

Chapter 63

The tavern's fireplace crackled with a warm, amber glow that danced across the rough beams and uneven stone floor. The scent of smoke and roasted food mingled with the yeasty smell of ale, giving the place a rustic comfort. Outside, the sky had slipped into the hues of dusk, casting long shadows through the narrow windows.

The tavern has filled out, some locals murmuring quietly over their drinks, still shaken from the recent chaos. But at one long table near the back, a very different kind of energy buzzed.

Yaz sat beside the 13th Doctor trying to keep Anaya entertained. Across from them, the 10th Doctor leaned forward, his coat hanging loosely over the back of his chair, a half-drunk mug of something suspiciously Victorian by his hand. Sonya sat beside him, unusually engaged, while Hakim and Nadja looked between the two Doctors with rapt fascination.

"So, let me get this straight," the 13th said, eyebrows raised as she wrapped her fingers around her mug. "you landed first in the 14th century? Just before the plague? Charming!"

"Well, technically I crashed," the 10th replied with a sheepish grin. "One second I'm skimming the temporal vortex, next...BOOM...white flash, smoke, and no TARDIS. Like she got ripped clean away."

"Ripped? Like torn out of time?" 13th frowned, leaning in.

"Exactly! Something hit the vortex, some kind of pulse. Temporal detonation, not really sure. I survived it 'cause I was mid-jump, but she just vanished."

Sonya, eyes wide and sparkling with intrigue, leaned closer. "And you just built a machine? Like by hand?"

"Well, not the first day," he said modestly. "Took a few weeks and a bit of stolen parchment. Amazing what you can do with copper wiring and a looted astrolabe."

She giggled, flipping her hair a little too dramatically. "Just like you did in Babilon Doctor"

Across the table, Hakim leaned forward, utterly absorbed. "Wait, wait, so this machine, it lets you travel through time? But only forward?"

"Yes...One century at a time," the 10th said, nodding. "It's like jumping from one floating rock to another, hoping the next one's close enough. Each stop, I improve it, make it more stable."

"Sort of like temporal stepping stones," 13th mused, clearly impressed despite herself. "Clever... but messy. Very you."

"Messy? That's rich coming from you!"

"Excuse me," she said with a huff, "it's called a resourceful."

Nadjia blinked between them, clearly trying to keep up. "Do you two always talk like this?"

"Yes," Yaz, Sonya, and Hakim said in perfect unison.

The 13th Doctor tapped her mug thoughtfully. "Alright! Here's what I think, your machine's creating micro-ripples. Each hop fractures the same tear wider. It's pulling things in, like the kids, the goats, even random tech scattering them everywhere."

"I did wonder if it was me..." the 10th murmured. "Well, me adjacent. If my device is piggybacking off residual vortex energy, then every jump's making the rift worse."

"And the reason my TARDIS is glitchy?" she added. "Same rift. It's like time's... chafing. I can only jump a century cause she can't get proper coordinates anymore."

"So, solution?" he prompted, tilting his head.

"We need to close the rift. Fully. Properly. From the inside out."

Hakim leaned in, eyes bright. "How do you do that?"

"Dual TARDIS interface," Thirteen grinned "We use his temporal hopper's frequency, sync it to my TARDIS's stabilizer, and then, poof!...We first need to find the epicenter, locate the missing TARDIS, and stitch time back together with a nice little bow."

"Are they talking in English?" Nadjia frowned

"Risky," Ten admitted. "But brilliant. We'd have to feed both devices through a converging vortex loop, kind of a timespace feedback handshake."

"I love a good timespace handshake."

"Yeah, I remember."

Sonya tilted her head, still watching him with interest. "Sorry,... could you explain all of this pretending I'm five?"

"Absolutely....see told you you're gonna get interested in all of this" Thirteen grinned, couldn't help feeling a bit proud of Sonya "Alright, imagine time is a really long ribbon, yeah? Now imagine someone tripped and yanked part of that ribbon so hard it ripped, that's what happened when he..." she jerked a thumb toward Ten "...went hopping through time without his TARDIS. Now there's a big tear in time, and things are falling through it. Naughty things."

Sonya blinked. "Right..."

