



DOCTOR • WHO



THE FROZEN

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'I haven't been ice-skating since my seven hundred and twenty-first birthday,' muttered the Doctor to himself, as he raced to the other side of the console to pump the vortex loop.

He checked the scanner. 'Year - 5113. Planet - Winter Wonderland. Only place in the Universe entirely dedicated to winter sports.' The Doctor beamed. 'Ice rink the size of Huddersfield.'

He threw the lever to activate the doors.

There was a deep gurgling noise, then a massive wave of cold water - high enough to surf on - crashed into the TARDIS, flooding the floor and soaking everything in sight.

Riding high on the wave was a woman.

She sank to the floor at the Doctor's feet.

He quickly reset the lever, and the doors heaved shut against the oncoming deluge. He winced at the sound of electrical circuits fizzing and popping beneath his feet.

'Nice of you to swim by,' he said, helping the stranger to her feet.

'Where am I?' asked the woman. 'Who are you?'

'I'm the Doctor. Who are you?'

'I'm Mai,' replied the woman. 'Mai Kondo.'

She was in her mid-twenties, with a round, friendly face, glasses and short black hair. She wore a sensible suit. A very wet sensible suit.

'I'm training to be an alien environmental scientist, but I got a little, er, out of my depth' she said, wringing out her sleeves and emptying her shoes of water. 'I came from Earth two weeks ago - with my university exploration group. It's for my thesis. This planet's more far gone than even we thought.'

The Doctor looked at his scanner. An image of snow-less mountain tops and mile upon mile of dismal marshland gave way to a graphic showing a planet swinging along an arc towards its own sun.

'According to this,' he noted, 'Winter Wonderland is getting hotter by the day. Hence the melty thing.'

'It's what's happened on Earth too,' said Mai.

'But this isn't caused by pollution, this is orbital decay. And there's not much you can do about that.'

Mai sat down on the floor. 'I have to confess, I hoped I'd get to see at least a little bit of ice. But there's not so much as a snowflake left here.'

'In that case,' mused the Doctor, putting on his glasses, 'what about a little jaunt through time and space?'

'This is a time machine?'

'Well... it's just a run-about really. Y'know, nip back to 1500 BC. Whiz forward to the year 9000. Pop down the shops.'

'It must use so much fuel. What's your warp footprint, Doctor?'

'Oh, not very big,' he replied, with a dismissive wave of his hand. 'More

of a toe-print really. And I try to offset it by growing my own veg. You should see my broccoli.' The Doctor paused. 'You may have noticed my TARDIS is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside,' he added, proudly.

'I was just about to mention that.'

'I thought you might.'

Mai smiled and watched as the Doctor reset the coordinates.

'I'll show you what the Earth was like when it still had winters. And I can get in a bit of ice-skating too. Two birds with one stone and all that.'

And with a wheezing, groaning and a fizzing sound, the TARDIS dematerialised.

'We've landed in the middle of the river Thames?' shouted Mai, horrified. 'Are you insane?'

'Don't worry.' The Doctor waved a dismissive hand. 'This is February 1814. It's frozen solid. Well, not solid, but as good as.'

Mai stepped through the TARDIS doors, wearing one of the Doctor's old coats and a scarf, and placed a tentative foot on the ice. Then she looked around her.

The Thames no longer flowed - it had frozen into one vast, smooth ice rink. From Blackfriars Bridge all the way to London Bridge, the ice-topped river was crowded with stalls selling food and drink, clowns juggling burning batons, animals performing tricks, kids playing skittles, and hundreds of cold but happy people chattering, laughing and skating to and fro.

'This is the last time the Thames ever freezes over. Of its own accord.' He paused, leaned against the TARDIS, and started to pull on a pair of ice-skates. 'Of course, they did it artificially for the 2030 Dancing On Ice special. Torvill and Dean's final Bolero. My word, they were

good...' He trailed off, realising Mai was looking at him as if he was mad. 'Beautiful though, isn't it?'

'I've never seen anything like it.' Mai sighed sadly. 'Where I come from, nothing ever freezes.' She shivered. 'It's so cold.'

'I can lend you some thermal undies.'

'No, I mean colder than it needs to be to freeze.'

The Doctor rummaged in his pocket and pulled out a thermometer. 'Minus seventeen,' he said, noting the temperature.

Mai took it off him. She glared at it for a moment, then looked up, confused. 'It's just dropped to minus twenty.'

'Minus twenty?' He frowned darkly. 'You know what that means, don't you?'

