

Proposal for a *Doctor Who* short story
featuring the eighth Doctor and Sam Jones

“BOUNTY”

by Peter Anghelides

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First Draft

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Bounty

Proposal for a 5,000-word *Doctor Who* short story by Peter Anghelides

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“That cloud,” said the Doctor. He was pointing one long finger vaguely into the almost clear blue sky.

“That one looks a lot like a Vandeyan Arctic Plant.”

Sam levered herself up onto her elbows, scrunching the warm white sand beneath her, but didn't turn over. “Yeah, right.”

“Or a Chookian ice ape.” The Doctor squinted at her. “Now you'd find *them* fascinating.”

The Doctor is casually trying to convince Sam that the TARDIS really can travel in time and space. The problem for him is that the ship has only transported them across the world from Coal Hill School to the Seychelles Islands (in the Indian Ocean). Sam had thought at first that they *were* on an alien world - black rocks, white sand, stunning blue sky. Then she spotted the palm trees, an old man painting at an easel further down the beach, another man scanning the beach with a metal detector. Two of the palm trees sweep almost horizontally across the beach, just like in the TV advert for the chocolate bar. A couple of palm trees beyond the rear of the beach seem to have been crudely chopped off - storm damage, probably, though they never show that in the TV ads, do they?

Sam is actually a little awed by the Doctor and his reported experiences, but is too cool to let him see this. So she teases him, as though he's bonkers: why should she believe this nonsense about traveling in space and time, when he could have just drugged her and flown her across the world? Never mind, she says sarcastically, maybe after this he can fly her somewhere out of this world, like Venus, or Alpha Centauri, or California. “Oh no,” says the Doctor, “I said one trip, and that's it - straight back home to London.” (So this short story will be, in part, about Sam's decision to travel with the Doctor,

and the Doctor allowing her to do so.)

Sam is writing a postcard home to her parents, trying to think up a plausible story about how she got here. Maybe she's sneaked off with her local Greenpeace group to see the famous black parrot in the Vallée de Mai, or to explore alternative transport options here on the island of La Digue where there are no motor vehicles, only ox-drawn carts. Whatever she writes, it should provoke a reaction from her parents, a response - anything other than their current complacent acceptance of her.

If the Doctor really has travelled the Universe, then maybe she can win at one of her school friend's games called "Well, I never did". You declare something you've never, ever done - if the other person has done it, you score a point; if they haven't either, they score a point. In this game, the winner gets to choose their next destination.

Sam: "I've never been to the Seychelles before." Neither has the Doctor, so a point to him. His turn.

The Doctor: "I've never been a member of Greenpeace." Two points to him.

Sam: "I've never been to... er... Pluto." Lucky guess, a point to her. She realises that she will have difficulty working out what he *has* done, where he *has* been.

The Doctor: "I've never kissed Danny Watson." She's somewhat taken aback. And it's another point to him.

Sam has a long think. "I've never killed someone."

The Doctor is quiet for a long time. Then he affects to spot another cloud shape. "That one looks like a grumpy Draconian," he says.

She gets up in the sand, about to remonstrate with him, when she finds she's kneeling on a hard object. It's about the size of a pocket calculator, with lots of interesting dangly wires and scorch marks. The Doctor says it's an alien artifact. How can he tell it's alien? Well, she would recognise plastic if she found it in sixteenth century France, wouldn't she? Besides, what do you know on earth that does this -

and he activates what appears to be a homing signal.

So what is it? “I don’t recognise all alien artifacts instantaneously,” says the Doctor. “My hero has feet of clay,” says Sam, looking at his the Doctor’s bare feet in the sand. Beside them, she spots another small, dark shape.

She doesn’t get chance to comment on this, however, because the man with the metal detector has come across to join them. And, much to their surprise, he is pointing something else at them which the Doctor recognises as alien - a weapon! Metal Detector Man snatches the artifact, and scarpers. The Doctor tells Sam that there’s something odd about the man (“what, apart from the fact he’s shoving an alien gun up our nostrils?”) and he’s going to follow him to see what’s up. But he won’t let Sam come with him, much to her disgust. Off he goes, trying not to let Metal Detector Man see him.

