

They say that life sometimes gets complicated, don't they? Well, if they took a look at my life, they might decide to adjust that a bit. You see, my life occasionally gets simple; and that simplicity usually only materialises after a bottle or three.

THE HOLE TRUTH

A Bernice Summerfield Adventure (may contain swearing)

by John G Wood

Hi. I'm Professor Bernice Summerfield, but you can call me Benny. I'm an archaeologist by profession, and a time traveller. Which isn't as useful to the job as you might think — because what it mostly does is get me into trouble. Case in point: there was this one time when I was travelling with the Doctor and Ace — you've heard of them, have you? Good, that saves some explaining! Well, we'd got caught up in some alien invasion of a human colony world, a couple of centuries before my home time. We found the invaders' weakness, foiled their plans, and sent them packing, the usual drill; and normally we'd have been off on our next adventure before you could say 'Chelonian Mothership'.

But things weren't going as smoothly as you might hope in the TARDIS at this point. Ace had some unresolved issues with the Doctor - don't worry, they sorted it all out later - and the atmosphere was as about as warm as Iceworld at Christmas. So rather than heading straight back, I decided to take a detour via the local watering-hole.

And actually, thinking about it, 'hole' is just the right word for Colly's Place. You know the sort of thing: rooms made from XXL transit crates with sawdust and old straw for carpeting, patrons passed out in the street outside and smoke so thick inside that you could get high just from standing upright for five minutes. Still, at least the locals kept to themselves and the staff were pleasantly surly.

I'd bought myself a jug of the local rotgut - happily, about as cheap as the decor - and sat

down at the bar. There was a woman sitting right at the end, nursing a drink, and I could tell straight away that she didn't belong. She wore a cerise jacket with padded shoulders and matching slacks, flat-heeled designer shoes, a pale blue silk shirt and a purple cravat. It looked vaguely stylish but entirely over the top, and gave me the impression that she simply didn't care what people thought. Also, she was far too clean to be from around here. The clincher, though, was when she opened her mouth.

A burly fellow had been pushing his way to the bar. He spotted a gap next to her and elbowed his way in, knocking her glass over as he did. "Oi!" she said. "Do you mind?" It wasn't the words she used, but the accent: even with the slurring you could tell she'd had a pretty good education. That didn't impress her neighbour, though; he just got on with ordering his drink, unaware of her looking daggers at his bald spot.

And that would have been that, except for what happened as he turned and left the bar, drink in hand. The woman reached into her handbag and pulled out a slim silver rod, pointed the top at the lout's back and flicked a switch. There was a high-pitched whine, barely audible in the noise of the crowd, and then the sound of swearing as his glass shattered. Calmly she returned the device to her bag and turned back to the bar.

Thanks to the Doctor, I recognised the device as a sonic screwdriver. Intrigued, I stood up and took my jug to the seat beside her. "Men, eh?", I said, tutting and smiling companionably. She turned her head, and I pressed my advantage. "Can I get you another drink?"

"Thanks. Yeah, another pint of impotable slurry, why not? I've still got a few too many functional brain cells." She sounded really fed up, but what I was thinking was, who uses a word like 'impotable' when drunk? Or at all, for that matter? And hadn't the Earth colonies given up serving drinks measured in pints a long time ago?

"So," I said, once her glass had been refilled, "what brings you to this delightful holiday spot?"

"Like you said before, a man. If you can call him that. I prefer the term MANIPULATIVE TRAITOROUS BASTARD!" The last part was yelled, causing more than a few stares to be directed our way.

"Ah. Bad breakup, then?"

“Bad? BAD? He dumped me — here! Just up and left without so much as a cheerio, so long and thanks for the ride!”

“Yes, in my experience that’s what normally happens.”

“Oh, is it? Is it really? Happens a lot to you, does it, getting left in a whole other re...?” She paused and looked at me properly for the first time. “Hang on, I know you, don’t I? I’m sure I recognise those earrings.”

I was sure I’d never seen her before, but I had my suspicions about who - or rather what - she was. She might have just been drunk and confused, but I decided to test the water. “Oh, I get that all the time. You’ve probably seen the author’s bio in one of my books. On archaeology?” I struck the pose I usually use at the holoshoots.

She studied me a moment. “Hang on, I’m almost there. Begins with a ‘B’...” I nodded encouragingly. “Got it! Bernice Summerfield! Never forget a face. A photo. You wrote that Mars one, didn’t you?”

