



[thedorkygirl](#) wrote in [dwfiction](#),
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THE CONTENDER - g - Seven & Ace

disclaimer & author's note: surprise crossover. See bottom.

[nostalgia lj](#) looked this over for me when I cried that nobody loved me. So, of course, to Steve from Dave with love.

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"Professor, you said we were going to a rock concert!"

"And so we are, Ace," the Doctor replied comfortably. "Undeniably we are in attendance at a concert. I urge you to simply look around you at the people milling about in clothes proclaiming allegiance to one or another of their rock and roll gods. Feel the bristle of energy that makes the hairs on the back of our necks stand straight. Listen, Ace, *listen* to the unwilling patience of the crowd. This," he said, "is much more than a simple *rock* concert."

Ace rolled her eyes to match his Rs and pulled down on the sleeves of her t-shirt, ignoring the scratchy heat that the weather and audience were producing. All around them, strangers were milling in a dull buzz of anticipation as the start of the show came ever nearer. The selection was varied -- young and old were there, of course, as were the various economic give-aways (*brands, hair, and teeth*, the Doctor muttered). But there were folks dressed in jeans -- thin, low, and tattered -- and people in tiny skirts. People in hissing leather, women in clanking heels, a few men in suits. Girls with bright blue hair and System of a Down shirts were a dozen a shilling, and if she saw one more black-haired, mascara-slathered teenage boy, Ace was certain she would scream.

To another though more slight extreme, dotted here and there in the crowd were men dressed as if it were a casual day at the office and not at all a concert (which, Ace thought scornfully, it really wasn't). There was someone she swore taught her history when she was twelve, dressed just as when he did those infuriating exams -- and dozens dressed in the same colored polo shirts and wrinkle-free trousers. Even still, there were people there dressed in more outfits more regular to her standards (with hair pulled back in pony tails and bright red sunburns already on their noses).

The only thing in common these people really had was the same tense energy that vibrated within them all. Parents were escorting children aged thirteen, ten, five, even toddlers, and they all kept up a collective bounce on the balls of their feet, faces craned toward the stage. Ace found herself catching the bug even as she answered the Doctor.

"This isn't a *concert* -- it's a contest. An air guitar contest."

"Ah, Ace, but that's the best part, isn't it?" the Doctor exclaimed, throwing his arm around her and gesturing in a wide half-circle with his other. "Look at these people, practically glowing with the wait. Eyes wide -- grins wide -- they're waiting for this as if it were their birthday."

Ace was saved from answering by the dimming of the lights and a strum of guitar strings. A man came on stage and raised his arms, and the crowd screamed a long, frenzied screech that nearly burst Ace's eardrums. Against her better judgement, she leapt and yelled with them.

"New York City. The year is 2009," the Doctor shushed into her ear, "and Alameda, California's own Hot Lixx Hulahan is here defending his crown in what's expected to be his fourth straight win as America's top air guitarist. But we have a young upstart thrown into the mix."

"An upset, Professor?" A fly landed near her nose, and she flicked it into the thick air with a thwap.

"An upstart, Ace, much like Hot Lixx himself. This air guitarist has only been on the circuit for four months -- roughly the same age of career as our current champion when he claimed the crown in 2006. The media says the circle of fame has come round again."

Amused, she asked, "And what happened to cycling race you were taking me to see? 2005, Lance Armstrong?"

The Doctor looked uncomfortable as some dark haired teenagers with thin eyebrows slithered past him in enough cloth to complete one of the three outfits needed to dress the girls (no matter *how* hot the weather was -- and it was drenching her back -- she would have never been seen in a public place or private wearing something that looked as sketchy as that).

Ace knew he hadn't noticed the passing girls but was instead formulating --

"I thought this would be more enjoyable."

"You or the TARDIS?" Ace asked smugly. "I knew you hadn't banged your knee when we landed -- the coordinates got bungled again!"

The Doctor didn't answer, merely pointed to the stage and what appeared to be the first guitarist.

It was a twenty-something Asian woman in bleached jeans and a sequined halter top. When she introduced herself as *Connexion* in a thick Texas twang, applause went up and died down quickly. Soon, she positioned herself, feet shoulder-distance apart, and dropped her chin to her chest.

"What is she --" Ace began, but the Doctor hushed her.

A rumble from the surround sound speakers started the sharp, clear tunes of Satisfaction by the Rolling Stones. As the acoustic tune sank into the audience, Connexion on stage started a slow, delicate rattle of her body that gradually gained fluidity and speed as the song itself heated up. Her slithering, sharp struggle was not a fight against anything, Ace saw, but one for something -- in a combustion of enthusiasm and clatter at the heat of the song, Connexion jumped from a bent position and sprang, fully, into rocking her air guitar.