"So what we're gonna do," Thirteen continued brightly, "is take his little homemade slingshot," she mimed a pinging motion "...hook it up to my old girl, find where the ribbon tore, and stitch it up like a really clever bit of cosmic needlework. Easy-peasy."

Sonya stared for a beat. "...You lost me at slingshot."

"No worries...Alright, imagine you've got a rubber band..." she continued all animated, hands flapping everywhere as she explained passionately "And you pull it back....really far. That's what he's doing with his little time-jumper," she nodded at Ten. "But without his TARDIS to aim properly, he just goes flying...fwip!into a random century, like a paper plane in a hurricane."

Sonya blinked again. "Still sounds dangerous."

"Oh, it is, nasty way to travel" Thirteen agreed cheerfully. "So what we're gonna do is take his rubber band, his time jumper, and attach it to my really big slingshot...my TARDIS. Then we can aim the jumps and finally land exactly where we need to."

"And that'll fix time?" Sonya asked.

"Eventually," Thirteen said, grinning wide. "First, we stop it from getting worse. Then, we stitch the universe back together. Bit like cosmic sewing, but with more explosions."

Hakim raised a cautious hand from where he sat, cupping his pint. "And how long will this... cosmic sewing take? Days? Weeks? And, you know...can it go wrong?"

Thirteen clapped her hands once, then pointed both index fingers at him. "Brilliant question! Always plan for the worst, hope for the best, and pack snacks. Time-wise? Depends how tangled the threads are. Could be quick, could be a bit of a trek."

Ten leaned back in his chair, arms folded, giving Thirteen a sideways glance. "Oh, it can go wrong. Catastrophically, in fact."

Hakim looked like he immediately regretted asking.

Ten leaned forward now, fingers steeped. "If we miss the anchor point, argument say, the wrong signature, wrong century, wrong tether, the slingshot effect could just... ping us out like cosmic confetti. Flung across timelines like a pair of socks in a tumble dryer."

"Thanks for that image," Sonya muttered.

Nadjia looked worried, and Yaz just destructed herself with Anaya trying not to think about everything going wrong.

"Oi! You're creeping them out" Thirteen waved a hand breezily. "What he means is, there's risk. Always is. But we've done slingshots before, and I have a fully functioning TARDIS...Should be fine"

"And what if it isn't?" Sonya asked

"No worries...You'll get home by time you're forty" Yaz laughed

"What?"

Hakim blinked. "So... it's risky, could take a while, but we've got two of you, and at least one TARDIS. That's something, right?"

"Exactly!" Thirteen beamed. "Trust me. We'll stitch time back up neater than nan's best quilt."

Ten gave a half-smile, tapping the table. "Let's just hope we've got enough thread."

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The familiar hum of the TARDIS filled the air, but it was a different kind of hum now, tenser, more erratic, occasionally interrupted by a worrying buzz or a mechanical sound that made everyone but the two Time Lords flinch. The console room looked like it had exploded in a tangle of wires, coils, beeping gadgets, and something that might've been a toaster in another life.

"Right! Hopper's frequency's pulsing at 0.93 on the vortex band," Thirteen announced, squinting into a spark-sputtering readout. "All we've got to do is gently, gently thread that into the TARDIS stabilizer's feedback loop without blowing up reality."

"Yeah, that's the easy part," the Tenth Doctor said from under the console, spanner in one hand and sonic in the other. "Do me a favour, don't touch the blue dial unless you want us swimming in antifreeze for the next six hours."

Thirteen smirked and immediately reached for the blue dial.

He popped his head out. "I saw that!"

Yaz stood with her arms folded, watching with a mixture of awe and disbelief. Anaya was asleep in the corner in a blanket nest Sonya had made, while Hakim stared at the exposed guts of the TARDIS like a man obsessed. "This... happens a lot?" he asked, cautiously stepping around a wire that sparked ominously.

"Every few thousand years," Thirteen muttered, flipping a switch. A high-pitched whine screamed through the room. "Oops. Nope, not that one."

"Was that the quantum bypass or the dimension buffer?" Ten asked, poking his head up again.

Thirteen blinked. "Could be either. I labelled them backwards, or forwards. Not sure."

Ten looked horrified. "You... reversed your own labels?"

"Time loop breakfast incident," she said with a shrug. "Don't ask."

