

In the constellation of Hydrus, on the planet Ristas, somewhere in the heart of Hydrus Industries Residential Zone #14, Bryan Emris wakes up to the sound of his alarm clock. The low buzzing sound is annoying, but not as annoying as what Bryan knows comes next:

‘Good morning employee of Hydrus Industries. Let us thank Mr John Nuchess for our glorious workplace by making sure to arrive within the designated sign in time. Those who are found to be late will be punished severely. Have a good day.’

It’s Only Hydrus If I Fail

by David Hogan

Something that can only be described as an angry yawn blasts out of Bryan’s mouth and he gets out of bed, his military-short crew-cut assuring he is a presentable member of society even in a hurry. His wife Janet doing the same, minus the angry yawn and the crew-cut, her short blonde hair looking a little scruffy, something she immediately fixes in the mirror. They exchange looks of empathy towards one another, knowing that nether of them are going to have a good day today. A high-pitched beep alerts them both to a little red light that’s blinking on the afore-mentioned alarm clock. They both look a little worried as Bryan presses the button and a badly computer generated message plays:

‘Hello *Mr Bryan Emris and/or significant other*, we are delighted to report to you that your son, *Harold Emris*, has scored well on his company loyalty test. This pleases us greatly. You are therefore allowed to hold one party for him on, *March. Twenty. Four. at Seven. PM. in Residential Zone. Fourteen. Sub-Hall. Two.* Message ends.’

‘Well, that’ll make him happy,’ Bryan says with his oddly Yorkshire accent and an awkward smile.

‘Mmm... not many children get to have a party,’ Janet responds.

'No... Indeed,' Bryan sighs, knowing that his son doing so well means he'll live to adulthood, but his adulthood will but just like his own. The lesser of two evils, yes, but still not great news.

Bryan quickly takes a shower and gets dressed in his light-blue boiler suit and heavy black boots; meanwhile Janet wakes Harry and gets him ready for school, or Hydrus Industries Young Employee Evaluation Facility #14, as it's also known. Bryan gives his son a smile as he walks into the small kitchen and sits at the rickety table to eat a quick and rather uninspiring breakfast.

'Well done on your test, Harry,' Bryan says with a big smile.

'Is it true? Can I have a party?' The young blonde-haired boy says with hopeful eyes.

'Yes son, in two weeks time!'

'Wow, great! Can we maybe make it my birthday party, pleeeeeease?'

'Now son, you know full well that it has to be a High Test Score Celebration Party. No one gets Birthday parties.'

'But Dad, that's not true, Mr Nuchess' son does, remember? A few months ago we all had to make cards for him and give him presents.'

'Yes, but that's different Harry... he's... special.'

'So I'm not special.'

'Oh, Harry... you know I didn't mean it like that... I-'

A loud buzz from the analogue clock hanging on the wall cuts the awkward conversation off and everyone takes one last bite from their breakfast and heads towards the coat rack next to the front door. They exchange kisses as Harry and Janet, who teaches at the same school Harry attends, leave in one direction, and Bryan heads in another.

A short walk through the uniform Residential District leads Bryan to a monorail that will take him to the biggest Hydrus factory on Ristas. He picks up a small screen from the arm of the seat he's now fastened into and presses a button to see to today's headlines:

'Two more members of the so-called Resistance captured!'

'Interesting, the Resistance has been more careful of late,' Bryan thinks to himself.

He looks at the picture that accompanies the article to see a young teen in strange clothes and a female dressed in purple with an unimpressed scowl across her face. Not the kind of strong vision normally associated with the Resistance.

'Are they really getting that desperate already? Surely in the mines there are no end to people who would want to rebel,' Bryan once again thinks to himself. The mines: the place that makes Bryan happy to be in his *current* position. As the monorail stops and he walks towards the large factory, he thinks of the endless shafts and unending shifts that the miners have to deal with. The people who don't score well on tests like his son... they very rarely make it to 30, 20 even depending on just how bad the "education".

