



*I should have killed him straight away.*

*It would have been a mercy.*

*I'm capable of mercy.*

*But...*

*...he smelled of starlight.*

## Fimbulvinter

by the Bunny in the Tardis

---

This one is thin. So little meat and my children are hungry. So very thin. Could it be that his tribe has cast him out and he, too, is running from the Cold Sleep? His marrow will be warm, though, his blood sweet. Unlike so many of the others, his young face belongs to his young body. Not like the ones who came before. Not like the ones who have lived so many

lifetimes that can only be seen in their eyes.

Hesitation would bring me shame if there was anyone left to know. But I am alone. Alone in the wilderness, cut off from my world. Alone like he is. His keen dark eyes gaze into mine without fear. And he should be afraid. Very afraid. Perhaps the Sleep has stalked him even longer than I, drinking deeply from the warmth of his soul. It is a patient hunter on any world, but I am swift. My blood burns with my anger and my need. I will snap him in two to feed my children and clean my teeth with his small bones.

Wind and cold swirl about my body. The second star is low, soon to be eclipsed by the mountain. I must away from this place with my prey. My children are hungry. This meat will have to sustain them. I cannot tarry. Darkness hunts us as surely as the Cold.

I raise my paw to strike him down, expecting him to flee, to flinch, to close his eyes, but he does not. His eyes are proper eyes, dark and large. Stars shine within them; so many stars, burning brightly, turning slowly. He has gazed into the Heart of Time, that much is clear, and he is running. Great wisdom for one so young.

His lips, small and pink, move, but I do not know the words he sings. The prey things never speak to me. They only scream. That I understand, but this? Why would he speak to me? Why should I listen? His teeth are small and round like a child's, his flesh beneath another creature's skin is naked. What a sad creature he is, this traveler in the wilderness whose eyes are filled with stars. Eating him will be a mercy. I am capable of mercy.

*You don't have to kill me, you know.*

His words enter my mind and I can only stare at him. He, all pink and thin and lacking meat for my children. Speaking to me. Speaking *into* me. Cold Sleep rides swiftly on the night air. I strike a single blow, knocking him down, silencing his Voice. As I scoop him up I notice blood on the snow. It smells sweet. It tastes sweeter. I will have to kill him, of course, but it is a shame. I press my nose against his soft, dark hair. He smells... of starlight.

The moon is bright. The storm is gone. The Cold surrounds us. Within the cave, my children are sleeping. If they are not dead. It is difficult to tell these days. I count them. Four. Only four. A fifth one huddles outside the nest. Alive, but only just. What remains of another lies to the other side of the nest. That is why they can sleep. Their bellies are full. Soon enough they will need to eat again. I lay my kill out for them to wake to.

My kill. But not killed. He did not die. He will be good sport for my young when they

wake. They must learn to hunt. Someday I will be gone. Someday I will not come back. They must learn... After they have eaten their fill, I will empty his bones of their marrow and perhaps I, too, will sleep.

I crouch at the entrance to the cave, the wind stiff against my face. Below the mountain the world is warm and the grass mirrors the burnt orange sky. The trees are silver and the night is still. I have hunted there. I have killed there. I am a dark legend in that country. The Great Houses send their mightiest against me, but I am swift. I am fearless. I am their worst Nightmare. But I do not venture there anymore. I cannot leave my children. Not yet. They are too small. Even we are vulnerable when we are small. So I do not go. But they have music below, and sometimes, if I listen very carefully, I hear it.

My children press close against the gift I have brought them, seizing what little warmth is left in his body. They should not lie so close to him. They should not take comfort from anything except his bloody flesh. But they are children and they have never seen the likes of this creature before. He bears so little resemblance to the enemy I am accustomed to. Only one of his hearts beats for this world. The other longs for the stars.

As I watch, he stirs, one pale, reddened hand touching that place on his thin face where I cuffed him earlier. It is mottled, blue and green. The blood has congealed. He stares at his fingers dumbly, then at me, as if to challenge me for my actions. Then he sees my children waking around him, stretching their small bodies, extending their claws, teeth gleaming as they grin at him. First one and then another strokes his face with a taloned paw, then presses a muzzle against his dark hair. They inhale and their eyes dance and they look at me and I smile. If he was not frightened before, he will be now. Unless he has no wits left. But not a one of my children strikes. They only sit and stare into his star-filled eyes. I have looked into the Heart of Time. I have seen the past and the future. I have seen, and I have seen everything perish. I wonder if he has seen it too.

Slowly, ever so slowly, he reaches beneath the layers of fur that are not his own and draws out an instrument that emits light and some faint warmth. I am unconcerned. A child's toy. But the light is hypnotic for my children, and they watch intently as this half-grown, child-thing holds it out to illuminate our meagre surroundings.

I hate this place. I hate it as much as I hate the two stars that rise in the flaming sky of this world. I hate it more because it was the path that led me here and then offered no chance of return. The mountain shook. The skies grew dark. Winter came early and I was

trapped. Then my children came and so we are all trapped. But I knew of this world. I knew the stories. I knew they could send me home. But they did not. They would not. And so I hate them, too.

