

Hometown Surprises

Von Ikeuchi_Aya

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Kapitel 1: Heading Home

CHAPTER I: HEADING HOME

It was night. A warm and wet summer night. I hated that kind of weather and temperature. My head began to ache and I felt the dizziness which started to overtake my whole body.

The air smelt as if there would be another shower of rain soon. No surprise. The weather forecast had told us on Monday that there was not a chance of getting a real summer for the next 14 days.

I sighed and continued walking after the green traffic light for pedestrians lit up.

Today had been a busy day. I had to get up early because of my internship and after work, I had to go to several bureaucracy appointments I made in the past. Or they made for me in the past. I could not remember anymore.

The sleepiness became real after 5 PM and now, as it already was about 9 PM, I just wanted to close my eyes immediately and fell into sleep.

'Hey, watch out!' I heard a person's yell and got back to reality. I almost bumped into another person, a tall man with a striped suit and chucks on his feet. I turned my head and blinked as I walked on.

He had a slim figure, brown short and chaotic hair and over his suit, he wore a light brown trenchcoat. Was ist some kind of cosplayer? No. It could not have been. That kind of walk, that voice, ... that was impossible!

I blinked again and noticed that he almost got lost of my sight.

I turned around on my heels and backcrossed the road, quick, because the traffic light showed the helmeted red little man with outstretched arms again.

A sudden urge to follow that stranger packed me.

I could not resist. I was curious, I was anxious. My heart started thumping strongly against my chest and it was not just because I speeded up.

Faster, I made my way through the crowd which was so typical for Berlin, even at night.

The man just turned left to Tauentzienstrasse, a well-known road for (expensive) shopping here and dashed through the people.

'Dammit,' I expelled and tried to be on the scent.

My mind kept telling me the whole time that it could not be real.

There was no chance, that HE was here after all.

He was a figure.

A simple figure from a long on-going story, shown on the BBC programme.

Nothing to be crazy about.

Well, okay, crazy, but only in your mind.

There was absolutely no bloody way that the Doctor could be here in our time and space.

End of the lesson.

Yes, I know all that.

But sometimes your intestines tell you something else. That was a moment like that. I know all about the stuff and still, I felt it that it must be real.

That was why I kept following him. Just because I accidentally bumped into him and he apologised - more or less. Actually, he just shouted at me to prevent any further injuries, but that did not matter at the moment.

I continued to walk his footprints and recognised the surroundings. He kept going, passing the NIKE-store, Uniqlo, the whole long passage and the famous KaDeWe - it was the street where the subway station 'Wittenbergplatz' would appear within a few metres. And if I had been ever wondering how fast the Doctor walks... now I knew it.

I was a bit out of breath when the crowd finally lifted and only a few people were on the same pavement like us. Out of breath, hurting diaphragm and the fact that I was getting slower and slower as much as the running kept going.

He would disappear. He would disappear and I would never see him again.

Maybe it was that fear that let me shout out to him - in a squeaky voice, much higher than I usually sound, and also louder than I usually speak:

'DOCTOR!'

I should have done this so much earlier.

It was like a magic word, like *Abacadabra* or *Alohomora* that he reacted to it.

The stranger stopped, turned around and looked puzzled who on earth had called him. I felt his eyes on mine. There was no other one around who stood breathless in the way of others and tried to compose herself. It was only me.

'Yeah?' he answered, still surprised, but very calm. He just stood there and my heart was racing.

That was no Fata Morgana, no illusion. It really was him. A man walked by and did not pass through the Doctor, just *bypassed* him. He might be real. That was for sure.

'What is it?' the Doctor wanted to know, 'How can I help you?'

He even sounded like David Tennant and I shook my head to get a clear mind again.

I tried to answer in a much more normal way, 'Er... you... are the Doctor, right?'

Stupid question, but I did not know what else I should say. I really needed to know that I was not dreaming.

Now he turned wholly around and put his hand in the pockets of his trenchcoat.

'Well... it seems so' he suggested, 'Depends on what is your request?'

I continued walking, slowly, and I could not help but started smiling. Smiling because of the most unreal things became real.

After such an exhausting day.

With that kind of shitty weather.

Just in the middle of my hometown's city centre.