The song changed into a violent and heavy trill of thrilling anger, and Connexion on stage threw herself into a frenzy hair and elbows and knees as she went nearly double into the air. Next to her, a group decked out in matching white tees with some sort of textual logo on them burst into rousing cheers.

"Ace!"

The song changed several more times in the sixty seconds allotted, and by the end of it Ace and the Doctor were out of breath from screaming along with everybody else. She didn't have the chance to feel ridiculous for smashing around in a standing room only air guitar contest, though at a later date she suspected self-mocking.

After Connexion's scores were announced came another guitarist -- and another, and another. Rather than draining, each performance was invigorating. Almost a dozen people had chosen at least some bit of Pink Floyd's Comfortably Numb, but there were so many selections that it could have been just the only one that Ace noticed. She danced through songs, most she knew, some she didn't, with each air guitarist, heart racing as wildly as their fingers. By the time almost ninety minutes had passed, she was drenched in her sweat and the sweat of others around her. The sticky mixture smelled marginally better than an old pair of trainers, and Ace was afraid to run her fingers through her hair because of the deep suspicion that she'd never be able to wrench them out again. The Doctor, she noticed, seemed just as calm and cool as when they'd first arrived.

An intermission came then, and she ate a ten dollar hot dog, suspected she had paid too much, and wandered over to the line for the toilet. Immediately regretting that she hadn't gone there first, Ace settled behind an attractive woman in a red leather jacket and great jeans escorted by a long-nosed man in an ugly blue suit. They seemed to be discussing an old argument between them in familiar, teasing tones -- the woman had wanted to go to Canada it seemed, and this detour *hadn't* been on the itinerary.

By the time she'd done her business and made it back to the front gates, the Doctor was propped up against a wall reading a torn paperback. Upon her arrival, he shoved the book in his pocket and smiled. Ace glared at the lack of perspiration on his brow and tugged her shirt up and down between her breasts surreptitiously in an attempt to wipe away the sweat that had gathered there.

"Ah, good, the main event is only acts away. Time for the battle for the crown!"

And so the final acts began, the top billing for the night's events. These performers were obviously the really talented and skilled ones; the sets and songs became more and more intricate

(and difficult, Ace marveled as one guitarist performed a back flip), and the scores became gradually higher and higher, leveling out at nearly top marks. Some of the more enthusiastic contestants included animals, walls, and even fire in their acts.

A compact young woman with short, fuchsia hair walked briskly across the stage and took the mic. Expecting another performance, Ace strained her ears to listen to the introduction.

"OKAY EVERYBODY," screamed the woman, "THIS IS IT. THE MOMENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR ... HOT LIXX HULAHAN!"

The noise level from the audience reminded Ace of the explosion from one of her aerosol cans. It was unbelievable in its volume, and it lasted nearly five full minutes after the person left the stage. People in the crowd were chanting *Hot Lixx* over and over again like a war cry, and the man himself stood on stage like an idol, long stringy limbs and tangled brown hair melting into a tall and sloping figure.

When the first strains of music started, the audience collectively drew in their breaths to watch the master at his art. His fingers moved like eddying water as he apparently drew out the sweet cords of a Satriani song, and Ace was unable to take her eyes from his body. The way he caressed it, his phantom guitar had weight and inspired feeling in the music being pumped out through loudspeakers.

He had the body of a guitarist -- long and lean and muscular and with a sheen of sweat. His face was all concentration, but his movements were free and unchecked. The water streamed off his face and dripped down his hair. Hot Lixx Hulahan had been born to rock, and he wasn't leaving the stage pure one moment longer. His was an intensity made for song lyrics and album covers.

It was spectacular, and by the time the random, judge-selected song came to close his set, Ace was breathless and hoarse. Only steps away, it looked as if the heat and excitement had been too much for one woman: she had fainted for a few seconds. A wide circle was emerging around her where she sat as people waited for security.

Ace wondered if the Doctor would mind getting them backstage and if she had a pen on her.

"Are you keeping properly hydrated?" asked the Doctor, and she nodded and held up a half-empty bottle of water (six American dollars).

On stage, Hot Lixx was still waving and bowing to the raving audience, some of whom were throwing items on stage for him. There were roses littering the ground at his feet, and clumps of cloth strewn among them. Ace wasn't certain, but she thought they were pants.

"He's amazing," she half-screamed, half-rasped to the Doctor, and he tapped his nose on the side and winked.