He shakes the thoughts from his head as he is frisked and scanned by the personnel at the front of the factory. They've known him for many years, but they are no less vigorous than they were when he first arrived. Bryan knows, though, that if they weren't they'd be in major trouble, so a friendly nod and he walks through the factory and into the back rooms, on his way to the armoury. This factory, as already stated, is the biggest and most important factory, not only for its production line, but also because it holds the offices and VIP areas of the company... as well as the prison and execution line. Some might say that's a risky oversight in planning, others say the higher ups get a kick out of the executions, either way people often have debates over which is the more frightening possibility.

Bryan takes his usual short cut through the cafeteria and sees his long-time friend Peter. Peter is a prison guard, and damn good one too.

'Morning Pete,' Bryan says, still keeping up a brisk walking pace.

'Morning Bry. I head about Harry, congratulations! Maybe one day he'll be working here with us... that'll be exciting for him.'

'Better than the alternative, Pete.'

'Indeed!'

'I heard you have some new guests, they don't look like any Resistance members I've seen.'

'Tell me about it. The woman won't stop droning on and on about how they don't even know what the Resistance is. I mean, how poor of an excuse is that? It doesn't even make any sense!'

'Ha, that's a bit hard to swallow alright. How can you live on this planet and not heard about them. They can't be too bright.'

'Oh yeah, though you should hear the boy talk, he thinks he's some sort of genius!'

'Sounds like fun. Anyway, must dash, can't be late for my post.'

'Yeah, see ya around, Bry.'

Bryan gives a nod and a small hand gesture of goodbye and heads to the armoury. Another couple of scans by people who have seen him every day for the last god knows how many years, and he's given a helmet not unlike what SWAT members from present day Earth wear, and a laser rifle. Standard affair, laser rifles. How did people get on with guns that needed to be reloaded all the time? Not that you don't get in trouble if you forget to charge it after use...

A final look at his watch tells him he's right on time again, and he arrives at a wooden door labelled "VIP Area". A guard wearing the same boiler suit and helmet nods and walks away as Bryan stands in his place, and there he will stand for a total of twelve hours, with breaks, of course. It dull, it's lonely, and it's potentially dangerous, but it's steady work, not as dangerous as the mines, and keeps his family in one of the nicer Residential Zones.

Down at the end of his all too familiar long, cold metallic hallway are a turn to the right, where the cafeteria, prison and other facilities Bryan passed on the way here are located. To the left? Offices, interrogation, and the transport line straight to the mines. More times that he'd like to think he's seen prisoners get walking across that small gap at the end of his corridor, on the way to the mines.

Several hours slowly drag on as Bryan looks down a mostly empty corridor, the only things of note are people with boxes walking past at the other end, and two VIPs entering the door, treating him as a final pest that they have to pass before they're out of the riff-raff. The sound of faint whispering makes the lonely guard's ear twitch. Imagination? Just going a bit loopy because it's been nearly four hours without your first break? That must be it.

No, wait. Suddenly a lady in a dark red dress comes round the right corner at the end of the hallway, gripping the walls as if she can barely hold herself up. Dressed like that she must be a VIP, and although he shouldn't leave his post, Bryan feels compelled to try and help her. She falls to her knees and as he goes to help the poor young lady he looks up and sees a fair-haired man in an odd outfit smiling,

'I'm terribly sorry about this,' the man says, before Bryan feels a small impact to the back of neck, and everything goes dark.

'How long have I been out?'

Bryan wakes in the medical ward with a panic. What will happen to him? Oh God, what will happen to his family?

'Ah, awake are you, Mr Emris?'

Bryan looks to his left and sees his supervisor, Mr Tenrick.

'Sorry, sir... he, surprised me, I...'

'Listen, Mr Emris, and listen well: You have had a spotless record, and thankfully the man who assaulted you was captured shortly after entering the VIP area, so although the woman escaped, I will be merely docking you some pay and will be assigning you extra shifts until I feel you have atoned for you mistake.'

'That's very kind of you sir. It won't happen again, I swear it!'

'It better not. Now head down to the cafeteria or something, This period of unconsciousness counts as three of your breaks, and the third won't be over for another fifteen minutes. Relieve the guard at the door then, and not a moment too early or late, you understand me?'

'Yes sir.'

'Good. Carry on.'

