

## Strange Tidings

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## Strange Tidings

by [QuailFence](#)

### Summary

While looking for a stolen crystal, Ace and the Doctor stumble across some interesting people.

### Notes

Written for the 2022 round of [crossworks](#). Thanks to [stevensimonscott](#) for betaing. Date changed to coincide with creator reveals for the exchange. Originally posted 18 Aug 2022

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

“Ace, how would you like a vacation on Paralexis IV?”

“What’s there?” Ace asked, popping her head in.

“Quite a lot, but I was thinking that we could go to their fabulous museum of gemology. It has the largest collection of minerals and gemstones in the sixtieth century Andromeda galaxy.”

Ace thought for a minute, then nodded. “Sure, let’s go. It’ll be a nice break from saving planets.”

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Of course, not ten minutes after they arrived, they were roped into a mystery.

“You say that the great crystal has disappeared?”

The museum curator—a Paralexian, a birdlike creature with a reedy voice and pink plumage—nodded. “Shortly before the museum opened, a security guard came to check on it, like we do every day. When we saw that the crystal had disappeared, we told our superiors. They checked the security footage, and saw nobody come in or out. No alarms triggered, either. It’s like the crystal disappeared into thin air!”

“Excuse me,” Ace butted in, “But what’s this great crystal and why is it so important?”

The Doctor turned to her and began to explain. “The Great Crystal of Miloshi is a giant green crystal, nearly as big as my head, that’s very important to this part of Paralexis IV”

The curator continued. “In the past, it played an important part in the rituals and beliefs of the religions of the groups that eventually became the Miloshi. While those religious beliefs are less common nowadays, it still serves as an important symbol of Miloshi culture and independence. Losing it is a great loss to us.”

“We’ll do our best to find it,” the Doctor promised. “Won’t we, Ace?”

“Oh, yes,” Ace agreed. “The Professor’s very good at helping get people and planets and sometimes the whole universe out of sticky situations.”

As they left for the crystal chamber, the Doctor told Ace, “Sorry that I took you for a vacation and we ended up in trouble anyways,”

“It’s alright,” replied Ace. “This is lower stakes than we usually deal with anyways. Not that it isn’t important, but it’s not trying to prevent the Daleks from exterminating an entire solar system either.”

The Doctor gave a hum - whether it was in agreement or contemplation or both, Ace wasn't sure - and they entered the chamber.

"Oh, blast and bother!" The Doctor said, scowling at their sonic screwdriver. Apparently they'd had one for many lifetimes until they lost it in the Great Fire of London, and had only just gotten down to replacing it. The whirring noises it made were annoying, but Ace had to admit that it was very useful.

"What is it, Professor?"

"It seems that the Great Crystal has moved into another universe."

Ace frowned. "So... we've lost it, then?"

"No, we can still follow it, it's just that traveling between universes places an immense strain on the TARDIS's systems." The Doctor pocketed the sonic and gestured for Ace to follow them. When they got back to the TARDIS, the Doctor began aggressively working the controls and told Ace, "Find something to hold on to." She barely had time to grab onto her side of the console before the TARDIS made a great heaving noise and began rocking violently back and forth and up and down and around. The TARDIS's wheezing and groaning noises seemed more strained than usual, and Ace got the impression that the TARDIS was distinctly annoyed by the Doctor trying to get it to bring them to another universe.

Finally, the rocking and noises subsided. Ace - who had crashed to the floor sometime during the trip - picked herself off the ground and told the Doctor in a rather annoyed tone, "That has got to be the worst trip I've ever taken in that machine of yours. Do you know where we've ended up?"

"She's not a machine," they responded, fiddling with the controls. "Give me a moment." The scanner turned on, and they both peered up at it. It showed a dimly-lit room with a variety of gray crates and boxes with colorful labels stacked up in piles.

"Looks like we've landed in someone's storage room," remarked Ace.

"Yes, but whose and where?" The Doctor turned back to the controls, and after a minute they had an answer. "It looks like this particular storage room is on the bottom level of a spaceship. The Great Crystal isn't on it, but the ship is heading towards it. Unfortunately, I can't determine the crystal's exact location." They straightened up and turned to Ace. "I suppose we'll have to go exploring."

The pair exited, and Ace went over to look at the nearest pile of boxes. She peered at the label of the container on top of it: "Refined dilithium, one hundred 1 kg rods. WARNING: Highly flammable. Store in a fireproof container until ready to use."

"Ace?" called the Doctor. She turned to look at them, and saw that they were being held at the point of some weapon that she couldn't identify, wielded by a person with a yellow shirt and blue skin. "We seem to have a problem."

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*Personal log of Deanna Troi, supplemental. Security has apprehended two people in the cargo hold. One of them has given her name as Ace, and the other claims to be the entity known as the Doctor. Given that their arrival coincided with a spike in chroniton readings and the appearance of a Police Box in said hold, signs generally associated with the arrival of the Doctor, I have been asked to interview them in order to determine if they are really who they say they are.*

When Troi got to the brig, she was escorted to the cell in which the two intruders were being held. They both had pale skin and looked Human, but Troi knew that they might not be. One of them was about middle aged, and wore a tan hat with a sweater vest that had question marks on it. The other looked like a teenager, with long brown hair in a ponytail and a black leather jacket.

