One Too Many
by BittyBlueEyes

Summary

Rose runs into a familiar face. Not one familiar face, but two. The complicated meeting becomes even more problematic when an extra person sneaks into their group. --After Part 1, the series can be read in any order.
Chapter 1

Rose left Sainsbury’s Supermarket and started down the street toward her TARDIS. She smirked as she watched the people as they passed. Their style seemed so silly to her. There were overalls and plaid shirts or waistcoats, busy print dresses, and crimped hair. She’d seen and worn some really outrageous outfits in her travels through time and space, but these were the things she grew up wearing and couldn’t help but laugh at it all. She looked in the shop windows, too. It was all a blast from the past. On her walk, she spotted a café and stopped in for a latte to take back to the TARDIS.

Rose only made it a few steps out of the café when someone called after her.

“Rose? Rose!”

She’d know that voice anywhere and she groaned. This couldn’t be happening. She thought if she didn’t look back and just kept walking, he might think he’d been mistaken, but he didn’t stop calling out.

“Rose! Where are you going? Rose, stop! Rose!”

He was getting closer and Rose wasn’t sure what to do. She started walking faster, but she knew he would, too. She either had to face him or run.

She ran.

Rose wove around other people on the pavement and ran as fast as she could. Coffee was sloshing out of her cup and burning her hand so she dropped it right where she was and pushed herself to run faster. Her pinstriped Doctor was still running after and shouting her name. She’d already passed her TARDIS and panicked when she saw his just ahead. She quickly changed direction but not before she caught sight of her younger self stepping out the door. The Doctor must have noticed too because he stopped shouting ‘Rose’ and just yelled for her to stop.

Rose raced across the street, trying her best not to get struck by the moving vehicles. There was a pretty close call and a few squealing brakes, but she didn’t slow down. She chanced a glance back and saw that the pinstriped Doctor and her younger self were both racing after her. Trying to buy herself a bit larger head start, she turned down an alley between two buildings. There was a chain link fence, but she still didn’t hesitate. She used the handle of a dumpster there to give her a boost, took hold of the top of the fence, and gracefully flipped over. The Doctor did the same thing but was a bit slower and not nearly as graceful. It was just the head start she wanted. She ran past two shops and dived into the next. She turned away from the shop window, moved back a row of clothing racks, and pretended to be browsing.

Rose was counting the seconds, trying to guess how long it would take for the Doctor to pass her and then how long it would take her younger self to pass after that. The seconds kept passing. How fit was she back during her second year of running with the Doctor? How long would it take her to scale the fence? It couldn’t take that much longer, but she had already been more than half a block behind them.

The shop door opened and Rose finally looked up. He must have figured out that she took shelter in one of the shops. The look on his face was severe when he found her.

“Who are you? What are you?” he demanded.

Rose sighed and shook her head. “I really wish you would have just left me alone.”
I asked you a question.”

“Honestly, I wasn’t paying attention,” Rose replied.

“Hello,” a saleswoman said pleasantly as she approached them. “Is there anything I can help you with today?”

“No, I’m sorry to bother you. I’ll just be leaving now,” Rose answered.

The Doctor held out his arm to block her path. “You’re not going anywhere.”

Rose pointed out the window at her younger self that was looking around helplessly.

“You’re still not going anywhere,” he insisted as he went to the door. Rose followed him and even though he blocked her path when he opened it, she pushed past.

“Stop!” the Doctor shouted, ready to chase her again.

“I’m not going anywhere. I’ve been caught. I just don’t want people to overhear,” Rose explained.

“Oh my god, she’s me!” younger Rose said in shock. Older Rose just waved.

“I can’t believe you found it so fast,” younger Rose continued. Older Rose looked at her quizzically. It?

“I’m going to ask you again, who and what are you?” the Doctor asked.

Rose thought this might actually work to her advantage. If they thought she was an alien, this might possibly be an easy fix. “I’m a brancheerian,” she lied.

