*

*“Octavian,” he finally volunteered.*

*If only he’d known what was to come.*

**DOCTOR  
WHO**

CLASSIC DOCTORS - BRAND NEW ADVENTURES

**HELL IN  
HIGH  
HEELS**



by Andrew Weston

THE COMPANION CHRONICLES PROSE SERIES

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