Bryan walks past him, and feeling of relief washing down his system. His family is safe. His life is safe. A little less pay and some night shifts, he could handle that. As he walked towards the cafeteria, he sees the turn off for the prison, and decides to take it; maybe he can get some answers from the man who rendered him unconscious in such a polite manor.

'Oh, hey Bry!' Peter shouts as he enters the prison cell room.

'Hey Pete.'

'I hear I'm not the only one who's had a bad day today.'

'Oh? What happened to you?'

'The mouthy woman and the kid from earlier, they somehow managed to escape. I mean, how is it that we can hold prisoners without any problems for years, then suddenly all this happens!?! It's like they're from another world!'

'Quite.' The oddly dressed attacker says, joining in on the conversation. He gives a pleasant grin, contrasting the empty, slightly rusty barred cell he stands in. The two chatting guards turn around to face him.

'Tell me, your names are Bryan and Peter? Yet your badges say Emris and Undale. That's a strange quirk I've been noticing about this civilization. Plain and dull first names, but rather odd and unique surnames. I wonder how that happened?'

'What are you talking about?' Peter wonders, 'Are you saying you really are from another world?'

'Is that so hard to believe? Your company sells items to other worlds, surely someone from another world being here isn't so hard to grasp?'

'Why would anyone want to come here?' Bryan responds, 'That's why it's so hard to believe. Even the VIPs resent having to be on this planet of factories and low-end housing. Plus, why would you be with the Resistance if you were from another planet?'

'Oh, I don't know. Maybe I'm here by accident, maybe I don't like tyrannical regimes holding down a society of hard workers. Maybe both, who knows?'

'Surely the accidental arrival one,' Bryan says.

'Well, yes, the TARDIS databanks were a bit patchy and hadn't been updated with the proper names for this system, and as such this planet was just a bunch of numbers from its early Earth discovery. It got it confused with an actual planet that's name is just numbers I wanted to show my companion Adric. A great place if you like maths, they trade in hard sums, not money.'

'What on Ristas are you-'

'Ristas is it? I'll have to update the databanks. It's much better than HD 10180 B, but that's what I get for being so fond of you humans. Took the wrong data from too early a period of your existence.'

Bryan and Peter look at each other, confused.

'Yes, well, anyway...' he continues, suddenly dropping his fun-loving persona, 'Let me just leave you with a piece of advice. You don't seem like bad people, so when the alarms go off and this company falls, don't resist. Fight it and I can't guarantee your safety from the rebels, or the real threat behind all of this.'

'Real...?' Bryan pauses, 'Don't be crazy,' Bryan continues shaking the last line off, and amused though undeniably impressed by the prisoner's confidence and sudden stern demeanour, 'I don't know who you are, but Hydrus runs the entire planet, and will do forever. They're too big a regime to take down.'

'I'm The Doctor, for the record, and if I had a penny for every time I've been told that... well, I'd be rather well off,' the man retorts, before smiling again, 'and after all, it'll only be Hydrus if I fail.' He smirks at his word play, but it's lost on the two guards. 'Ah yes, sorry... personal joke, I guess.'

Bryan was about to respond further when he sees the time, and starts walking at a quick pace out of the door, 'Sorry, have to run. This would be the worst day to be late for the first time.' As he looks back The Doctor gives him another pleasant grin and even a little wave. If he was given all the time in the world, Bryan feels he'll never understand him.

Thankfully for his future, he reaches his post dead on and relieves the man standing in his place. Mr Tenrick comes running down the corridor towards the relieved guard:

'Come with me, quick! I think I know where the resistance base is and I need all the help I can get!'

and just like that Tenrick and the guard run down the corridor and out of sight. The words his supervisor uttered, however, were not out of mind. The Doctor's words ringing in his head, Bryan realises that he felt a large amount of sadness at the news that the Resistance base might have been discovered. After all these years, maybe he hasn't given up all hope. He always assumed he'd just grown accustomed to this way of life, and that any hope of a change had long since been quelled.

Bryan quickly shakes out the thoughts, thinking they could land him, or more worryingly, his family in some serious trouble.