It became real: I met the Doctor. (My *favourite* Doctor, just for addition)

'Um... to be honest...' I could not come up with any kind of excuse. I just did not have one. So I tried to think of anything that would be reasonable why I stopped him while he might try to save the universe again, 'I don't know. Actually, I never thought I would meet you in person. Once. In my life. Well... in *this* life.' I talked myself more and more into trouble, but in the end, I managed to walk up to him and at least he was not too bothered. The Doctor's expression was some kind of emotionless, but emotionless was good. It was *neutral*. It was *okayish*. I could continue, babbling around, but for our both's sake, I did not.

'Well, yeah, usually most of you don't' he simply said, nodding once, but did not blink for a bit. Maybe he thought I was some kind of enemy? Well... or at least some kind of lunatic. That would not surprise *me*. 'And you are?'

'Oh' I made and realised that I had not introduced myself yet, 'I'm Alex. I'm... living here. You know, not *here* exactly, but here. In this town.' I stuttered and it was not my

thing to stutter, but the Doctor threw me off track, just with his presence.

'Then... nice to meet you, Alex. So... if you don't mind, er... do you wanna tell me why exactly you seem to know me? I don't think we met before?'

He was right. Of course, we did not. His brief scratching behind his ear and the big eyes, which lay on me, was an unbreakable evidence that his whole memory would not tell him anything else. But what should I have said? That I have known him from TV? Come on, Alex, that would you make even more look like a lunatic!

'Everybody knows you... more or less. You're... some kind of... popular?' I tried my best to explain, but earned a more questionable look from him,

'Popular? What? What year do we have?'

'2017.'

'There's no way, people know me like you suggest they do.'

'Well, I didn't say "everyone". Just... a certain among of people,' I tried to correct myself, but talked myself more into trouble. Again.

Now the Doctor overcame the last metres and we stood face to face.

'Who exactly are you?' he asked in his calm voice, but the seriousness of it gave me the direct order not to lie or to try anything else than telling the truth.

'Really, just a human being. Just a woman who had an awful day and wanted to go home to her boyfriend, cuddling up.'

He kept looking at me, looking me straight into the eyes and I just held on. Not avoiding the eye contact. *Please, hold the line.*

Then, suddenly, he looked in on me, behind me and the mood changed.

'You'll come with me.'

'What?' It was my turn to sound unbelievable.

'You'll come with me if you still want to cuddle up with your boyfriend. Else you *never ever* will again!' It was a threat, but not a threat he made on me. It was a threat I would understand much later. For the moment I just felt he was grabbing my wrist and took me with him.

I did not have a choice and I did not dare to look behind me.

The only thing I knew was that I had to trust the Doctor. That I could trust him like I trust my husband-to-be, who was actually waiting for me...

Here, in the centre of Berlin, on this sticky night, I had a change in my life nobody else would ever believe me.

If I would be ever able to tell it to *somebody*.

Between you and me: I was not so sure of it because *running* was almost *never* a good sign in "Doctor Who".

Kapitel 2: In the TARDIS

CHAPTER II: IN THE TARDIS

'Ich kann nicht mehr,' I called accidentally in German while I blew out the used air, hoping my diaphragm would release a bit of the tension. No. Still hurting.

And the worst part of it was that I could not stop running. The Doctor pushed and pushed forward. He still held my hand and so I could not do anything else than keeping the track.

'I know, but you *have* to,' he insisted. Yeah, thank you, TARDIS. Always translating everything. Wait. Of course, I could talk in German the whole time and it would not matter, right? Instinctively I had switched to English. Well, now I could go on with it, could not I?

'W-What is it we're running from, anyway?' I wanted to know. I was not allowed to look back and I was sure, I did not want to know either, so I wanted to hear an explanation from the Doctor himself at least.

'We're not running away. We're running into it.'

'What?' That sounded even more surreal.

'We're heading right into the disaster.'

'Okay, STOP,' I yelled and put all my strength together to get a halt. I set my feet on the ground with all my might and tried to pull my hand back. The timelord did not let go of it, but for once he had to stop with me, 'What is it you're talking about? What's the big deal?' When I looked him straight into the eyes I knew that it was irresponsible to start talking about the running issue *right now* and *here*. I knew it was a mistake. I really *did* know. Still, humans are the race who know too much and still make it to the top of stupidity. Thank you, for your appreciation.

'I *will* explain it to you, okay? I *will* explain everything to you. When we get to a *safe* place.'

The TARDIS.

There was no other place the Doctor would rather be if it comes to "safe places". It was his sanctuary. His exit for almost every danger he might face.