"Right, that's it. You're not allowed to eat cereal while piloting."

"You nearly vaporised the swimming pool rerouting power through the library in your day!"

"I was young and stylish and had great hair, mistakes were made!"

Yaz rubbed bridge of her nose "I think they're gonna flirt their way through fixing time." she muttered to Sonya,

Sonya grinned. "At least it's entertaining."

"Alright," Thirteen said brightly, slapping a panel that immediately blinked red. "Now we just need to get the stabilizer and hopper talking to each other without causing a dimensional tantrum."

"We should recalibrate the conversion harmonics," Ten said, spinning the hexagonal brass rotor and tapping twice on the holographic panel. "Drop the phase echo by two decimals. That'll smooth the handoff."

"And reduce the chance of a recursive collapse," Thirteen nodded. "Good thinking, me."

"I do have my moments," he said, and then a loud POP! made everyone duck. A long stream of bright yellow goo started dripping from a pipe underneath the console.

"Ups...Definitely not on purpose," 13th scrunched her nose

"...Is that custard?" Hakim asked in disbelief.

"Where do you think the biscuits come from?" She spread her arms up

"That reminds me of processed cheese at McDonald's" Sonya gagged

Ten grinned. "Classic handoff error. Brings back memories."

"Fix the valve!" 13th called, already flipping a switch to drain the overflow. "We don't need another coral burnout like during the Titanic crash!"

"Was that before or after the Host tried to lobotomise me?" Ten muttered, ducking under a sparking cable.

"Arrr..." she gave it a thought "Same day." she nodded

Everyone watched as the two Doctors moved around each other like synchronised dancers, occasionally tripping over wires or arguing over a decimal point, but slowly, very slowly the TARDIS's internal readings began to settle.

Sonya wandered over to Yaz, nudging her. "Do they know what they're doing?"

Yaz gave it a moment's thought, watching as Thirteen banged a spanner against something underneath the console while Ten barked at a monitor.

"...Honestly? I think they're making it up as they go."

"Confidence is ninety percent of genius," 13th smugged, holding up a flashing component in one hand. "The other ten percent is remembering which end of the spanner is which."

"And the last five percent is style," Ten added.

"That's a hundred and five percent," Hakim frowned.

"Time Lords." Ten and Thirteen answered in unison.

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The console of the TARDIS hummed low under dimmed lights. Sparks had flown more than once during the day, console still buzzed slightly from the last adjustment, and a pile of tangled wires rested like a nest beside Thirteen's foot. The temporal hopper sat open and partially wired into the stabiliser matrix, its core pulsing faintly.

It was late.

Victorian Sheffield had long since slipped into quiet outside, but inside the TARDIS, the two Doctors worked with stubborn intent.

"Well, that capacitor's definitely blown," Thirteen muttered, poking the smoking rim of a node with her sonic. "I told Hakim to get a lantern-grade mercury coil, not one of those cheap brass-capped replicas," Thirteen muttered, "Only the real thing can handle a feedback loop without melting."

Tenth raised a brow from under the console. "You know those were originally used to power lighthouse beams?"

"Exactly!" she beamed. "Perfect for punching light through stubborn cracks in time."

Women disappeared hours ago, their laughter drifting faintly from the kitchen. Even Time Lords couldn't resist the smell of spiced lentils and fresh bread spreading all the way to the console making them hungry by the minute.

Anaya had been asleep for most of the afternoon, bundled by the stairs in a makeshift bassinet from folded blankets cradled by soft hum of the TARDIS.

Thirteen glanced over and softened at the sight. "Still out like a light," she said fondly.

Tenth didn't respond.

"Listen," he said after a beat, standing upright with a faint grunt. "We're still misaligned by point-zero-five. That's gonna cause a nasty echo if we try to stabilise the slingshot circuit."

Thirteen narrowed her eyes thoughtfully. "You're right. We need a backup calibrator...You mind getting it? Pretty sure I left it in the secondary tools bay when I was juggling too many repairs a month ago...Or was it a third one?" She stopped to think for a moment "Ah—wait!" she suddenly snapped her fingers. "It was after the second earthquake. Definitely the second one."

Tenth squinted. "That's half a mile down the hallway?"