It's been over an hour since his meeting with The Doctor. He's started to think about other things at last. That is until he sees Peter being escorted down past the end of his all-too familiar corridor by armed guards.

'I don't care, Mr Undale,' a clear VIP says behind them, 'That's the second break out and third prisoner that's escaped on your watch. After that kind of performance, it'll be the mines for you!'

A brief instinct to run down the corridor and try and stop it passes, and instead Bryan just feels anger towards The Doctor. If he is an alien, then he and his friends have swooped in and ruined his best friend's life, and hasn't made his any easier either.

'Damn him...' Bryan thinks to himself, trying to put mental images of Peter dying in the mines out of his head, 'Damn you Doctor!'

Another hour or so passes, Bryan is still consumed with fear on behalf of his friend when none-other than the CEO of Hydrus himself, John Nuchess, starts running down the corridor, flanked by several heavily armed guards. Bryan quickly side steps and lets him through, noticing a look of panic on his face. Some of the armed guards stay outside the door with him, making him feel awkward and out performed... well, as out performed as you can be at standing in front of a door.

No more than ten minutes more pass and a large explosion rocks the building, causing all sorts of alarms to go off. Bryan is in a panic, had The Doctor done this? He looks at the personal guard and they haven't even flinched, but he was almost shaking. Suddenly a large roar of voices came from both turns at the end of the corridor and a large group of miners and apparently now ex-employees come charging down and opening fire on the personal guard. A brief fire fight rocks the claustrophobic corridor as the personal guard fall, taking only a handful of rebels with them. Bryan stands there watching, thanking his lucky stars he didn't get hit in the crossfire. The resistance members look at him, weary as to what his move is going to be, a question Bryan himself doesn't know the answer to. He spots Peter in the crowd, signalling him to drop his weapon, and suddenly a feeling of relief fills his body. Bryan doesn't just drop it; he tosses it like a guilty child trying to hide the piece of chocolate he just stole. As the gun clatters against the cold floor, the resistance let up a roar of approval.

To his massive relief, the large group moves past him, ramming the VIP door down and charging in. After a few more seconds of noisy chaos, he slumps down up against the wall, almost laughing to himself that after all these years standing in front of that door, he just willingly let a bunch of people go past him and knock the door down.

'Up you come, Bry,' Peter says, having stayed behind to help his friend.

'How? I saw you being carried off...'

'I was, and had been. But before I could get shipped off to the mines, The Doctor's friends and some Resistance members broke in the rescued me and my fellow prisoners. After that it was a whirlwind of rally cries as more and more people joined us. I still don't know who or what The Doctor is, but he certainly knows how to stir up a revolution!'

Revolution. It suddenly sunk in. A large group of armed Resistance members had just stormed the VIP area where the CEO himself was located. It was over. Not only his life of

slavery, but his son's dark future as well. Bryan could almost cry, and instead he and Peter hugged briefly, before walking into the VIP room.

Sadly, they'd missed the action; apparently the crowd had killed the remaining personal security and then tossed Mr Nuchess out the head office window. He was most certainly dead. The leader of the Resistance was being held up high, and as he was he was giving a speech about equality and a proper and fair rule. Bryan caught sigh of The Doctor and his three friends sneaking out of the crowd and runs up to them.

'Doctor, aren't you staying?' Bryan asks.

'As I just told your new leader, I tend not to stick around for the after party, so to speak.'

'Well... can I just say... thank you.'

'Yes, and no problem.'

The Doctor turns to leave and Bryan notices a large tear in his jacket, not unlike a giant claw mark.

'Doctor, your jacket, what happened?'

The Doctor sighs, 'Ask your new leader, it's a long story and I've already told it once, much less been a part of it. Sometimes, Bryan, be thankful you only play a bit part.' Another trademark grin and he leaves, flanked by his eclectic mix of companions.

Bryan turns back around to hear more of the speech, but then decides to go and find his wife and son, and throw the biggest Birthday party that's ever been thrown.

DOCTOR WHO

CLASSIC DOCTORS - BRAND NEW ADVENTURES

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HYDRUS
IF I FAIL



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THE CCPS VOL III - LOGORRHOEA OF THE LOOKERS-ON

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