Mai frowned too, concerned.

'Perfect temperature for skating! Come on!' And he slid off across the ice, leaving Mai to lace her skates.

'I've never done this before,' Mai called out to the Doctor as they whizzed through the crowds, past groups of excitable children, grown-ups discussing the weather, gangs of skulking teenagers, donkeys giving rides, and loudmouthed souvenir sellers.

'You've picked it up very quickly,' he yelled back at her. 'Do you like it?'

'It's okay,' she replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

After several minutes the Doctor came to a stop, exhausted but smiling. Mai skated into him and he caught her in his arms. They laughed, stared at one another for a moment, then he released her.

'They had kings and queens back then, er, back now, didn't they?' asked Mai, once she'd caught her breath. 'Who's on the throne?'

'Who's on the throne?' repeated the Doctor, incredulously. 'Mai Kondo! Did you not go to school?'

'Yes, but we didn't do ancient history. Anything before the Great Exodus is a mystery to me.'

'Who's on the throne... goodness... imagine not knowing that...' He trailed off.

'Go on,' egged Mai, cheekily.

'It's gotta be good old Quee... Kin...'

'You don't know, do you?' Mai folded her arms.

The Doctor stopped a man as he skated in their direction. 'Who's on the throne these days, mate?'

'Why, King George, of course,' replied the man. 'The third King George. How could you not know that, sir?'

'Course he is,' said the Doctor tapping his forehead. 'Must be the cold - icing up the brain circuits.'

The man looked astonished, and quickly skated off.

'Old Georgie-boy - I knew him well. Thrashed the French in the Seven Year War, pounded them again at Waterloo... and made a terribly good lemon meringue pie.' The Doctor frowned. 'Or was that Gordon Ramsay? I never could remember.'

'I have no idea what you're talking about,' said Mai. 'You really are a very strange man.'

'How nice of you to notice,' grinned the Doctor.

Mai looked at him askance, then she laughed.

'Gift shop!' cried the Doctor. He'd spotted a man selling souvenirs. 'Woo!'

They skated over to the stall and browsed the goods.

'What's this?' asked Mai, holding a small object up to the light.

'It's a thimble.'

It had Frost Fair 1814 painted on the side in delicate copperplate.

'A what?' she asked, confused.

'It's a long story and it involves darning socks. Not very useful for someone from 5113. Want one?'

'If it's not very useful, why would I want one?' she said, handing the thimble to the Doctor.

'Sometimes there's nothing as nice as something that's totally useless,' he said. 'But I'm all out of gold guineas anyway.'

Then something caught Mai's eye, and she pointed through the crowd. 'What's that?'

'Looks like an ice sculpture to me.'

'A sculpture made of ice? Wow!' She skated off to take a closer look.

'Are you going to buy that, sir?' asked the souvenir seller, frowning. 'This isn't a museum.'

'Quite right,' said the Doctor. 'Trouble is...' He rummaged in his pocket. 'I've got no...' Then his hand brushed against the psychic paper. 'Ah!' An idea struck him. 'I'm from His Majesty's commission for...' He held up the paper. 'Thimble inspection...'

It stood twelve feet tall, a vast icy sculpture as beautiful as anything Rodin ever chiselled. It was delicate, translucent, and crudely human in shape - yet its edges were sharp, squared off, unfinished. Its bearded features were more like those of a Greek god than a man. And Mai felt, despite its beauty, that there was something frightening about it.

She pulled her scarf tighter around her neck. She was positive the temperature had fallen even further. Then she remembered she still had the Doctor's thermometer.

'Minus twenty-three,' she murmured, surprised. 'It is getting colder.'

Intrigued by the huge statue, Mai moved in for a closer look. There was something strange about the ice they'd used to sculpt it - it looked more

like frosted glass - so she reached out and touched it.

As her hand made contact, she let out a cry of pain. It was as hot as an oven.

'What the..?'

More than that, for a moment, her hand was actually stuck to the sculpture, as the figure emitted a strange red glow, like blood pulsing through a transparent vein.

Mai yanked her hand away and an icy coldness gripped her. She spun round, bashing into the Doctor as she did so. 'That thing's red hot!' she cried.

He quickly pushed a small object into his jacket pocket. 'Don't be ridiculous, Mai.' The Doctor reached out. 'That's nothing but a... aargh! You're right!' His hand also stuck to the sculpture for a moment before he summoned enough strength to pull it free.

She shook her head despairingly. 'What is it with men? Just like little kids - they won't be told.'