"Bit less if you take the shortcut through the greenhouse," she grinned pointing

He gave her a look.

"Oh alright," she raised her hands. "I'll go... But you're on baby duty." She nodded toward Anaya.

Tenth hesitated, eyes flicking to the bundle of blankets like it might spontaneously combust. "I'm not exactly...."

"You'll be fine," Thirteen said lightly, already jumping up the stairs.

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The TARDIS hummed low and steady, panels glowing gently and the scent of something delicious coming from the kitchen hanging in the air. Cables coiled across the floor like vines, the central column pulsing with light as the 10th Doctor crouched beside an open panel.

His coat lay draped, sleeves turned inside out, as he bent over the tangle of wires, muttering under his breath whilst few sparks flew into the air.

Behind him, Anaya stirred in her sleep. A soft little squeak at first, then a cry, thin and high-pitched.

He flinched slightly, his shoulders tensing but he didn't turn.

Then came the wail, broken and raw, filled with confusion. The kind of sound that echoed in empty places and tugged on things you didn't want tugged. His hand paused over the circuit board, his shoulders tensing, head lowering further into the circuitry. A cry meant a need, a need meant a connection and connection was the last thing he could afford right now.

She cried again. A sharper sound this time, desperate and rising. His grip faltered on the sonic. He paused lifting his head, his eyes falling on the bundle and a tiny fist rising from the blankets, reaching out for anyone who hears.

The wailing didn't stop. It rang in the bones of the TARDIS, high and small and persistent.

He set down the screwdriver. His legs felt heavier than usual as he stood and turned. She was red-faced and squirming beneath the quilt, arms flailing in panic, as if the world had turned strange and no one was coming.

He hesitated.

Then he moved. Slowly. Like walking through water. Every step forward cracked something brittle inside him.

She was so small. Her tiny chest heaved between cries, fingers clenched into trembling fists. He didn't reach for her at first, just stared at this impossible little being that shouldn't be. A child from a life he didn't yet understand.

Without fully meaning to, he finally reached down and lifted her. She fit awkwardly in his arms, light and fragile, her warmth soaking into his coat. She hiccuped once, tears rolling down her cheeks as she was calming down, her head tipping into the hollow between his shoulder and collarbone, little hand gripping the lapel of his coat.

He stood still, bolted to the floor. Not cradling, not soothing, just holding her as if the weight of her might anchor him against a tide he hadn't seen coming.

Footsteps echoed gently down the TARDIS corridor. The 13th Doctor stepped into the console room and stopped as her eyes landed on him from the top of the staircase.

The man she used to be stood stock still, holding her daughter awkwardly in his arms, like someone who had just stumbled into a life he wasn't prepared to live. She didn't speak, didn't have to.

The sight hit her harder than she expected, the corner of her lips twitched. There was something in the slope of his shoulders, the stillness of his body, the conflicted look flickering behind his eyes. A man resisting the urge to feel, and failing miserably.

Thirteen stood there for a long moment, her gaze softening. Then she walked over, quietly, as though afraid to break whatever fragile thread had formed between them.

As he passed Anaya to her his hands lingered for just a moment, not enough for anyone else to notice. But she did.

"She was crying..." he said

"Well, she isn't now..." she said softly "Hey munchkin...I know, right...He feels same but looks different, very confusing." She cooed to Anaya smoothing her hair and kissing her forehead "You didn't see his teeth yet."

10th smiled, and for a short moment had an urge to touch the tiny hand, brush lightly over her small fingers.

Yaz entered a heartbeat later. Her expression softened when she saw Thirteen holding the baby, and she crossed the room in quiet steps.

"Hey, sweetheart," she murmured, brushing her fingers over Anaya's cheek before leaning in to place a gentle kiss on Thirteen's lips, a small, intimate moment exchanged like breath. Familiar. Quiet. Home.

He looked at them, at the warmth in the Doctor's smile, and the peace on her face. At how easily she became someone he could barely imagine himself ever being.

And for the first time, he let himself wonder what it would feel like to be loved like that. To be known. Chosen. To be someone's home. Something cracked inside him. He

turned away before it could show. Deep down, something old and raw twisted inside him, not jealousy, but grief for something he didn't have. A glimpse of a life that wasn't his yet. A family that might only ever exist after all the breaking was done.