“A brancheerian? Kind of a far from home aren’t you? Aren’t Brancheerians from-“

“The planet Sirus, yes, but I’m not. My people are from Sirus, but I was born in open space. Several generations ago there was an invasion on Sirus and my people fled to the nearby moons of Flamboon. I hear they later went back to Sirus, but my family decided to travel instead of living on the moons. My family has traveled for many generations.”

The Doctor nodded as he took in this information. “So what are you doing on Earth?”

“It was an accident… well, sort of. I was looking to buy some ship parts, but I didn’t realize that this was a level 5 planet. I knew I shouldn’t be walking around, but I thought I’d just pick up a few provisions to see me to the next space station.” Rose held up her grocery bag as evidence.

“So you’re not planning to stay?” the Doctor checked.

“I’m leaving as soon as you let me go,” Rose agreed.

“If you’re so innocent, why were you running?” younger Rose asked.

“He caught me. I changed into the person that was with him and he figured it out. I’m not supposed to be here so I didn’t want to be captured,” Rose lied easily.

“How did you decide to be her?” asked the Doctor.

That was a hard one. Younger Rose was only coming out of the TARDIS when older Rose spotted her. But the Doctor never left her in the TARDIS while he wandered in a safe environment like this.
It was likely she had just gone back to the TARDIS to grab something. That would mean that she had already been outside of the TARDIS.

“I had to change quickly after I almost came into contact with the man I was copying. She was the first person I really took notice of.” Rose hoped they’d buy it. She had a feeling that their questioning was almost through. “I mean no harm. I promise. I’m just heading off to the next space station.”

“To buy ship parts?” asked the Doctor.

“Yes.”

“Is your ship going to make it to the next space station? I mean, if you need parts-“

“No, I don’t need parts for my ship. I sell them. You know, hard to find ones,” Rose quickly corrected. She didn’t want him offering to inspect her ship.

“Hard to find such as?” the Doctor inquired.

“Oh, well, I heard someone at the space station has an osmiridium auxokinetic quad-dipolar trajector. Really hard to come by. You could charge just about anything you wanted for something like that.”

“Really?” the Doctor asked with interest. “Well, if those are the kinds of parts you sell, I’d like to go browse, if that’s alright. I’ve-“

Rose let out a shout in frustration. “Do you have any bloody idea how difficult you are?! I thought this might actually work, but you’re… You’re such a daft old man. Seriously, what am I supposed to do with you?”

The Doctor looked severe again. “You are a liar then. Did you really think I’d let you go without having a look at your ship?”

“I had hoped, yeah,” Rose admitted.

“Is she even a brancheerian then?” asked younger Rose.

“No,” Rose answered. “If you ask this thick-skulled alien next to me, he might be able to figure it out. Perhaps he could scan me with his sonic screwdriver to see if I have human-like readings. Maybe he’ll figure out why I ran when he called ‘Rose’ and got scared when I saw the TARDIS. Maybe he’ll figure it out when he realizes that I knew he was an alien without anyone telling me or how I already knew what a TARDIS and sonic screwdriver were. And maybe if I threw out there that he’s a 902 year old Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey, located in the constellation Kasterborous, he might put two and two together.”

The Doctor’s eyes widened and he gaped at her in surprise. “Rose?”

“Yes,” Rose answered. “I ran because I was told to. I bumped into your previous incarnation before and he scolded me for not legging it the second I recognized him. Then I saw her and wanted to avoid a paradox.”

“Why didn’t you just say so?” the Doctor asked. “Why the elaborate story?”

“Because I thought I might be able to get out of this if I pretended to be whatever metamorph you were looking for. Then nobody’s memories would have to be erased and I wouldn’t have to deal with this whole thing.”
"So this is me? This is really me?" younger Rose asked in surprise. "But... that's just so weird. You're me from the future?"

"Yes," Rose replied.

"How far in the future? I mean, you look exactly the same as I do now. Well, your roots need some touching up, but-"

"Yeah, thanks. I've been meaning to get to that. Nice of you to point it out," Rose grumbled.
Younger Rose laughed. "Really though, when are you now? How much further along?"

Rose shook her head. "I can't say."

"Why not?" the Doctor asked skeptically. "It's like you said, we'll have to forget all this."