Did I mention this was a couple of centuries before my time? It was also, unsurprisingly, a couple of centuries before my publisher took me on. Now I was sure: she was a time traveller. I didn’t let the knowledge affect me, though; I behaved in my usual cool, calm manner.

“Hah! Knew it!” I blurted. “You’re a Time Lord!”

She flapped her hand at me. “Shh, shh. Don’t shout, they’ll all want one.”

“Sorry. What’s your name?”

“I’m the - oh, never mind all that. You can call me Joan.”

“So, Joan, why don’t you just jump in your TARDIS and head off somewhere better suited to sorrow-drowning?”

“Because the Mas... - the, ah, the man I was with - shtole it. Stole it.”

I grimaced. “Oops.”

“Yah, oops indeed. The old girl was a classic model, too.”

“Listen I’m travelling with a Time Lord myself. I’m sure the Doctor wouldn’t mind giving you a lift somewhere?”

“The Doctor? Uh, I think I’d better just keep away from him - from any renegades for now.”

“Suit yourself. I’m sure you can happily find some way to occupy the rest of your lives in this fabulous resort location. Or, if you get bored, you could hitch a lift on the annual supply freighter. I think the next one’s due in eight months or so.” I drained the last of my jug, and stood up. “Nice to meet you. Have fun!”

I counted as I walked away. On ‘three’, I heard Joan’s voice behind me.

“Wait!”

I waited.

“Look,” she said, and paused, rather too obviously thinking of how many beans she was going to spill. Or maybe just concentrating on forming words while the world spun about her; it was difficult to tell.

“Do you want to sit down?” I asked, watching her gently swaying.

“You think I’m too drunk to stand? Well, if you think this is bad, darling, you should have seen me last time I was female. Down the pub every sodding night!” She leaned forward and tried to whisper, though it sounded just as loud as before. “I used to work in a supermarket. On Earth. I hate my third incarnation.”

I blinked in surprise, grabbed her drink from the bar, and steered her to a table by the door. “Actually,” I said, “the Doctor’s not too keen on his third body either. Well, third persona, I suppose.”

“Really? What did he say she was like?”

“He. He sounds like a pompous git to me.”

For some reason she laughed. “So it was that long ago, was it? Interesting.” She drained her glass; I did the same. This establishment was rapidly losing its appeal, now that there was something more . . . exotic to investigate.

“Come on,” I said. “I think we should get you to the TARDIS before I end up having to carry you.”

“Well, what was the point of sitting down, then?” Joan stood up again, with some effort, and braced herself for the long walk to the door.

We’d gone a few steps when there was one of those drops in ambient volume you sometimes get in crowded places for no apparent reason. In it, I could easily make out a

shouted conversation between one of the patrons and the man behind the bar.

“‘ere, Colly,” yelled a gravelly voice. “There’s somethin’ weird goin’ on in yer cellar!”

The barman looked up from whatever he was fiddling with. “Hargon, you muppet, I don’t have a cellar. Transit crates don’t come fitted with ‘em, and do I look like I’m goin’ ta rip up my floor an’ dig?”

The other guy looked confused for a second. “No? Anyway, you’ve got one now. An’, an’, there’s somethin’ swirly glowin’ an’ hummin’ down there.”

Joan froze. “Oh bollocks,” she said.

There are times when it’s the most mundane problems that give you trouble while you’re trying to deal with an alien menace, and this was a perfect example. I could tell from Joan’s reaction that this was something we should be worried about, and straight away set off in the direction Hargon was pointing. Unfortunately, so did everyone else in the bar, and pretty soon we were trapped in the middle of a crowd of gawkers, most of them taller than me. I considered phrases like “pardon me”, “do you mind?” and “let me through, I’m an archaeologist”, but was pretty sure they would only make things worse.

Joan was more of a height with the other patrons, so I thought she might have a better view. “Can you see what’s going on?” I asked, while trying to avoid multiple elbows giving me bruises in uncomfortable places.

“Not a thing. Hold on, I think I need to be soberer for this.” She pulled the oddest of expressions, and I could hear ominous gurglings working their way around her abdomen. I started to get a little bit worried about where this was leading.

“Er, Joan? You’re not going to do what I think you’re going to do, are you?”