“Well, lucky I found this bit, then,” says Sam, to herself, examining the other artifact which she now picks up from the sand beside the Doctor’s footprint.

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The Doctor follows Metal Detector Man, keeping pace with him on a bicycle. Something seems different after he catches up with him, though - the man has turned into a splay-nosed, brachycephalic alien with ropes of hair like Seychellois braids. Then they pass a crowd of Seychellois, and the alien’s outline shimmers into a real Seychellois. Once out of range of the crowd, it transforms back to the alien shape. Passing a couple of nuns, the shape changes to a local priest... the creature is blending in like a chameleon, and the Doctor now recognises it as a Rhiptogan. At one point, as they continue their progress, the Doctor passes the TARDIS where it is parked neatly behind a clump of palm trees.

The Doctor continues to follow the Rhiptogan on his bicycle to a local church, a cheap but cheerful Seychelles make-do building beside the beach. The Doctor pads around the back, being careful not to get his rolled-up trousers wet in the salty rock pools. He peers through one of the tall windows.

Inside, the Rhiptogan is opening up a heavy oak cupboard, engraved with Christian religious

symbols. But the cupboard is bristling with the usual flashing-lights paraphernalia of alien technology. Unobserved, the Rhiptogan is in his natural state. Much to the Doctor's surprise, however, another (female) Rhiptogan has sneaked in. This new arrival is called Ruduse, and the one who was previously Metal Detector Man is called Lirpa. They are clearly rivals.

Ruduse wants to know where to find someone called Anolis. Lirpa refuses to reveal this, saying he needs to find and protect him. Ruduse is not convinced - she wants to kill Anolis and win the price for bringing back his severed head.

Ruduse discovers that Lirpa has been able to recover and reactivate the tracking device - but has carelessly only recovered one part of it. Nevertheless, this can trace its companion component (which we will guess is the other bit that Sam found earlier). She takes it from the oak cupboard, and then shoots into the other equipment, which explodes. The aliens start to fight.

The Doctor scurries round to the front of the church, planning to stop the brawl and to deal with the ensuing fire. By the time he has reached them, however, they are throwing themselves about with inhuman strength. Ruduse gets the upper hand, and forces Lirpa out through one of the windows, where he falls into one of the rock pools. The Doctor leans out to see if he can help him, but Lirpa is thrashing about in the pool, his torso gushing steam as it dissolves in the salt water. The Doctor turns to face Ruduse, but she flings him through the same window.

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Sam has been examining the second alien artifact. As it's past 11 am, and blondes burn easily, she has moved to the rear of the beach to get into the shade. After a while, the artifact started to bleep and flash (the way artifacts do). When she shuffled further up the beach into the shade, the bleeping intensified. After some experimentation, she decides it must be a tracer, and uses it to work her way into the undergrowth. She moves beyond the storm-damaged palms, and discovers a furrow of torn foliage with fresh growth all through it.

She eventually makes her way to the entrance of a dark cave, with lots of odd, pale foliage all round it. She steps through this, and when her legs brush against the foliage she feels a stinging sensation. She pulls down her rolled-up trouser legs and puts on her deck shoes, and continues into the cave - which appears to be glowing. It's a small vessel of some kind. She's excited to have found a spacecraft, and as the door is open she goes inside. There she runs into a Rhiptogan, who is rather surprised to see her.

After an unsuccessful attempt to talk to her in French, it makes an equally disconcerting attempt to talk to her in English. "I am Anolis. I come in peace. I mean you no harm."

"I bet you say that to all the girls," she replies, trying to stay calm. The creature tries to calm her by changing its shape, but after it appears to turn into her father she asks it not to bother - she can cope with its natural appearance, and disguise seems a bit pointless.

Anolis explains that his ship crash-landed several weeks ago, and that he and his fellow fugitive Lirpa have been trying to get it working - searching for parts that fell loose in the crash. It's painstaking work, since the beach is not safe for them, and a bounty hunter from their own race is chasing them. He just wants to pack up and leave.

There's a noise from the doorway, and Sam sees the Doctor coming into the ship through the brightly-lit doorway. She shouts a warning about the stinging plants, but he explains that they are not harmful - he remembers that from his previous trip to the islands.