I could not object. If the situation was that worse ... I should just accept it and trust him. Trust his decision.

And it was hard not to trust someone who you started fancying a long time ago. Not because it was the Doctor or that the Doctor was played by David Tennant but because both men remind you of your husband-to-be you love so much.

'Okay,' I answered meekly.

The Doctor sighed in relief, his eyebrows pulled apart and then he turned around again, 'Let's go.'

It was not a long run. We had only 50 m left until we reached the underground station. The impressive grey and beige coloured building, which reminds one of Greek architecture because of the four columns (actually built in 1902 by an architect called Paul Wittig), was right in front of us, but the Doctor did not want to enter it. Instead, he walked further on. We passed the station's building, crossed the street which was not crowded with cars but nearly dead, turned left and then rushed through an archway - the entry of an old tenant-occupied house, one of the popular Altbau kind of houses in Berlin.

It was dark and the big double doors were only ajar, so I stumbled with my right shoulder against the heavy wood and felt the pain immediately through my whole body. Ouch.

For a second.

Because you know what?

Sometimes pain can be absolutely forgotten. *It is demanded to be felt* but sometimes... it just is not.

Right in front of me was the one thing that let me feel in disbelief.

'It can't be...' I whispered, unable to move forward. The Doctor snapped his fingers and the door of the dark blue police box opened itself.

Light emitted from the inside and lit up the dark floor around us.

'Come on, no time to waste!' the Doctor invited me in and had finally let go of my hand. He stood right in the doorway and waited for me to follow.

Right. No time to lose control. No time to stand here and admire the TARDIS.

I had seen one once, when I was in London, visiting the "Doctor Who" shop. I suddenly remembered the overwhelming feeling when the key was given to me and I could open up the door myself. It was only a mock-up, of course, but my imagination had gone crazy. *What, if it is the real one? What would you do now? Imagine, the Doctor gave you the key!* And so on.

I felt my heart racing, the temperature reaching my cheeks, blood rushing in my ears. Step by step I made it to the entrance, holding my breath when I was just before going in the box. The Doctor already did and so it was my turn.

I took a deep breath and then marched on.

That.

I stood in the TARDIS.

'It's, er.... bigger on the inside?' I could not suppress the urge to speak that quote.

I knew how the TARDIS looks like from the inside. I knew it well. Nevertheless, it was something totally different to see something with your own two eyes. I never had a "Doctor Who experience" in Cardiff, never visited the filming's set and so it was as astonishing as for every other one to stand inside the ship of the Doctor.

I was shifty-eyes, could not get enough of every detail here.

'You won't go insane?'

'No, don't think so.'

'Good.'

I did not take notice that the Doctor was already on his feet, maintaining the TARDIS' control desk. Now I watched his every step and suddenly, in the middle of his doing, I realised what would happen next. Of course, he would not flip switches and pull on the lever for nothing, would he?

'Doctor, where do we go?' My voice was near shrieking and the Doctor looked at me with a stern expression on his face. He was checking if I was freaking out.

I was not. Well, maybe a bit. Because I did not think it through. The running, the *escaping* ... of course, entering the TARDIS meant, we would go further. Much further. 'Far enough to avoid the danger right now,' he answered as calm as you could be, 'Don't worry. We'll come back.'

Well, that was exactly what I was worrying about: Going away with the TARDIS could mean five minutes or a year. It could mean earth, Mars or the end of the universe. Even if I imagined from tie to time how it would be to travel with the Doctor, I was not prepared for doing so. Not now.

But I could not object. Not at all. And what would happen if I did? Nothing.

He would have keep going. Because it was the only thing that was right to do at the moment. 'I'm sorry.'

And even if I had imagined traveling with him, I had never wanted to hear these words coming out of his mouth. That "sorry" that left his lips too often.

I felt the stuttering under my feet and heard the typical sound of the blue telephone box. Signs that we would leave the place and end up... I do not know where.

I could only hold on the backrest which looked like the pilot's seat, hoping that the journey - wherever it would lead us - would go smoothly, no obstacles, no trouble.

'You shouldn't be,' I pressed through my pursed lips, 'Better than getting caught by... whatever it was you've been running from.'

The Doctor looked up when he was hitting another bottom and could let go of the control desk for a second.

We looked each other in the eye and said nothing. Finally, he dropped his gaze and cleared his throat.

'That may take a while.'

'I think I have that time now.'

'You do.'