"Dinner's in twenty minutes" Yaz said moving a loose strand of hair glued to her wife's forehead

"Alright" Thirteen smiled passing her Anaya "I think she's wet"

"And hungry...That's alright, we'll sort it out" Yaz said softly smoothing little t-shirt over Anaya's back tucking it into her trousers. "Sure you don't need any help?" She asked looking at all the pile of wires across the floor

"Maybe later when your dad returns"

"Alright...I'll leave you two to your chaos then" she winked stepping away, her eyes glancing for a short moment over to her wife's former self.

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The TARDIS hummed around them, that familiar pulsing rhythm rising and falling like breath. Tools clattered. Sparks sizzled from the open panel beneath the console as the 13th Doctor leaned in with a welding torch, goggles perched on her head. The 10th crouched beside her, chin resting on his fist as he examined the synchro alignment output.

Yaz had just left with Anaya, murmuring soft words into the baby's hair as she disappeared into the hallway. The quiet that followed left a strange space in the room. Not awkward. Just... quieter.

"She really loves you," he said, offhandedly. "Yaz."

Thirteen didn't look up. "She does."

The 10th watched her for a moment. "She's a good one."

"Yeah." Thirteen exhaled. Her voice was casual, like someone commenting on a nice sunset. "She's the one I'd stop for..."

He blinked, surprised.

Noticing the silence, Thirteen kept fiddling with the wires, her voice light. "Never used to think I could. Not really. Always thought loving someone meant making them part of the storm. You know, dragging them through the vortex and hoping they don't drown."

"But we always dragged people along," he said softly. "You still do."

"This was different." She finally looked up, just for a moment. "Yaz didn't chase the stars. She chased me. And I let her."

10's brow furrowed. "That scares you?"

Thirteen gave a wry little smile. "Terrifies me."

There was a long pause as the console beeped at them. They both glanced down, good, alignment still holding. But her hands slowed.

"She saw me," Thirteen said, quieter now. "Not just... Not the Time Lord. Just... me. Even when I didn't want to be seen."

"You didn't think you'd deserve that."

She shot him a quick look, dry, familiar, cutting. "Still don't."

He smiled faintly. "Course you do. You've changed."

Thirteen nodded absently, tightening a dial. "Yeah, but part of me never stopped running. Even when I had everything I never thought I could have... I couldn't make myself stop."

"You loved her."

She went still for a second, "They're my anchor...They both are." she said quietly

They didn't say anything else for a moment. The console pulsed softly, amber lights washing over their faces. The Doctor, two of her worked in silence again, side by side. A pair of ghosts haunted by the same heart.

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The TARDIS kitchen bustled with warmth and chatter. Nadjia stirred the pot on the stove, then wiped her hands on a tea towel before passing a basket of bread to Sonya. Yaz had just returned from the nursery, gently settling Anaya in her lap.

"Are they still at it?" Nadjia asked, poking through the fridge.

"Did you doubt it for a second?" Yaz smirked, adjusting Anaya as she began to feed her.

"He's a strange man," Nadjia said, setting plates on the table.

"Mum..." Yaz sighed. "Give him a break. This isn't exactly easy, you know."

“He’s handsome though,” Sonya chimed in, placing glasses beside each plate with a cheeky grin.

“Oi!” Yaz looked up sharply. “What are you on about?”

“Just saying,” Sonya shrugged, rolling her eyes. “Don’t get your knickers in a twist.”

“He hasn’t even looked at that child,” Nadjia muttered, frowning.

“It’s complicated,” Yaz said quietly.

“You’re starting to sound like her,” Nadjia replied, giving her daughter a sideways glance.

Yaz didn’t answer. She simply rolled her eyes and shifted Anaya gently to her breast.

“Could you imagine,” Sonya said after a beat, lowering herself into a chair, “going into the future and seeing yourself with someone, with a kid... and they’re all strangers to you? That’s got to be a serious mind toss.”

“Exactly,” Yaz nodded. “Thank you. He’s not strange, Mum. Just shaken. He’ll come around.”

“Oh, I don’t know.” Nadjia sighed as she set the pot down in the centre of the table. “This whole business of pasts and futures, different bodies, it’s all very confusing. My brain just can’t accept they’re the same person.”