"Just wait for the contender."

Though she couldn't imagine anybody following that performance, Ace settled down to watch the next act -- the number one new rocker in the system -- walk on stage. Because of the crummy tickets the Doctor had got them and the awkward lighting, she wasn't at first certain that what she was seeing was in fact what she was seeing.

But it was, and, Gordon Bennett, it was incredible. This upstart -- this girl -- had come on stage dressed in a complete pirate's outfit. Ropes of tangled hair stuck out from under a glaring blue bandana, lending her the taint of Medusa. Though the rocker wore a patch over one eye, what Ace strongly suspected was half a tube of liner rang round the visible one in thick black, effectively obscuring it also.

Her white linen shirt was torn and tied and torn and tied in several places, patches in smart spots keeping modesty and holes in others hinting at possibility. Even her trousers looked authentic enough to pass inspection by Ace's discerning eye (though she *was* far from stage), and the boots were made to walk planks -- at the heels of a captured lass or lad bound for the seas.

Ace blinked and reassessed the outfit, but it was not a mirage brought on by the overwhelming heat. The final rocker truly was decked out like a *Pirates* extra. A sharp hacking squawk drew the spectators' eyes up as a bird -- an honest and green parrot -- circled above her. As the rocker advanced, so did the bird's orbit, and it almost seemed as if it were all beautifully choreographed (but it *couldn't* have been, could it?) Ace's thoughts were torn from pondering it out, though, because the closer the guitarist came to the stage, the lower and lower the disturbance of the crowd until she stood before a silent audience in the middle of a hot spotlight.

The air guitarist spoke. Whatever she said by way of introduction was drowned out by a thunderous roar from the crowd. There seemed to be no real segue between the accolade and the beginning of her performance; her bowing acceptance smoothly transformed into a hard core rock fest between air and guitarist.

Ace had seen a giant snake be burned from the inside by an acid -- the writhing and wriggling then was nothing to the hardcore action taking place on stage. The guitarist was everywhere at once -- one moment leaping two feet into the air over center front, left front another as she slid into an awesome solo from a Guns 'N' Roses song. The energy she evinced in the audience was nearly magic.

To say that Hot Lixx Hulahan had been amazing was like saying Led Zeppelin was good. Watching the performer on stage at the moment blow Hulahan out of contention was only comparable with viewing the creation of a star, all colored lights and fire.

It must have been apparent to the crown holder as well, because he jumped from off stage and began playing along with the new guitarist. Sweat pouring off of both of them (and rivers of black mascara running down *both* their cheeks!), they faced each other in an insane stand-off -- but a stand-off of the most conclusive sort, because everybody already knew the immutable outcome. This newcomer, this upstart -- this upset -- had come for the crown, and she was leaving with it!

When the final music drained down, Hulahan grabbed the air guitarist's wrist and yanked her arm into the air. The crowd -- even the judges -- went wild with screaming. They had a new queen of air guitar. Ace grinned from ear to ear even as she hollered till her throat hurt. Only when she absolutely needed water (or she'd risk losing her voice altogether) did she stop and take a swig from her bottle.

Overhead, scores were being called irrelevantly. Ace turned to the Doctor and mopped sweat off her forehead.

"Who *was* that mad rocker?"

"Look around you, Ace!"

Taking his advice, Ace noticed for the first time that several people of varying age were wearing fitted white t-shirts with one word on them: Archivist12. Scrutinizing them carefully, she took in their group-within-a-group attitude: together but certainly not together. It was like a convention of people -- they did not all know one another, but they shared a common thread -- more than air guitar alone. Though they were scattered throughout the crowd, the group seemed to be leading a chant of sort.

For a moment she strained to listen, and the faint peals of *Arc Arc Arc*.... reached her ears before she turned and tugged on the Doctor's jacket.

"Come on, Professor, let's go," she said. "We know who won, now let's beat the rush."

"Excellent idea, Ace," and he led the way, she casting looks behind her. Only Hulahan's tall, lean figure was distinguishable; Arc, too, had slipped away before the crowds. "Perhaps somewhere a little cooler this time."

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/end

Hot Lixx Hulahan is a real person and the inspiration for this story:

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/08/11/DDGB3KDF8681.DTL>

I do not own Doctor Who. As for Archivist12? Ha, I wish! I do not own the Minaverse ([mina de malfois](#)). Please do not sue me. This was meant more to be a tongue-in-cheek thing at some of the more stretchy parts -- specifically, the last bits with Arc. All in good fun, folks, and can you imagine Ace fangirling Arc?