"I still can't talk about it."

"That doesn't make sense," said the Doctor. "By the look of you, it can't be more than two years."

"If you're still skeptical about me being Rose, would this help?" Rose passed the Doctor her shopping bag. "Milk because I prefer cow's milk over all the other crazy milk around the universe. Bananas, of course. J-"

"Jelly Babies! You got me Jelly Babies and Jammie Dodgers!" the Doctor said excitedly.

"No, I got my Doctor Jelly Babies and Jammie Dodgers," Rose corrected as she took her bag back. "If you want some, you'll have to go get your own."

"Speaking of your Doctor," said younger Rose, "where is he?"

"Oh, erm, we sort of split up for the afternoon. He had some things to take care of and I had to do the shopping. I'm supposed to meet up with him soon," Rose answered anxiously.

"What kind of stuff?" asked the Doctor.

"Doesn't matter," Rose said as she shook her head. "Just seemed easier to split up."

"He just let you go off alone?" the Doctor said doubtfully. "Sounds to me like he knows there's trouble and he let you go off on your own?"

"And you let him?" younger Rose asked incredulously.

"There's no trouble here. Well, maybe a bit if you're chasing a metamorph, but we didn't know about that. I'm a big girl. I can go to the supermarket on my own," Rose stated defensively.

"When exactly are you supposed to meet him?" asked the Doctor.

"Soon."

"No, I said, exactly."

Rose checked her watch but it didn't do her any good. It wasn't set to Earth time. "Erm... We're supposed to meet at-"

"That watch doesn't help you, does it?" the Doctor challenged. "I can see it from here."
Rose sighed. "You're right. It's running on TARDIS time. Well, I call it TARDIS time, but you call it 'Rose time.'"

"Rose time?" asked younger Rose.

"Yeah, it's what his watch is always set at. He can know the time of day by his time sense and the sun and the stars, but he created his own time to run by. It's based on our sleep cycle so he knows when we should eat and when we should head back to the TARDIS so we can get some sleep," Rose explained. "I set my watch that way, too, so we're always on the same track."

"So are you meeting him by Rose time or Earth time?" the Doctor inquired.

"Erm... my time." Rose was having a hard time coming up with answers now. She was fantastic at coming up with the story of the metamorph, but she was struggling with lying about her meet-up with her Doctor. They weren't meeting up on Earth or in this time period. She had her own TARDIS and she was supposed to go meet him.

"You don't know," young Rose challenged. "You have no idea when you're supposed to meet him. Do you even know where?"

"It's not-"

"You don't, do you?" younger Rose continued. "He just dropped you off, didn't he?"

Younger Rose turned to glare at the Doctor. "You just dropped me off!"

"I would never do that," the Doctor argued. "Never."

"But apparently you have!"

"Where is he? Where is he really?" the Doctor insisted.

"Look, if you're both that upset about this-" Rose started.

"I want to know where he is and why you're stranded here," the Doctor angrily persisted.

Rose sighed heavily. "He's on Qetesh. Something's going on there and I requested that I come here while he dealt with that."

"You made him go alone?!" younger Rose demanded in outrage. "There's trouble out there and you asked him to do it himself?! Doctor, this isn't me! I would never-"

"I am you and I didn't send him into a war zone. Qetesh is a peaceful planet that is having a very minor issue. Though Qetesh is peaceful, the women there are owned by the men. The Doctor has to give me a temporary tattoo that states I'm his property, I have to stay mute the entire time, their clothes are revealing and give me a rash, and most of the food there is toxic to me and it's rude if I refuse it. It's absolutely miserable there so I asked to sit this one out."

"I'd let you stay in the TARDIS while I took care of it and then we'd do the shopping together," the Doctor argued.

"Well, that's not what happened," stated Rose.

"That still doesn't explain why you don't know when to meet him," said younger Rose.

"Look, I'll call him. If it makes you feel better, I'll call him." Rose took out her mobile and hit the
"Hello!" the Doctor answered the phone cheerfully.

"Hey, how's it going on Qetesh?" Rose responded.