“Well, they are, Mum,” Sonya said with a grin. “That’s your son-in-law and your daughter-in-law right there.”

“You’re just gonna make it worse now,” Yaz laughed.

“Make what worse?” Thirteen’s voice floated in from the doorway. She strolled in casually, hands in her pockets and a playful smile on her face.

“Mum can’t wrap her head around you both being the same person,” Sonya chuckled.

“It’s a bit of a hiccup,” Thirteen said with a wink. She leaned in and pressed a quick, playful kiss to Nadjia’s cheek. “Just pretend I’ve got a twin brother, if it helps.”

Nadjia huffed a laugh despite herself and playfully slapped Thirteen’s hand away as she reached for a tomato from the salad.

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The door to the TARDIS creaked open, letting in a gust of air and the sound of cheerful footsteps.

"Ah-ha!" Hakim announced proudly, holding up a small, dusty device wrapped in cloth. "Took me forever to find it, but I got it. And I made two new friends on the way, well, sort of friends. One of them brews his own gin and thinks Queen Victoria's still alive, but stillnice bloke."

The Tenth Doctor looked up from where he was crouched beneath the console, his expression lighting up. "Brilliant! Nothing better than making friends in strange places."

He stood, wiping his hands on a rag as he took the part from Hakim, inspecting it. "Oh yes... ohhh that's the stuff." He let out a satisfied groan. "Good job. I knew I liked you for a reason."

Hakim grinned. "You're welcome, though I still don't understand what this thing does."

"Don't worry," Ten said, heading back to the console. "Neither does half the TARDIS half the time...Oh and...Vitoria...she is still alive" he laughed tapping his shoulder

Just as Hakim opened his mouth to speak again, the Thirteen hoppedher way into the control room.

"Dinner's done," she said with a wide smile. "Oh...and I've prepared a room for you," she added, looking at her other self. "Which is just... weird, right? I've basically made up a guest room for myself in my own TARDIS." She frowned. "Technically, I'm being a great host and a very welcome guest. That's double the social points." she grinned satisfied with herself.

Ten raised his brows, visibly amused. "I don't know if that's clever or narcissistic."

"Both," Thirteen said brightly. "Come on. Food's getting cold, and I don't fancy scolding from my mum-in-law again for it."

Ten laughed. "Well, I am starving. Lead the way, hostess with the mostess."

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As they made their way down the corridor toward the kitchen, the 10th Doctor glanced around, hands stuffed into his coat pockets, brow furrowed. "Really? Yellows, oranges...walls with blue piping? Bit loud, don't you think? And that floor texture? Feels like walking on squishy waffles."

"Oi!" Thirteen shot him a sideways look, smirking. "Regen freedom, remember? New face, new taste. I wanted organic and weird. It's very me. I happen to like waffles thank you very much"

He scoffed, eyebrows bouncing. "Weird's one word for it."

"Thank you," she grinned proudly

Hakim, walking just behind confused "Wait, it changes? The whole thing? Every time?"

Thirteen turned to him with an enthusiastic nod. "Oh yeah. Inside and out. Mood swings and all. Post-regeneration chaos gives it a full interior makeover."

"Yeah chaos is word!" Tenth smirked

"Organised chaos," she said smugly, twirling on her heel. "Besides, not all of us want our TARDIS looking like a coral reef exploded during a steampunk convention."

"What did yours look like Doctor?" Hakim asked intrigued

"Well, mine," Tenth began passing by her, puffing up proudly, "was sleek. Organic."

Thirteen made an exaggerated yawn, then crossed her eyes behind his back and mimed falling asleep.

"I saw that," he said without turning.

She winked at Hakim. "His had a midlife crisis with lava lamps."

"I heard that, too!...It was ambient lighting, atmosphere, you know?"

"Atmosphere?" Thirteenth mimicked, pulling a face. "You had cables hanging out like spaghetti and a floor that looked like it hadn't met a mop in centuries."

"Charm!" he protested. "It had charm!"

"Yeah, so does a haunted house," she quipped, nudging Hakim with a wink. "Be grateful you've got me now. At least I Hoover."