Thankfully, she wasn’t. Instead she let out an enormous belch, exhaling a yellow-grey cloud of concentrated alcoholic gas. Even though I wasn’t in the direct line of fire it smelled terrible: a couple of people right in front of us fainted and the rest somehow fell back despite the crush, leaving us an open path. We stepped over the unconscious bodies and raced toward the anomalous cellar.

“How did you do that?”

She glanced sideways at me. "Old Time Lord trick, darling. Doesn't your Doctor use it when he's had a drop too many?"

"Nope, can't say he does. Mind you, he's too much of a control freak to let himself get very drunk in the first place."

"Huh, typical Doctor. No sense of fun."

By this time we were standing at the edge of a hole in the floor, alongside a handful of determined (but now decidedly greenish) patrons. Obviously a man of initiative, Colly marched up the path Joan had created and joined us. He swore inventively.

What was beneath us is hard to describe. Actually, that's not quite true, it's pretty easy to describe: "wobbly glowing hole" just about covers it. What is difficult is finding words to express how it actually felt for those of us who were present at the time. It was about four foot square, but the edges wavered gently back and forth, something like a jelly on a tray. The colours cycled through a range of greens, yellows, and oranges, and all the while there was a low humming noise, like the TARDIS at rest but gradually changing pitch. The overall effect was hypnotic, and for a while we all just stood there.

Joan broke the spell. "Right," she said, "I need to investigate this. Anybody got something I can drop in?"

Colly stared at her. "'scuse me your Highness, but this is my establishment, and if there's any droppin' ta do, I'll be the one ta do it. Alright?"

Joan tilted her head and waved him forward. He rummaged in his pockets, pulled out a corkscrew, and tossed it into the hole. It fell normally for a metre or so, then slowed. After five metres it was hard to tell it was moving at all.

"What's stoppin' it?" asked the publican.

"Nothing," replied Joan. "It's still accelerating, but time is distorting so that we can't see that from here. Have you ever heard of the Schwarzschild Radius?"

"The what?"

"It's the distance from a Black Hole within which light can't escape. The thing is, as something approaches the Schwarzschild Radius, gravity slows down any light it may be emitting or reflecting - or at least, the light trying to escape that gravity. As a result the light

takes longer to reach observers, and the object's fall appears to slow. In fact, we can never see it actually reach the Schwarzschild Radius, because the light at that point is trapped; it's as if the object is approaching slower and slower, forever. Do you see?"

"No," said Colly, sullenly.

"Good grief, I've been dumbing it down as much as I can! If you can't even understand that, how do you expect to cope when I move on to explain that it's actually time that's affected rather than lightspeed?"

"I don't." Colly was looking red-faced by now, and it wasn't from blushing. Joan seemed not to notice his growing anger; I grabbed her by the sleeve and pulled her to one side.

"Joan, can I have a word about, well, your choice of words? You might not be winning us any friends here." She looked at me as if I were crazy, but before she could say anything Colly coughed meaningfully behind us.

"Hang on. Are you tryin' ta tell me I've got a Black Hole in my cellar?"

Joan laughed. "Oh no, of course not, don't be ridiculous! It was just an analogy."

"Good." Colly looked relieved.

"This is something far more dangerous."

"Well, that went well." We were sitting in the dust of the street outside, the hot blue-white sun glaring down on us. "Do you know, Joan, I think calling the publican an 'ignorant oik' might have been a teensy mistake?"

"Ha! I've been thrown out of far better places than that!"

"Not in this town - Colly's is as good as you get."

"Really? Good lord."

"So, since we've now got absolutely no way of getting at our host's ersatz cellar, can you tell me why this thing is such a problem? What is it?"

"It's a hole. Between realities."

"A wormhole, right; I've come across some before. And this one leads to a parallel world. Fair enough. Which makes it dangerous . . . how?"

She grimaced. "It's not stable. There's a steep temporal gradient between the two

universes, and it's trying to short out the differential. Basically, time is being sucked into this reality, faster and faster. Eventually the universe will become supersaturated with chronons and the substrate of existence will crack."

"Goddess. A little more worrying than a hole in the floor, then."

Suddenly I realised something, and laughed. I think it was mostly a tension release reaction, but Joan looked puzzled. "What?"

"Oh, it just occurred to me that you sounded just like the Doctor, then. You both come out with these fantastic speeches that sound like total gibberish, and you both look so serious when you're making them."

She laughed, too; a high-pitched, nervous laugh. It sounded completely fake. "Ha ha haa, well, that's us Time Lords. We are all quite similar, in so many ways. Upbringing, don't you know." Then she frowned. "Well, not quite. Some of us have standards. And loyalty."