"Done! The vermin are gone. I got to play the Pied Piper again. The good one, not the bad one. I was just setting in the coordinates to go meet up with you. But wait... why are you calling me? We should be meeting up. You shouldn't need to call me. We-"

"Stop babbling a second, please. I've gotten myself into a bit of trouble. No, strike that. You've gotten us into a bit of trouble. 1990's should be fine, you said. You didn't spend as much time in the 1990's. You-"

"The problem, Rose. Get to the problem."

"I've run into you. Well, you ran into me."

"Which me?"

"The last one. Not only that, younger me is here, too."

"Don't touch her! Paradox, Rose! Don't-"

"I know about paradoxes. We've been through that already. Me now and me then both know better than that. We're not going to touch each other."

"Not that it matters, but do you know when they're from?"

"I don't know, but judging by her relatively new shoes, I'd say... soon after Krop Tor."

"Alright. Well, as long as you don't touch her, everything should be okay. The me you're with now will just-"

"I know they won't remember. The problem is, they're upset that we're running errands separately. I've forgotten where and when we're supposed to meet, so I'm calling to set a new rendezvous."

"Ah, yes, you don't want them to know about your TARDIS. Alright, name the time and place and I'll come pick you up."

"Well, it's London, May 21st, 1992. What time is it?" Rose asked the pinstriped Doctor.

"10:56," he answered.

"How about 11:15 by Sainsbury's on Waterloo?"

"I'll be there."

"Okay, see ya soon." Rose hung up and looked up at the Doctor and her younger self. "All set. No problems. It's like I said, we're just fine. Anyway... I guess this is where we part ways."

"Can't we go see him?" asked younger Rose.

"It's better if we just leave off here. You two have enough to forget. Make sure you wipe the memories good, Doctor. You know how much trouble there will be if you don't," she told him. "I know I haven't been very pleasant with you and I'm sorry about that. I'm just kind of stressed out
about this. It really has been nice seeing you. Really. And you," Rose said as she turned to look at her younger self. "This... It's been crazy seeing you. Take care."

Rose gave a little wave and started up the road. She only made it a few steps before the Doctor called out to her again.

"I've regenerated again, haven't I?"

Rose stopped but didn't turn around.

"You heard me call your name. You knew my voice and ran. If I were still this man, you would have looked. You never expected to hear my voice again. You've had a hard time looking at me this whole time and when you finally did, you said it was nice to see me again like you hadn't expected to see this face again. I regenerated."

Rose didn't want to answer and knew she didn't have to. He knew without a doubt. She bowed her head, overwhelmed by what she'd been doing so well at suppressing. It had been ages since she saw that face and heard that voice. It'd been years and years, just countless years since the meta-crisis Doctor passed away. She loved her Doctor now, but she'd never stop missing the meta-crisis Doctor and her Doctor with pinstripes.

"No!" young Rose argued in distress. "You said you usually keep a body for hundreds of years! If this isn't more than two years in the future... No! You can't regenerate again! You can't-"

"It's hard," said Rose, tuning to look at them again. "As you can already feel, Doctor, a storm is coming. Things are going to get rough, very rough, but you'll make it through. It gets better. Much better. I can easily say, I've never been happier than I am now. I think that my Doctor would say the same. Just... take care."

Rose turned again and went to go meet her Doctor.
Chapter 2

The pinstriped Doctor and Rose didn’t tail the older version of Rose where they were sure she’d look. Instead, they ran up the next street over and stopped at the corner to watch as Rose made her way up the road toward them. Sainsbury’s was just across the street from them. Younger Rose pointed out the TARDIS straight ahead of them. Older Rose couldn’t see it yet because it was around the corner from her.

When older Rose did turn the corner and see it, she sped up to get there. Young Rose and the Doctor expected to see her fumble with a key that she kept around her neck, but stared in awe when she simply snapped her fingers and the TARDIS door opened on its own.

“Is that possible?” young Rose asked. “Can you do that?”

The Doctor’s mouth hung open in disbelief and he shook his head. “I don’t know. I’ve never tried.”