Sam looks at him - sees a flicker of doubt cross his face (what previous trip?). Behind her, Anolis makes a Rhiptogan "~~oh shit~~" "oh no" noise. Sam turns back to look at the Doctor. First she notices his eyes blink - like a reptile's! Then she sees he is holding something behind his back - it's the severed head of another Rhiptogan! This is not the Doctor, it's really Ruduse - who now throws Sam out of the ship and into the stinging plants. Sam can feel her hands and neck stinging.

Anolis and Ruduse fight inside the ship. Sam staggers to her feet, and tries to pry them apart.

Anolis seizes a chance to flee into the forest, apparently oblivious to the stinging plants. Sam stands in front of Ruduse in the doorway to prevent her following. The world starts to blur before her. Ruduse laughs - Sam's been poisoned by the ship's defence shield, the rows of Rhiptogan adike plants growing around the vessel. She seizes Sam, and starts to throttle her.

A shadow falls on them from the doorway. It's the Doctor! He is brandishing a fire bucket. He was delayed trying to contain the blaze at the little church, and now he's here with a bucket of sea water. Let go of Sam or he'll drench Ruduse with salt water, which will destroy the alien. After that, he wants them to take their Rhiptogan fight off this planet.

A standoff. Ruduse says she has the components to reactivate this shuttle, and that she plans to leave. The Doctor sets down the bucket, and Ruduse pushes Sam past the Doctor. As the Doctor catches Sam, Ruduse moves forward, kicks over the bucket, and seizes the Doctor.

Ruduse starts to throttle the Doctor. Is there a bounty on his head too, perhaps? She can add the Doctor's head to her collection anyway, just in case. The Doctor was a fool to try and save Sam, when it's obvious that the adike plants have done their work and she will soon die.

Sam, however, has struggled down the beach, filled the bucket, and struggled back spilling most of its contents. Now she hurls the remainder over the Doctor and Ruduse. Ruduse's left arm and the side of her face start to smoke, and she screams. Then she races for the controls, and slams the flight deck door. The Doctor and Sam stumble away towards the beach.

Behind them, the shuttle powers its way up into the sky and vanishes.

The Doctor drags Sam across to a purple VW Beetle, standing incongruously at the beach. He carries her into the sea to ease the urticaria on her skin. Sam explains that her legs, arms, and neck are really painful, like nettle stings "Nettle stings! Of course!" says the Doctor, and hares off to find a locally-growing alien flower (rumex) growing near to the adike. The salt water will help, but he can provide an antidote with the rumex.

They roar off in the VW Beetle. "I hate this car... it's so much smaller on the inside," says Sam. "Can I have a go in this later?" The Doctor points out she hasn't got a driving license. "Lucky we didn't get any further than Earth then, eh?" she says sarcastically, "then I'd have no chance."

She's fading. The Doctor tries to keep her conscious by talking - telling her how well she's coped with seeing aliens for the first time, how most Earth people cannot do this so easily. Sam wearily challenges him: what does he actually *know* about Earth? He travels around the Universe, maybe dropping in occasionally to this planet, meeting a handful of its billions of people, visiting a small number of the millions of places in each of its hundreds of countries at any time in all its history. What does he really know about Earth? "Let me tell you about my family," he begins, but she interrupts "No, I'm sick of family."

The last thing she sees before losing consciousness is the VM Beetle driving towards an impossibly small gap in the TARDIS doors.

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They're sitting on the beach again, watching the sun set. Sam is recuperating. She finds the postcard in her pocket, takes it out, folds it in half, and puts it away again.

"Your turn," says the Doctor.

"I've never churned up a beach in a car," says Sam.

The Doctor coughs apologetically, and looks at the ruts in front of them. "Two points apiece. The decider," he says. "My turn. I've never fought off a dangerous alien with a bucket of sea water."

Sam looks glum. "You win," she says. "London here we come."

"Yes, I get to choose your next destination," the Doctor smiles. He starts to pack up their deck chairs. "I understand you've never visited Pluto. Well, there's no time like the future, is there?"

The End