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As they stepped into the kitchen, the scent of spiced tomatoes and garlic hit them like a welcome-home hug. Thirteenth leaned in brushing a gentle kiss to Anaya's hairline, then another to Yaz's temple. Yaz closed her eyes at the touch, just a second, a breath, a moment of quiet affection.

Tenth caught it. Said nothing. But it sat quietly somewhere behind his smile.

“Doctor,” Nadjia called, gesturing toward one of the chairs, “you sit there, near the end.”

He blinked. “Me?”

“Yes, you,” she said with playful firmness, already placing a bowl in front of the spot. “Don’t just stand there loitering in doorways.”

Tenth gave a small laugh as he sat down. “Right. My kitchen, apparently not my jurisdiction anymore.”

“Welcome to my world,” Hakim muttered, sliding in beside him.

Thirteenth helped settle the food onto the table like she’d done it a hundred times, grabbing a bowl of rice without asking, tucking a napkin under Anaya’s chin, passing drinks before they were even requested. She didn’t just know where things were, she belonged among them. She belonged here.

Sonya was telling some story about a neighbor back home who claimed their washing was being stolen by ghosts. Hakim groaned into his food, muttering something about the “supernatural sock thief conspiracy theory,” and everyone laughed, everyone but Anaya, who was too busy trying to gum down a piece of naan bread with an expression of epic concentration.

Tenth’s gaze drifted over the table. There was something quietly surreal about it. The clink of plates. The cross-chatter. The way Thirteenth fit in so naturally, like a thread woven deep into this tapestry of a family. For a second, he wasn’t sure if he felt a pang of something lost, or something longed for.

“So,” Nadjia’s voice pulled him from his thoughts, “do you like spicy food?”

He straightened slightly. “Spicy? Oh, I’ve been known to flirt with a Traluvian Fire Pod or two. Why? What’s the scale of danger here?”

Nadjia smiled, ladling a deep red curry onto his plate. “Let’s just say... it’s not for the faint-hearted.”

Thirteenth was already grinning across the table. “Oh, go on then, let’s see what you’re made of.”

He eyed the plate cautiously. “If I regenerate at this table, I’m blaming you.”

“Please don’t,” Yaz muttered under her breath. “We just got the tablecloth.”

Everyone laughed.

Nadjia slid a bowl of spicy lentils in front of the 10th Doctor with a twinkle in her eye. "Careful now."

He straightened with a grin, full of bravado. "I once went five rounds with a bowl of flame-root stew on Caldor Prime, lips went numb, eyes watering, nearly coughed up a lung... brilliant stuff. Loved every second. Bring it on!"

Yaz smirked. "Sure about that?"

"Piece of cake," he declared, confidently taking a generous spoonful.

A pause.

His eyes widened. Then came the cough. "Oho! Right—hello! That's—ah! That's got legs!"

The family burst into laughter as Sonya passed him a glass of milk, already prepared. He took it eagerly, gulping with gratitude.

"I told you!" Yaz grinned, bouncing Anaya gently in her arms.

13th leaned back in her chair, eyes sparkling with mischief. "If he regenerates at the dinner table, I'm stuffed."

Nadjia patted him firmly on the back as he coughed. "Don't worry. We'll cool you down like we did her."

The 10th blinked. "Wait—what?"

Sonya chuckled. "Oh, there was this one time in Egypt, some glowing orb thing nearly fried her insides. Mum panicked and chucked her in a tub of ice. Clothes and all."

"Yup," 13th said brightly, spearing a bit of naan. "Shrieked like a kettle on full boil. Hope you've got decent underwear, by the way, just in case."

He looked mildly alarmed. "You lot are absolutely terrifying."

"Family tradition," Sonya grinned. "Welcome to the table."

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The lights in their TARDIS bedroom were dimmed to a soft amber glow. The hum of the console room was a distant whisper behind closed doors. Evening had settled like a lullaby, and the walls held the quiet warmth of family.

The Doctor, barefoot and dressed in one of Yaz's oversized t-shirts and knickers rocked gently as she cradled Anaya against her chest, the baby's tiny hand curled at her collar. With one last hush and a fond kiss to her temple, she laid her daughter into the cot, tucking the soft blanket around her with a gentle touch that lingered.