Just as soon as Rose had opened the door, a man appeared from the other side of the TARDIS and leaned up against it. Rose’s exaggerated sigh could be seen even from there. She reached out and closed the door again.

“Is that you?” asked younger Rose. “That can’t be you. Tweed jacket and a bowtie?”

“Yeah, I think that’s me,” the Doctor sighed. “I thought I was finally getting a good sense of style. The leather wasn’t bad and I really like this suit. I’ve had some really, really awful outfits in the past… I guess this guy’s look isn’t as bad as it could have been. I really like this suit though. I don’t want to lose this suit.”

They watched as the man with the bowtie took Rose’s face in his hands. He smiled brightly, shook his head, and then placed an endearing kiss on her forehead.

“You can come out now!” the man shouted loudly. “I’m sure it’s hard to see from there.”

The Doctor with the bowtie couldn’t possibly see them, but he was looking in their direction. Young Rose and the pinstriped Doctor stepped out of hiding and crossed the road to meet them.

“You know, I really hope we’re better at hiding now then we were back then,” the bowtie Doctor commented.

“Well, give them a little slack,” said older Rose. “We know them well enough to assume they followed me. I requested that they didn’t, but they’re too curious to take what I wanted into consideration.”

“So you’re me?” the pinstriped Doctor said as he looked over his future self. “Tweed and a bowtie? Really?”

“Hey, bowties are cool,” the other Doctor stated defensively as he adjusted said bowtie.

“Yeah, but my suit and my Janis Joplin coat. It sounds like I don’t get to wear them for very long. It’s our best outfit yet.”

“No, mine is the best outfit at this point, thank you. You keep your style and I’ll keep mine.”

“Fine, just tell me: how long have I got? Weeks? Months? Years?” the pinstriped Doctor asked
seriously.

The Doctor with the bowtie looked down at his Rose. She looked up at him for a moment then looked down at the ground.

“I shouldn’t say,” he answered finally.

“You, too? We’ve done this kind of thing before. You know that the person from the past forgets. What does it hurt? I just want to know how far in the future you are. I’m you. Why are you keeping secrets from yourself?”

The bowtie Doctor looked at his Rose again. She still hadn’t raised her head.

“It’s not my secret to tell,” the bowtie Doctor claimed.

“Not yours to- It’s your timestream! You-” the pinstriped Doctor stopped his ranting when he finally noticed older Rose’s demeanor. “Her secret? How is our life her secret?”

The bowtie Doctor leaned in to talk to her. “You really don’t want them to know, do you?”

Rose gave a small shake of her head, still never looking up.

“Do you mind if I ask why?”

“It was really hard to come to terms with at first. Very hard. For them… I know they’d forget, but… I guess I’d just feel bad if they knew,” she admitted quietly.

“That’s fine then. We-“

“I can still hear you,” said younger Rose. “You may be talking quietly, but not quietly enough. I want to ask you the same thing he did. Why are you keeping secrets from yourself? If something bad is coming, if this storm is going to be so bad, I want to know.”

“This isn’t about the coming ‘storm’. It’s…” Older Rose sighed and looked up at her Doctor. After a second to think about it, she nodded in consent.

“Rose doesn’t age,” the bowtie Doctor announced.

“What?” the pinstriped Doctor said in astonishment. That shock quickly changed to horror. “What do you mean she doesn’t age? When-?”

“She,” the bowtie Doctor said as he pointed to younger Rose, “hasn’t aged for a few months now. It will be years before anyone figures it out.”

“I don’t age?” Younger Rose looked at them all in stunned confusion. “How did that happen?”

“Think back. Think back to a huge event that happened a few months ago,” the bowtie Doctor instructed. “What happened?”

“Bad Wolf,” the pinstriped Doctor answered blankly. He looked between both Roses as he spoke ardently. “I’m so sorry. Rose, I am so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” older Rose told him.