'Did you see that?' asked the Doctor in a hushed voice, suddenly serious. 'It glowed.'

'That can't be manmade,' said Mai. 'Aliens?'

'Well, if it's not, it's the hottest lump of ice I've ever known. You wouldn't want that floating in your orange squash.'

'Did you notice, when you touched it though, it made you go really cold? I know it's cold generally, but that made me even colder.'

'Right!' trumpeted the Doctor. 'Everything around is growing steadily colder, while this is getting hotter.'

'So it's taking the warmth out of everything?'

'From you, from me... from the very Earth itself.'

They stared at one another in silence.

'What are we going to do? Find an ice pick?' offered Mai, only half joking.

'We need to communicate with it. And who better to do that than yours truly? I get on rather well with aliens.'

The Doctor cleared his throat.

'Now listen here. My name is the Doctor. And I demand to know what business you have here on Earth!'

Silence.

'Shall I get that ice pick?'

'This is serious, Mai.' The Doctor frowned. 'There's only one thing for it. Here goes.'

Before she could stop him, he'd placed both hands on the surface of the huge figure.

'No, Doctor!' yelled Mai. 'Don't be stupid!'

'Stand back!' he cried. 'It needs my energy to speak, to move... to live.'

'But you'll -'

The Doctor silenced her with a shake of his head.

'Who... are... you?' he hissed, addressing the statue.

The strange being before them glowed again with a deep red light. Then with a sinister grinding sound, it slowly lowered its icy head to look down at the Doctor. Two balls of fiery light burned in the centre of its face.

'Where are you from?' demanded the Doctor, his energy already dwindling.

The alien spoke.

'I am Masoon,' it said in a thin yet deep voice, close to a whisper. 'Of the Hyban.'

'The Hyban?' repeated the Doctor, shutting his eyes. 'Where have I

heard that name before?' His brow furrowed in thought. 'Of course! The Hyban. Peaceful race, and one of the Universe's only true endothermic life forms. They draw in heat from their surroundings to fuel themselves. Ironically, some call them the Frozen.'

'My planet is dead. An icy world orbiting a collapsed star,' said Masoon. 'The Hyban have travelled across the galaxy to find new sources of power. My journey finally brought me to this star system. I sensed the vast fires raging on this tiny planet.'

'Of course! The Human race is on the brink of an industrial revolution. Mountains of coal being burnt at an incredible rate to fuel thousands of new machines.' He paused. 'And nowhere more so than in London.'

Mai's expression darkened. 'He's sucking out all the warmth, just to stay alive. That's why the temperature's falling so fast!'

'Right,' the Doctor managed through chattering teeth. 'And that's just the beginning...'

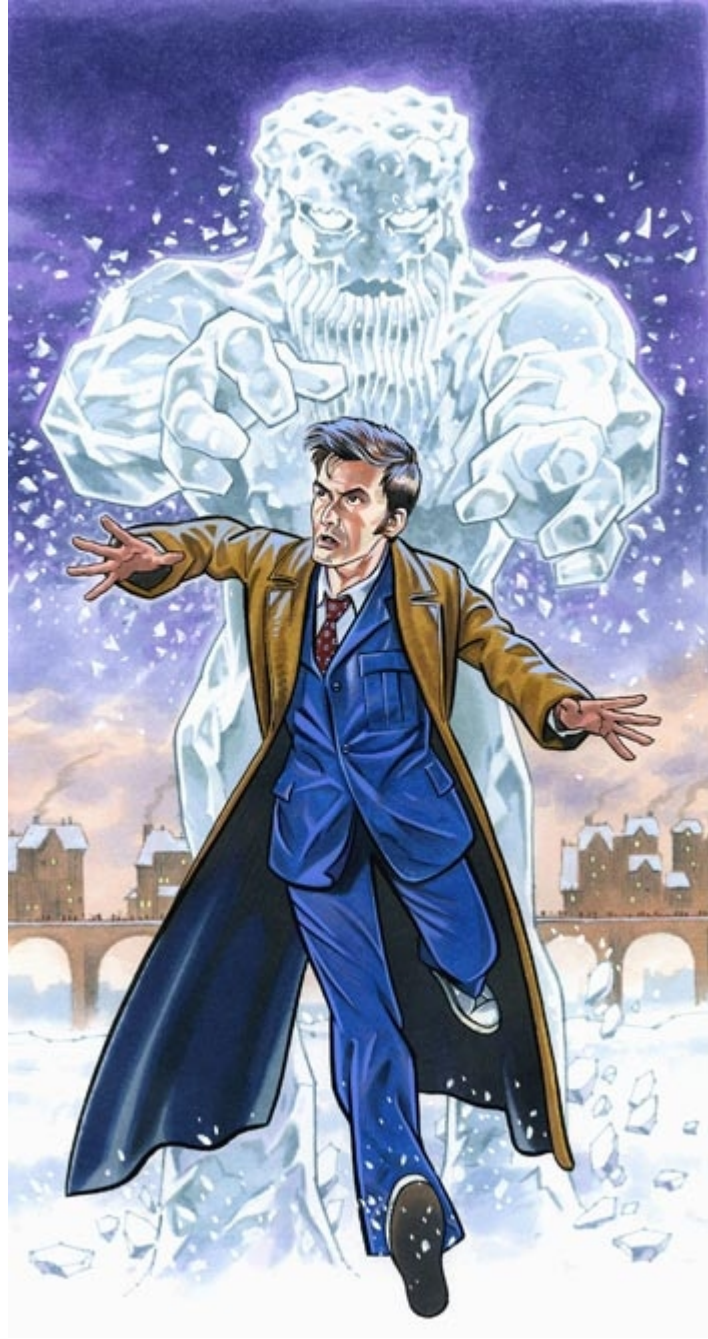
'But everyone will die. There'll be an ice age.' Mai glanced at the thermometer and shivered. 'Minus thirty!'