The child-thing wanders with his light and I am amused. My children follow him, licking their lips, planning their feast, divvying up his limbs. Four of them for four children. The Fifth One, the one that wasn't moving, creeps after them now. Slow. So slow. It would be better to sacrifice another to feed the stronger, but I am pleased. Five is stronger than Four. The small pink lips are moving again, his song rising in pitch. My children listen, but I turn away, listening to other sounds on the night winds. There is no music outside, but there is life. More of his kind. More food for my children.

*I can send you home.*

His Voice is inside me again. I understand his song. He has given me the key. I growl a warning, but he is too busy with his small blue light and his clawless fingers tracing patterns on the wall as if he were reading them with his hands. He scampers deeper in the cave, climbing amid the rocks, and begins to dig. My children scramble after him, pushing aside rocks, their laughter a music I have longed to hear. The smallest cannot follow as swiftly and cries so pitifully I am almost moved to put him out of his misery. But I am not the only one listening. The child-thing, the... *boy*... climbs back down and does the unthinkable.

He takes the fur from off his body.

He lifts my child in his arms.

He wraps my child in his... *cloak*.

He looks at me and I hate him. I hate him. But I see what is in his eyes again and I know I cannot kill him. I give him my thoughts and he smiles.

*Your destiny is in the stars...*

They dig. Five children. Four of them mine. One of this world. A Gallifreyan boy. One day he will be a Lord of Time, but not today. Today he is a boy. Today he still belongs to me. The last child—mine—sits wrapped in the boy's cloak, content to be warm. Despite my misgivings, despite the ill wind that blows up from below the mountain, I allow it to happen. I allow my attention to be diverted. I allow Death entrance to my domain.

"Look out!"

Another creature dressed in fur that is not his own. What he holds in his hand is not a

toy. I have seen it before. I have felt it burn. But I am swift. I am as Cold as the Night. And I will kill this one.

But the weapon is not meant for me. It is aimed at a point high in the rocks. A weak point. Above my children. The light blinds us all. The cave collapses as I move to gather them to safety. Two of my children are crushed before my eyes. Two flee into the snow. The last one lays unmoving behind the boy who is screaming. I understand screaming.

“What have you done? *What have you done!*”

“Don’t you mean ‘thank you?’ She’d have killed you! I couldn’t find you in the storm. I’ve been searching all night. I thought you were dead!”

I have been given the key to his song and his words are lies, all of them. Lies. His pale flesh is warm and dry. His belly is full. He is as patient as the Cold Sleep, as calculating as any Hunter. He stands over my broken body. He touches my fur. I have just the strength to kill him where he stands but he reeks of betrayal. His blood would be poison.

“Are you all right?”

“I’m always all right. You could have—”

“—stood by and watch you be killed? Wouldn’t that have gone over well at the Academy. Coming up here was your idea, remember? We were only going to look for the monster, not be dinner for it.”

My last two children have scattered into the Night. The Cold. The Dark. The Cold Sleep will silence them. We will never see our home again.

“But I was right, don’t you see? It’s written on the walls for anyone to read. There’s a portal back in the cave. I saw it just before you fired. She couldn’t reach it but I was going to send her children home. I could have sent them home!” His face is glistening, like rain.

“Are you *crying?*”

“You wouldn’t understand. I knew you wouldn’t. Never mind.”

The Murderer turns away, a cruel smile tugging at his lips as he dresses his face the way he has dressed his song. His face is as light and dark as his soul. He casts the weapon secretively into the snow, then pushes the body of my dying child from the warmth of the fur cloak. I hear other Voices now. Old Ones. They do not look Old, but they are. They think themselves wise, but they are fools. They Watch from their Citadel. They Watch while planets burn. They watch, and do nothing when the desperate flee and their children are hungry and they teach their children to do the same. Many have lived too long. I know what

it is like to have lived too long.

The child-thing that is not mine hesitates. He kneels beside me but does not touch me. I could still kill him. For all the woe this night has brought me, I would be within my right. He seems to know this too.

“I’m sorry,” he tells me, laying my last child close to me. My broken child. “I’m so, so sorry...”

“For pity’s sake don’t talk to that monster,” the other one says, barely turning. “It was going to kill you.”

Barely turning. But enough. Enough for me to see his eyes. Bright chips, burning with stars. Burning with hatred. This one has looked into the Heart of Time as well. It beats a song within him too terrible to be music. A swirl of snow stings my eyes and when I look again, it is gone. So is he. I gaze into kinder eyes. He does not see what I see. He isn’t running from the Monster, but he should be. He will be. And all his stars will grow dark.

*I should have killed him straight away.*

*It would have been a mercy.*

*I’m capable of mercy.*

*But...*

*...he smelled of starlight.*

# DOCTOR WHO

CLASSIC MONSTERS - BRAND NEW ADVENTURES

## FIMBULVINTER



by the Bunny in the Tardis



THE CCPS VOL II - EPISTLES OF THE ENEMY

by the Bunny in the Tardis

THE CCPS VOL II - EPISTLES OF THE ENEMY