The comment seemed pretty specific, and I took a wild stab in the dark. "You have some history with the Doctor, don't you?"

She smiled, a quiet, secret smile. "After a fashion."

"But not my Doctor."

"No."

I took a breath and was about to say more, but Joan suddenly stood up. "Right, come on! Time to move."

As I got to my feet she took out her sonic screwdriver and aimed it at the door to Colly's Place. There was a brief whine, and the lock sparked. "That should hold them for a while; let's get round the back."

"Wait — what?" I scurried after her, trying to process the turn of events. "Why do you want to trap a bunch of locals in their local? I mean, I've been to my share of lock-ins, but isn't this taking the concept a bit far?"

She was already dealing out the same treatment to the back door. Once done, she turned to me, looking cool and confident in the dusty alley. "Did you see that crowd? And smell them? How would we ever get anything done with that mob hanging around and drooling all over us?"

I was still confused. I didn't feel bad about it — it's sometimes useful to recognise that

you don't know what's going on, because it stops you haring off in the wrong direction — but it would have been nice not to be quite so lost.

“Hold on. I thought we were wanting to do something about the hole? You know, the one that's about to destroy the universe, and is sitting inside a pub that you've just locked us out of?”

She looked smug. “Just watch the corner of the building, and wait.”

And that was all she would say. So we watched, and waited. After a couple of minutes something seemed to be happening: I wandered over. There was a wobbly, glowing effect at the foot of the wall about a metre from the corner. “Hey, that looks like the corner of the hole!”

“Exactly. I noticed it was drifting before we left, and it was trivial to calculate when and where it would emerge.”

I don't think I'd come across holes that moved before, but it didn't really phase me; it was a dimensional anomaly, after all. I found myself more impressed by Joan's cunning.

“That is so sneaky! Right: what do we do to plug it?”

“Oh, we can't.”

“What?!”

“Not yet, anyway. Think about it. Why is it moving?”

“It didn't like the company in Colly's?”

“Seriously. It's obviously aligned itself to the planet's gravity field, otherwise it would be heading off into space on some apparently random trajectory. So I would expect it either to stay in one place relative to the ground, or to ignore the planet's rotation and effectively race around the entire world in a day. It's doing neither. So . . .”

She looked at me expectantly. It was like being put on the spot by one of my old lecturers way back, when I was an undergraduate. I thought hard. “So . . . it's being drawn by something?”

“Exactly. And what would pull on a dimensional anomaly?”

“Er, another dimensional anomaly?”

“Such as?”

I paused again, not because I didn't know the answer but because I was letting the

consequences sink in. I'd suddenly realised what was standing a few streets away in the direction the hole was moving. "Goddess. We've got to tell the Doctor. His TARDIS is about to be sucked through into another universe!"

Once I'd calmed down, I realised it would be several hours before the hole got to the TARDIS. As we ambled along I suggested we just get in and leave, but Joan shook her head. "Now that it's locked on, it will just keep following regardless of the spaciotemporal distance, spewing out chronons the whole time. No, that's not a solution. It needs to be dealt with here and now."

I'm usually pretty good at reading people — with one or two notable exceptions — and I knew there was something she wasn't telling me. I thought I knew what it was, too.

"Joan?"

"Hm?"

"You're from that other universe, aren't you?"

She stopped, paused, and then sighed. "Yes."

"And are you the reason this is happening?"

"Not entirely."

"Which means you are part of the problem, yes?"

She frowned at me. "I told you I was dumped, didn't I? Well, that's the cause. I can't co-exist with this world, long-term. But I didn't realise that, not until I saw the hole."

"So when you said 'not entirely', what you actually meant was 'yes, Benny, it's completely and utterly because of me'?"

"That's not fair! I didn't ask to be left here!"

I relented. "OK, sorry. If you go back, will the wound heal itself?"

"I . . . think so. Yes, I'm almost positive it will."

"Well, in circumstances this desperate, I think 'almost positive' will have to do. Go on then."

"What?"

"Just go back. Jump in the hole."

She looked at me as if I were mad, and then put on her annoying dumbing-down voice.

“Benny, you know how the gravitational pressure of a Black Hole can punch a passage through to a distant point in spacetime?”

“Sure.”

“Well, can you work out what that gravitational pressure does to unprotected bodies before squeezing their component subatomic particles through the rift?”