'There's no time to lose!' And summoning up all his strength, the Doctor pulled himself free from Masoon.

'Are you all right?'

He nodded, but before he could say a word, the creature raised its two vast, translucent arms high in the air, and lunged forward.

'Doctor, look out!'



But it was too late. The Hyban had the Doctor wrapped in an icy embrace, the creature's arms fusing together around his body.

The Doctor let out a long, agonised cry.

'Doctor!' screamed Mai, terrified.

'I need your energy,' whispered Masoon. 'I must survive.'

'Do something!' the Doctor wailed to Mai. 'He's draining the life from me!'

'But what?'

'Something to draw him away.'

'Right...' Mai composed herself, then wracked her brains. 'He wants energy. He wants heat. We need something with lots of power.'

'Think!' yelled the Doctor in an anguished tone.

'The TARDIS!'

'Brilliant!'

Thick crystals of ice were forming across the Doctor's face.

'Turn on the radiators,' he hissed through his teeth.

'The what?'

'The radiators!' His skin was growing paler as the Hyban stole away his strength, slowly turning him, as it did with everything it absorbed, to ice. 'Even the TARDIS needs a heating system. Controls... under the floor... marked...' came the Doctor's last words as ice locked solid across his mouth.

Mai didn't want to leave her new friend, but she knew she had a duty to perform - a duty no one else could do.

She skated furiously over to the TARDIS, flung open the doors, and clattered inside.

But where was the boiler?

Mai let out a wail of frustration, as she stumbled across the room, her skates clanging against the mental floor panels.

Then she saw it - tiny letters on the floor in a dark corner reading Do Not Touch!

'That's gotta be it,' she whispered to herself, and wrenched open the hatch to reveal a gigantic, archaic heating system.

She turned the dial from Off to Full.

There was a clanging and a banging, then a grinding, followed swiftly by a huge explosion somewhere down below.

Then it happened.

The console room turned from freezing cold to burning hot.

The Doctor's eyes were shut - he was rigid, lifeless. Ice covered every part of his body.

Mai stood over him, her own eyes growing wet with tears. She'd only just met this strange man, but he was so clever, he could do so much...

'There's your energy!' she yelled furiously at the Hyban, pointing towards the TARDIS. 'Happy now?'

With a splintering sound, Masoon opened his arms and released the Doctor, who fell stiffly to the ice.

The massive creature then turned slowly in the direction of the TARDIS, and as it took its first mighty step the sound was deafening - as the vibrations it sent out rang across the ice.

The crowd turned to see what was happening, and watched open-mouthed as the giant sculpture strode thunderously over the frozen river.

Screams and shouts echoed all around as people dashed to get out of the Hyban's path, skidding and falling as they tried to make their escape.

Wherever it lifted one of its heavy, glacial feet, the creature left a huge crater in the ice, with the river glinting through beneath.

Then it was gone, into the TARDIS.

The crowds stared at the strange blue box, aghast.

'Doctor!' wailed Mai. 'Say something! Please say something!'

Silence.

For Mai, an age passed.