"You're the Doctor and Ace, I'm assuming?"

The younger one spoke up. "I'm Ace, this is the Doctor and who are you?"

Ace seemed to be telling the truth — or at least believed what she was saying. "I'm Deanna Troi, head Counselor of the Federation Starship Enterprise. I was sent down here to interview you two using my empathic senses, and figure out if you're telling the truth about who you are.

Ace scowled. "Why would you do that? The Prof- the Doctor says that they've had dealings with your Federation before, and that you've gotten along for the most part. Surely you'd recognize them."

Troi shook her head. "Not necessarily. According to the files, the Doctor changes their face every once in a while. Apparently it's due to some ability of their species called regeneration. Because of that, we need to make sure that the person we're dealing with is the actual Doctor and not some impostor claiming to be them and that they've regenerated since the last time we met."

The Doctor nodded. "Quite right. Now, if you could get along with the business of verifying our identities? I'd like to do what I came here to do as soon as possible."

Deanna nodded. "And what, exactly, are you planning to do?"

"Search for a crystal that I believe has fallen into this universe."

"Why do you need to find this crystal?"

Ace spoke up. "It's really important to these aliens, the Mironshi."

"Miloshi," the Doctor corrected.

"Miloshi. It's very important to their culture, and they really want it back."

Ace still didn't seem to be lying. Deanna thought for a second about how to word her next question, then turned to the Doctor and asked, "Was everything Ace told me true and accurate?"

"Yes, it was."

The Doctor, too, was telling the truth, or thought they were. There was the possibility of them having been brainwashed, but their mind didn't feel like it. There was also the possibility of a third party having lied to the pair, but it was the Doctor and Ace's honesty that Troi was worried about, and they at least were telling the truth to the best of their knowledge. However, she needed to ask one last question before they could go.

"Why did you end up on our ship specifically? Is the crystal in this ship?"

"It's not on your ship," the Doctor answered. "My own ship can be a bit, ah, temperamental, as your files on me will surely show, especially when traveling between universes. I aimed for the crystal, but ended up here instead."

Again, they believed that they were telling the truth, which was enough for Troi. "You two can leave. Is there any way in which we can help you find this crystal?"

"Yes, actually. The TARDIS's sensors are not powerful enough for me to determine the exact location of the crystal, only the direction it is in. If I could have access to your ship's sensors so that I might be able to pinpoint the crystal's location, I would be extremely grateful."

"Let me talk to Captain Picard and Lieutenant La Forge and see what we can do."

The Doctor did end up getting permission to use the Enterprise's scanners in order to find the crystal. Ace watched the Doctor and LaForge tinker with them for a minute, then realized that she probably wouldn't be able to help and that watching them would be boring. So she asked Troi if there was a place where she could hang out, and was led to a place called Ten-Forward. It was a bar, with a big window showing the stars at one end. It was about half full, with about two thirds of the people there not wearing the primary-color outfits that Ace had seen in the ship's halls. Troi introduced Ace to the bartender, Guinan, a person with dark skin who wore bright yellow velvet robes with a matching flat-topped hat, and black hair arranged in several thick braids. Said introduction included Troi badgering Ace into telling Guinan that she was an adult Human so that Guinan knew that she was able to serve Ace anything in her stock that was not toxic for Humans. After that was done, Troi excused herself, saying that she was still on duty and had other responsibilities to attend to.

Once Troi left, Ace ordered a drink. As Guinan began to prepare it, she asked Ace, "So, you travel with the Doctor?"

"Yeah," replied Ace. "Why are you asking?"

"We've run into each other a couple times, not always in the same order as each other," she responded. "I'd like to swap stories and impressions, if you're willing."

"I definitely would," Ace replied with a grin as Guinan handed the finished drink over to her. "It's pretty rare that I meet someone who knows them, let alone from another universe."

"So, how long have you been traveling with this one? What do you think about them?"

"About...four years, maybe? It can be hard to tell the passage of time in the TARDIS." Ace took a long drink as she considered her answer to the second question. "The Professor - that's my nickname for them - well, they can seem silly and charming at first, but underneath that they're rather clever, and good at tricking you into doing what they want."

"Oh? How so?"

"Well, they once were trying to get this weapon away from these aliens called Daleks- do you know what a Dalek is?"

"I've never met one but I've heard the Doctor talk about them. Squids encased in metal travel cases, want to destroy everything that isn't them?"

"Yeah. Anyways, the Daleks were in a civil war, and each side was trying to get this weapon called the Hand of Omega. The Professor was trying to stop either of them from getting it. Eventually one side did, and the Professor goaded them into activating the weapon. Then they got more serious, told them not to use the weapon, that it would malfunction. The leader ignored them and used it anyway. Well...the Professor had booby-trapped the weapon, so they just ended up blowing themselves up."

