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BBC

DOCTOR WHO





ROSE AND THE SNOW WINDOW

BY JENNY T. COLGAN

Rotating round the Earth is a giddying experience, particularly when you have to go slowly enough to see what you're looking for – but fast enough to avoid being noticed by the International Space Station.

'It's all right,' said the Doctor, concentrating fiercely as they swung by the station, causing its sensors to spin wildly. 'I'll send them another guitar.'

Rose crouched next to him over the monitor, trying to see what he was staring at on the familiar blue-and-green planet below. 'What are you looking for?'

'I'll know it when I see it.'

'Well, is it, like, a mountain? A panda? Spaghetti? What?'

'A puncture,' said the Doctor, as the TARDIS screen

zoomed in on the Himalayas, the monitor's picture sharp enough for them to spot the mountain climbers in their bright jackets.

'A puncture?'

'In time. A slow leak. It's small, but if you don't patch it up –'

'Your bike falls over,' said Rose, at the exact same moment as the Doctor said, 'The universe implodes.' He added one of those grins that seemed slightly larger than his mouth. She could never quite tell if he was joking when he grinned like that.

'Aha!' he pointed a finger at the north-eastern part of North America. 'There we are!'

The TARDIS dematerialised just as they were about to cross the path of the blinking ISS again. On board the station, a woman thought she'd seen a strange blue light out of the corner of her eye, but she dismissed it as wishful thinking, which it was.

'New York?' said Rose, excited. She'd never been there.

'Toronto!' said the Doctor. He looked at Rose's disappointed face. 'Don't be daft! It's just as good as New York. Go, Maple Leafs!'



Outside it was freezing. Entrancingly cold. The snow had set hard against the pavements, and the cars moved almost silently under the crystal-spotted sky. The high-rise buildings downtown were incredibly dense and rose, glittering, into the air. There were very few people on the streets; Toronto had an entire underground city that made it possible to travel across town without ever having to brave the ferociously cold winter air.

'Ooh, it's nice,' said Rose.

'Course it's nice,' replied the Doctor. 'Everywhere is. Come on. We'll be able to see everything from where we're heading.'

The Doctor sniffed the air, then set off towards a huge, brightly lit residential tower. They bundled into the lobby behind a large man, then presented themselves to the doorman.

The Doctor engaged that grin again. He had a tendency to think it more charming than it actually was. 'Hello! We're here to see . . . apartment 2714.'

The doorman smiled politely. 'Let me just call up -'
'No need!' said the Doctor, flicking out his psychic paper.
'We're -'

He looked up at the bland building, out of ideas for once. 'The birthday surprise,' said Rose quickly, noting how

kind the doorman looked. 'Please don't spoil it!'

'Oh, a birthday, eh?' he said, smiling. 'You know, I've got some left-over helium balloons from an office party through here in the back . . .' He bustled off behind his desk.

'Um. We do . . . we do a dance,' Rose called after him. 'He's the clown.'

'I see that!' the doorman replied, returning with several floating balloons, which Rose gratefully accepted. 'Do something funny!' He looked expectantly at the Doctor.

The Doctor glared at Rose.

'He's only funny when he's being paid,' said Rose, before running after the Doctor who had walked huffily into the lift and grumpily started pressing buttons at random.

'This TARDIS is rubbish,' he said. He pressed a few more buttons.

The elevator stopped on every floor. Each time the doors opened, the Doctor would stick his head out, sniff surreptitiously, then lean back inside again.

'What are you sniffing for?' said Rose.

'I'll know it when I sniff it,' replied the Doctor.

'What, time has a smell?'

'Of course time has a smell! Yours is of diesel and hair gel and satellite trails.'

Rose wrinkled her nose.

They hit the ninth floor, and the Doctor stuck his head out again.

'Come on, then!' he said.

As she stepped into the corridor, Rose took a deep sniff. Sure enough, there was a faint . . . something. Was she imagining it? It was like the faintest trace of candle smoke on the air. Not scented candles, but something rougher, greasier . . . Then it was gone again.

They carefully walked up and down the corridor, listening at each of the doors, until they found an empty corner apartment. The Doctor pulled out his sonic screwdriver and the door unlocked and swung open.

'Right,' said the Doctor. 'This will do.'

'Ooh,' said Rose, taking in their luxurious surroundings. 'Tell you what, the high-rises on my estate are *nothing* like this.'

She wandered through the open-plan sitting room. It was sumptuous, but it was fitted out rather like a hotel, in shades of beige. There was no sign of personal photographs or knick-knacks. Rose wondered if it was a rental apartment, or perhaps someone had simply bought it as a glass box to store their money in? It didn't feel like a place to love or call home; it felt more like something to have. The thought saddened her.

One corner of the sitting room was just two walls of glass, and snow flurried past the windows. The views were indeed astonishing. Skyscraper after skyscraper glistened all around, great towers of steel and glass. It was dizzying at this height, like being in a city of lights in the sky, with the honking of the cars wafting up from far below.

'Don't touch anything,' the Doctor said from behind her. 'It's not ours.'

'You just broke in!'

'Yes, to save the universe.'

'Would the universe really mind if I made myself a cup of tea?'

The Doctor pursed his lips.

'Glass of water, then?' said Rose.

The Doctor seemed to consider this, then nodded, before returning to setting up the telescope he'd brought with him.

'Would you look at that,' he said, when Rose returned with water for each of them. He gestured out of the enormous windows.

Rose stared out in wonder. From where she stood, she could see into hundreds of other people's apartments, right into their lives. Some people were getting changed, some were eating, and in other rooms the blue lights of televisions flickered. It was captivating.

'Life unfolding,' the Doctor said. 'In the dawn of the twenty-first century, everyone blissfully unaware of what . . .

Well, never mind about that right now.'

'You sound like David Attenborough,' Rose said. 'Is that what you do? Look on us as just another species?'

The Doctor blinked, which, since it was something she never thought he did quite often enough, Rose noticed whenever it happened. 'But you are,' he said.

'Just animals in the wild?'

He shrugged. 'We're all animals in the wild, Rose.'

Rose pressed her nose to the glass, catching sight of her own reflection. She grimaced. It was harder than you'd think to get your roots done while travelling through the whole of time and space. 'So, what are we looking for?'

'Not sure.' The Doctor came and stood close to her.

They gazed out across the frosted city. 'It's not in this building, but it isn't far, and from here we can see just about everything. A panopticon.'

'A panopti-what?' said Rose. 'Never mind. Here's a question: what are we looking for that's nine storeys off the ground?'

The Doctor glanced at her and she prepared, as usual, to feel stupid.

'That,' he said, 'is an excellent question. Either something from a period where the geology of the region was different –'

'What, like a caveman or something?' said Rose.

'Could be. Or the thing itself could be geographically

off.' He frowned. 'Then we're really in trouble.'

'Worse than the universe imploding?'

The Doctor thought for a moment. 'Faster.'