“Ah.”

“And also what the chances are of the other end opening in an environment conducive to life, anyway?”

“Um.”

“Well, this is like that, only worse. I want to save your universe, sure. And I want to go home. But I’m not suicidal.”

We both walked in silence for a while. Eventually we turned the final corner, and there was the TARDIS, big, boxy, and beautiful.

“There you go, Joan. The Doctor will be able to sort it out.”

“I’m not so sure.”

A beefy hand landed on my shoulder and a deep voice in my ear added, “I’m not so sure either.”

I turned round to see two men and a little old lady. The one standing behind me looked to be in his forties and wore an official-looking badge that reminded me of the Sheriffs in 20th Century Western films. The second, younger man had a gun in his hand. “Is this them, ma’am?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s them — I saw them with my own two eyes! Vandals, that’s what they are!”

“Right.” The older man took a breath. “I am arresting the pair of you on suspicion of causing deliberate and malicious damage to the property of one Pieter Colly, viz, his public house, Colly’s Place, and thereby also causing great distress to the occupants of said pub . . .”

“Yeah,” said his younger colleague, “you could hear them yellin’ and bangin’ away on the door like they was dyin’ in there!”

“Shut up, Borlotti. Where was I? Oh, it doesn’t matter. You have the right to not be beaten up or maltreated in any other way . . .”

“Well,” I muttered, “that’s some comfort.” He gave me a look that would freeze fire.

“ . . . unless you resist arrest or act in some way that might pose a risk to officers or bystanders. Please indicate your understanding.”

“The thing is,” I said, “there’s a bit of a serious situation going on here; you’re all in terrible danger.” I was going to add “and only we can sort it out”, but I didn’t get the chance.

“Oh, thank you!” said Borlotti. And shot me.

It was probably fortunate that it was only a stun-gun; although when I woke, my head throbbing from the after-effects, it didn’t exactly feel like it. Stunner migraine’s like the morning after without the benefit of the night before. On the plus side, I hadn’t been beaten up, or maltreated in any other way - unless you count being left on the floor of a jail cell which was, if anything, filthier than Colly’s, and a lot bumpier. I blinked my eyes a couple of times to clear them, and saw Joan standing on the opposite side of the cell.

She looked down. “Awake, then?”

“Just about. Didn’t they stun you too?”

“Oh, yes. But I recover a little more quickly than you, it seems.”

“Let me guess. A Time Lord trick?”

“Yah. Not that it’s likely to matter. There’s only a matter of minutes before the anomaly reaches the TARDIS. And we’re stuck in here!” She rattled the bars.

I sat up, and realised why the floor had been quite so uncomfortable: I was lying on Joan’s handbag. I whipped it open, but it was empty; I sighed. “Just for a second there I thought our luck was in.”

Joan looked as if she couldn’t believe it. “Give that to me,” she cried. I handed it over and she reached in, pulling out the sonic screwdriver that had got us into this mess in the first place. “Hah! The idiots! There’s still a chance!”

I won’t bore you with the details of how we got past the duty officer; if you’ve heard of Ace and the Doctor, you know the drill. Though I did feel a brief twinge of guilt when I thought of the trouble he was going to get into, and wished it had been Borlotti instead.

We pounded back to the TARDIS. As it came into view I could see the edge of the hole

appearing from beneath a fence just to its left, and I started to relax. “We’re in time,” I said, slowing to a fast walk.

Joan grabbed me by the arm and pulled me on. “Don’t get complacent! We need to be inside before they touch, so that you can take me back.”

I couldn’t quite see what she was worrying about; we had a couple of minutes to spare. Still, I wanted to get inside as much as she did. I pushed on the door.

It was locked.

And then I realised that my key had been confiscated and was still back at the jailhouse.

I hammered and yelled, but there was no answer. It looked like Ace and the Doctor were both out. Eventually I gave up.

“So,” I said, hardly daring to look at Joan, “what happens when they meet?”

She seemed utterly defeated. “Basically, this TARDIS will be sucked through, and then the anomaly will go after the next nearest. And then the next. And the next. Although by that time the universe will probably be uninhabitable anyway.”

“There’s got to be something else we can do!”

“No. Not a thing.”

There was one thing I could think of, though. I didn’t want to do it, but — according to what Joan had said earlier — if I were to push her into the hole, it was pretty certain that the universe would be saved. And I would be a murderer.