She held her new friend's freezing hand.

Then a miracle.

'Must... get back... to the TARDIS,' he managed in a tiny, pathetic whisper.

The ice encrusting the Doctor began to thaw.

'You're okay!' A tear of relief froze on Mai's cheek.

'Course I'm okay,' he said in a voice much more his usual self, and he drew in a heavy breath and staggered to his feet. 'Two hearts. Gets the blood pumping again in no time.'

'Two hearts? You're an alien?'

'Naturally. You're not alienist, are you?'

Suddenly, there was a long, low creaking sound. Then a terrifying crack echoed through the air.

The heat from the TARDIS was melting the frozen river, and where Masoon had left his mighty footprints, vast fissures appeared which were rapidly turning the ice into dozens of free-floating islands.

More panicked cries rang out as the remaining Frost Fair revellers dashed for the safety of the riverbank.

'Get your skates on, Doctor!' shouted Mai.

'We'd do better with them off,' replied the Doctor.

They quickly removed their ice-skates.

'My feet are freezing!' shrieked Mai.

'You can warm them up when we get inside.'

The Doctor grabbed Mai's hand and they leapt to a neighbouring chunk of ice.

From here they looked for some way to reach the TARDIS, which was on an island of its own, some way along the river. But it was too far to jump.

'Paddle!' yelled the Doctor. And they crouched down and frantically flapped their hands in the freezing water.

The raft of ice began to move - and their desperate efforts, coupled with the sluggish current of the Thames, slowly dragged them closer to the TARDIS.

'After three we jump,' ordered the Doctor.

They both braced themselves and took deep breaths.

'One...' he counted, 'two... three!'

And they leapt across the water and skidded to a stop in a soggy heap beside the Doctor's ship.

'You all right?' asked the Doctor.

'Wet, cold, but alive,' replied Mai, smiling.

They dragged themselves inside the TARDIS and slammed the doors tight.

'Look!' Mai pointed at the Hyban.

Masoon was beside the console, his arms raised as if in exaltation, sucking in heat from the TARDIS.

'My gas energy bill will be through the roof,' muttered the Doctor, and he approached the alien.

'Get away from it, Doctor!' yelled Mai.

'Don't worry - he won't touch me. He's got all the energy he needs now.'

'But he could've killed you out there. He's evil.'

'Evil?' The Doctor laughed. 'He's only doing what anyone would do - trying to stay alive. I mean, look at Humans. You lot are just as reckless with your natural resources.'

'You don't have to tell me that, Doctor. We know. And we're now paying the price. But people like me are trying to put things right on Earth.'

'And you will, Mai, I can assure you.' The Doctor's expression was unreadable. 'You're going to be very important one day.'

'You've seen my future?'

'I don't need to see your future to know that.'

Mai looked intently at the Doctor. He was quite unlike anyone she'd ever met before.

'I've got an idea,' he said, after a pause, and he moved over to the controls, set the coordinates, and glanced up as the TARDIS's time rotor ground into life.

'Where are we going now?' asked Mai.

'You'll see,' replied the Doctor.

'What did I tell you? It's working already.'

The Doctor and Mai were sat together in the endless rows of spectator seats surrounding the enormous Winter Wonderland ice rink. It was so big, they couldn't see the other side. Snow fell all around them.

'Masoon is absorbing just enough energy from this sun to hold the planet at the right temperature,' he told Mai.

'But what happens when it moves too close to the sun for even him to control?'

'They'll have to find someplace else. Shouldn't be a problem though - the Hyban make great portable air conditioners.'

Mai laughed. 'I can't believe I've just travelled through time and space with you. And never mind that - I can't believe I've been ice-skating. Wish I had something to prove it though. No one will believe me.'

'Aah...!' said the Doctor, looking very pleased with himself. 'Then it's lucky I got you this.'

He held out the souvenir thimble from the Frost Fair.

Mai's face lit up. 'There's nothing as nice as something totally useless,' she murmured to herself, recalling the Doctor's words, and finally understanding what he meant.

'You're catching on fast, Mai Kondo,' smiled the Doctor. 'So, will you be okay here? Or do you want a lift back to Earth?'

'I'm fine,' replied Mai. 'I have lots of writing still to do on my thesis, and where better to do it than surrounded by all this wonderful snow?'

'That's good,' smiled the Doctor. 'And, you know, I might stick around for a while myself. After all, we still have our skates. Fancy joining me on the ice for one last spin?'

'I thought you'd never ask,' replied Mai.

THE END