In the bathroom Yaz stood by the mirror, slowly letting down her braids. The sound of the brush sliding through her hair was the only sound in the quiet space. The Doctor walked over to the door, one hand resting on the frame as she watched Yaz with open adoration, the kind of gaze that carried galaxies in its silence.

"What's the plan for tomorrow?" she asked softly, meeting her eyes in the mirror.

The Doctor stepped forward, her voice low, "Test jump. Just a short one. Enough to confirm everything's holding steady."

Yaz frowned slightly, brushing paused mid-stroke. "And if it's not? What if something goes wrong?"

A quiet smile played on the Doctor's lips as she slid up behind her, wrapping her arms around Yaz's waist, pressing close. "Nothing's gonna go wrong," she whispered against her skin, planting a tender kiss just below her ear.

Yaz huffed a half-laugh. "You'd say anything right now if it meant getting your way with me."

The Doctor pulled back just enough to feign mock insult, eyebrows arched. "Are you trying to say I'm manipulative?"

"Centuries of practice," Yaz teased, turning her head just slightly, lips twitching into a smirk.

"Oi! That is absolute slander!," the Doctor murmured, voice husky now as her hands began to roam slowly, confidently, "In fact I'm extremely ethical, thank you very much. I just happen to be brilliant and have great hands."

Yaz gasped softly as the Doctor's fingers slipped under the hem of her underwear "I'm very persuasive. It's a burden, really." Doctor murmured, trailing her lips down the slope of her shoulder with a featherlight tease.

"You're a right piece of work," Yaz muttered, but her breath was catching now.

"And you," the Doctor whispered, "are terrible at resisting me."

Yaz turned at last, meeting her halfway, their lips crashing together in a kiss that burned, all breath and a quiet ache of longing. The Doctor's hand slid up, fingers

curving behind Yaz's neck, holding her there as if the universe would end if they parted. They stumbled to the bed, crushing on to it with a thud, then looked towards Anaya who was unbothered, still sleeping.

Yaz grabbed a fistful of Doctor's t-shirt pulling her into another kiss, hungry and passionate.

She curved into her, a whisper of breath escaping her lips as Doctor's lips trailed lower, warm and wanting. Their hands tangled in the sheets, in each other, in need. Yaz's fingers slid into the Doctor's hair just as the world decided to literally explode. The TARDIS shuddered, jolting violently. Lights flickered. A glass fell off a side table and shattered on the floor.

"OH, COME ON!" the Doctor groaned from somewhere under Yaz's thigh.

Anaya screamed.

"Oh for—" Yaz threw an arm over her eyes, "That better not be another bloody earthquake."

Hakim burst out of his room in a dressing gown and fluffy socks, clutching a mug of tea that was now very empty. Nadjia stormed out behind him, hair wrapped in a towel.

Sonya skidded in from her room in unicorn pyjamas. "Did we just get hit by a lorry?!"

"Nope!" Ten shouted as he sprinted past in a blur, wild hair flying, shirt flapping over bare legs, socks half-on, sonic gripped tightly in one hand. "Louder than that! Definitely bigger!"

Thirteen shot out, hair everywhere, still in her boxers and t-shirt. Yaz was behind her, shirt half-buttoned, holding Anaya who was howling like a foghorn.

Both Doctors yelled in unison, pointing back
"Stay in the TARDIS!"

They barrelled down the hall like Olympic sprinters, nearly falling down the stairs, sonic screwdrivers waving as if they could baton their way through catastrophe.

The 13th opened the door. Smoke. Sirens. Chaos.

A full London Underground train was sprawled halfway across the street, embedded into a row of Victorian terraces like it had popped up for tea. Sparks shot into the air. People screamed. Flames flicked in the sky. Bricks smoldered.

And over the crackling of fire and confusion the voice came from the train ...

"The next station is... Clapham Junction. Mind the gap."

Yaz blinked. "...We're in Sheffield."

Thirteen stared at the mess, hands on hips. "Great Scott," she muttered.

Ten raised an eyebrow, glancing down at Thirteen. "Corgis? Seriously?"

Thirteen folded her arms, completely unapologetic. "Oh, and question marks are a fashion statement now?" she shot back, nodding at his own underwear.

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