Guinan let out a soft whistle. "That is...probably the most manipulative I've ever heard them of being. I don't doubt that they could *do* it, it's just that I've never heard of them doing anything like that before."

Ace nodded in acknowledgement. "Yeah. They're a good person, though - all of their schemes ultimately end up taking down people who deserve to get taken down." She took another sip of her drink. "So...how did you end up meeting them the first time?"

"Well, I used to own a bar on Earth—a series of bars, actually. At the time I was working in San Francisco..."

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They continued talking until the Doctor strolled in to Ten Forward, telling Ace to come with them.

"Are you sure that Iota Cerberii II is the planet that the crystal is on?" asked the pilot of the shuttle that the Doctor and Ace were in, an Ensign Vperli. She looked rather like a humanoid pig but according to the Doctor was an alien of a species known as "Tellarite". In addition to piloting their shuttle, she was apparently going to make sure that the Doctor and Ace "didn't cause *too* much trouble looking for this crystal," as she put it.

"Not entirely," admitted the Doctor, "but given that the sensor readings decreased when we moved away from this planet, I'm fairly certain that the crystal is at the very least in the same system."

The Doctor tried to chat with Vperli, but she told them to shut up so that she could concentrate on flying the shuttle, meaning the Doctor spent most of the trip trying to get Ace to tell them what she and Guinan had talked about.

They finally landed next to a forest which was, aside from everything being gray and blue rather than brown and green, pretty similar to the ones that Ace had seen in Britain. The three of them climbed out and the Doctor took out their sonic screwdriver. They immediately began buzzing it around.

“Could you please stop that irritating noise?” complained Vperli.

“I was just about to,” replied the Doctor as they switched off the screwdriver. “I needed to check if we were on the right planet.”

“Are we?” asked Ace.

“We are, and in a stroke of good luck, the crystal is rather nearby - only about a kilometer that way,” they replied, pointing into the forest a little right of where they were standing.

Ace nodded in response and began to jog towards where the Doctor was pointing, with Vperli and the Doctor right behind her. After a couple minutes they found themselves in a clearing. In it was a mischievously grinning humanoid figure holding the crystal.

“Who are you, and why do you have the crystal?” Ace demanded.

“Ooh, you’re a feisty one, aren’t you?” replied the figure.

Vpreli signed. “That’s Q. He has a tendency to bother our captain.”

Q grinned. “That’s right, my dear! Though I think ‘bother’ is a bit strong of a word - I prefer to think of it as ‘checking in’. As for why I have the crystal - I wanted to attract the attention of that wonderful fellow known as ‘the Doctor’! Are they here?”

“Yes, I’m here,” snapped the Doctor. “But that still doesn’t explain why you took the crystal. Couldn’t you have just called?”

Q tisked. “Oh, where’s the fun in that? Watching you scramble to find this crystal was so much more amusing than a simple *phone call* would be, I assure you.”

The Doctor sighed. “Why did you want to get my attention in the first place?”

“I’ve heard so much about you, but I’ve never gotten to talk to you - until now!” He leaned in closer. “So, how’s the war going?”

“War? What war?” the Doctor replied, confused.

“The War in Heaven, of course! Or perhaps you know it as the Last Great Time War...no?” he replied when he saw the confused looks on all three of their faces. “You haven’t heard of the war?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” said the Doctor, shaking their head. “Why do you want to know about this war, anyways?”

“Because that war created this time-stream. And you fought in it.” Before the Doctor could do anything more than sputter indignantly, Q sighed and said, “Oh, well, not much fun speaking with someone who doesn’t know what I’m talking about...” And he snapped his fingers and disappeared, leaving the Great Crystal of Miloshi on the ground and three confused people in a forest clearing. The Doctor put the Crystal in his pocket, and they didn’t talk the entire way back to the Enterprise.

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Back in the TARDIS, Ace stood in the corner with her arms crossed and watched as the Doctor fiddled with the controls, waiting for him to speak. It was a minute before they broke the silence by asking, “well, Ace, what did you think of those people on the *Enterprise*?”

“Troi was nice, once we got out of that cell,” she replied. “And Vperli was...okay. Guinan was ace, though - she had a lot of good stories about you.” She then switched the topic to the one she *actually* wanted to talk about. “So, about that war that Q person mentioned.”

“What about it?”

“I don’t know, anything! What do you think it’s about? Do you think you’ll be able to avoid it? Do you think *I’ll* be able to avoid it?”

“In order: I have several ideas but I don’t know for certain; no, since that Q person mentioned that I fought in it, and even if he hadn’t I’d probably get involved in it eventually, probably and I’ll do my best to make that the case.” They began flipping switches more aggressively. “Now, hold onto something - we’ve got a Great Crystal to return to its proper people.”

As Ace clung to the console, she mentally sighed. Once they returned the crystal, the Doctor was probably not going to answer any more questions about the war. She’d have to settle with the answers that she had been given - at least for now.

## End Notes

A few elements of this fic - namely, Starfleet being aware of the Doctor, and them and Guinan knowing each other - were inspired by the excellent fancomic [The Hero of Three Faces](#)  
The planet name came from the [donjon](#) generator

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