She must have seen some tension in my posture and figured out what I was thinking because she suddenly jumped away from me, retreating to the other side of the TARDIS. “Oh, no you don’t!”

I looked her in the eyes. “Joan, I don’t want to say this, but it looks like it’s either you or the entire universe — including you. I wouldn’t have tried to throw you in” — I hoped that was true — “but having spent some time with you I think there’s only one decision you can make.”

I waited; she looked at me, at the hole, back to me again. “Bollocks to that,” she said. “It appears you don’t know me as well as you think!” — and she stepped back. As she did so the wavy edge of the anomaly touched the TARDIS. It was suddenly enveloped in the glow, and in the same instant I realised that the hole was a square precisely matching the dimensions of the

TARDIS in cross-section.

It's funny what your brain decides to focus on in times of crisis. As I watched the Doctor's ship start to sink into another universe all I could think about was one question.

"Joan? Why did the anomaly fit the TARDIS so well before it even got here?"

She had a haunted, desolate look in her eyes, as if she was regretting her decision not to jump. She ignored my question at first.

"Joan?"

"Hm?" Finally she raised her head and saw me again, rather than whatever bleak, distant vista she'd been focused on before. Her padded shoulders slumped still further. "Oh, what's the point in beating around the bush? It's that shape because it was made by my TARDIS. Which is shaped like an old, blue, 1950s police box."

"What?!"

"Benny, Benny, Benny. I'm far more than just another Time Lord. I'm the Doctor."

I'm afraid I just stared at her, mouth open; I'm sure I would have come up with something witty to say eventually, but we were interrupted. There was a grinding noise, and the TARDIS stopped sinking.

We both turned again and looked at it. The ship was shaking very slightly, as if it was still being drawn down but had hit something immovable. Then there was a rippling effect, and the sound of the TARDIS materialising. The light on the top started flashing rhythmically, but there was a kind of double vision effect, as if it was still there but materialising at the same time and in the same space.

I heard a tiny strangled noise from Joan, and glanced across. Her mouth was open in a half-smile, her body language positively screaming hopeful anticipation. "Oh please," she said. "Please let it be . . ."

The TARDIS — both of it — rose gently out of the hole. When it had settled back into its previous position the door swung open, revealing a console room interior very different from my Doctor's, poky and almost flimsy-looking.

A man sporting a small, neat black beard stood in the doorway, dressed in black robes with a ridiculous collar. "My dear Doctor," he proclaimed theatrically, "I have returned for you!"

“Master . . .” Joan ran forward, put her hands on either side of his face, and kissed him. This went on for quite some time. Then they paused for breath, and while he still had his eyes closed, she gave him a right hook to the jaw. I think he probably spun round a couple of times on his way to the floor.

“Joan?!”

“What? He deserved it! He left me here!”

“Um. But he did come back.”

She looked smug. “And that’s why I kissed him first.” The TARDIS shifted slightly. “Oops, must dash. It was good to see you again, Benny.”

She shut the door. The light flashed, the elephants started groaning, and one TARDIS dematerialised, sinking as it went. The glow around the other faded and died; there was no sign that the anomaly had ever existed.

I’d scarcely had time to pick my jaw back up off the floor when Ace and the Doctor — my Doctor — strolled around the corner. They looked as if they’d decided to, well, not exactly bury the hatchet, but at least put it down for a while. Ace seemed relieved to see me.

“Benny! We’ve been looking all over for you! Where have you been?”

“Oh, you know how it is — you find yourself deep in conversation with a total stranger and completely lose track of time.”

The Doctor looked at me shrewdly. “And I don’t suppose you ran into any trouble during that untracked time?” He was emphasising his ‘r’s quite deliberately, I felt.

I remembered the key. “Well, there was one little run-in with the local constabulary, that still needs sorting out.”

Ace rolled her eyes. “Honestly, I can’t leave either of you alone for a minute!”

The Doctor gave me a slight nod. “Well, you can tell us all about it in the comfort of the TARDIS, over a fresh cup of tea. Come along, Ace, Bernice.”

He unlocked the door. There are many times I’ve been relieved to see that console room; this was right up there with the best of them.

And that’s the story of how the universe was saved by one of the Doctor’s oldest enemies,

while I ran around asking a lot of questions. I wouldn't exactly call it my finest hour, but then I suppose not every adventure can be a triumphant tale of female empowerment.

You know what? My throat's feeling rather dry after all that talking, and it's definitely your round.

Same again, please.