“It’s not,” he disagreed. “You just finished telling him how hard it was for you. I can only imagine what you’ve suffered.”
“It was hard. Very hard at first. I found out in the absolute worst possible way.” Rose had a hard
time going on already. The remembrance of her first experience with regeneration energy that killed
her unborn child still caused her unimaginable grief. “Then came the part of watching people age
around me. Mum and…” She almost mentioned Pete and the Meta-crisis Doctor, but caught herself
in time. “Mum and other people I cared about. As Mum got older I couldn’t visit her anymore, not
unless it was in secret because it would be dangerous if people realized that I didn’t age. I missed it. I
missed so much of my mum growing old, so much of her life. One day I went out to where I was
supposed to meet her just to find out that she’d died. I didn’t even get to go to her funeral.” A few
tears slowly ran down her cheeks and her younger self looked horrified at just the thought. “It was
awful. I finally really understood the pain you go through. It’s inconceivably heartbreaking.”

The pinstriped Doctor approached her and held her tightly. “I’m sorry, Rose. No one should have to
suffer that, especially not you. I’m so, so sorry.”

Rose took a deep cleansing breath and wiped away her tears. “I’m not and you definitely shouldn’t
be. It was my own doing. I was the Bad Wolf. I did it to myself. I saw all possible futures and chose
to make myself like this. I didn’t remember it, but I understand it. I loved you and wanted to stay
with you always. I never wanted you to feel lonely again. It was hard in the beginning, but I stand by
that decision.”

The pinstriped Doctor looked at her in confusion and Rose reached up to stroke his cheek.

“Yes, I said it,” she chuckled. “You already know that she loves you. She sometimes thinks you
might feel the same about her. The thing is, you’re so worried about losing her in the future that
you’re afraid to get too attached. We don’t have to worry about that.”

Older Rose took her Doctor’s hand and he smiled down at her.

“Wait… You’re not saying…” the pinstriped Doctor said hesitantly.

The bowtie Doctor nudged Rose forward and both of them wore large mischievous grins. Rose
leaned in to the pinstriped Doctor and whispered in his ear. The Doctor stepped back from her in
utter shock.


“Erm.” The pinstriped Doctor cleared his throat. “Apparently, we’re uh… Maybe it’s best that I
don’t-”

“What?!” younger Rose demanded.

“It would seem that we’re, erm… We’re… That is to say…”

“Married,” the bowtie Doctor answered for him. “We’re married by Gallifreyan tradition, so she
knows his biggest secret. That’s what she told him.”

“You and me? We’re-“

The pinstriped Doctor quickly cut young Rose off. “So, erm, maybe now would be a good time for
us to be going. I don’t think-”

“No, I don’t want to leave yet,” said young Rose. “Not until someone tells me how far in the future
this is. If Mum already died, how long has it been? How old are you?”

The question was directed at Rose and she and the Doctor looked at each other as they thought about
“I think last time we tried counting we decided that I was, what? About 180. No, 170?”

“I think we said about 180, but how long ago was that? Maybe 10 years? Actually it’s probably only been 5 years. You know, it might just be easier to say she’s nearing 200,” the bowtie Doctor said finally.

“You don’t know?” young Rose asked in horror.

“Well, he doesn’t either,” older Rose claimed as she pointed at the pinstriped Doctor. “He claimed he was 900 when he met you, which he really didn’t know then, and started counting from there, but he lost track after 906. He really has no idea. Now he calls himself 1200, but he’s been saying that for at least 50 years. Anyway, it really doesn’t matter. Really, it doesn’t. Anyway, we probably should be going our separate ways.”

“Alright,” said the pinstriped Doctor. “Best wishes to you both.”

“You too,” Rose waved after them. “Oh, and Doctor!”

The Doctor had already made it around the corner, but poked his head back around the wall when she called.

“I’m not one to judge the outfits you choose, but you definitely have the sexiest hair.”

The pinstriped Doctor grinned, but the Doctor at her side looked terribly offended.

“It’s alright, I still love your hair, too. It’s just his… never mind.” Rose walked up to the pinstriped Doctor and gave him a kiss on the cheek. “Goodbye, Doctor.”

The pinstriped Doctor disappeared around the corner to catch up with younger Rose, but then he appeared again, backing away slowly from something in front of him.

“Doctor?” older Rose asked in concern. “What’s wrong?”

“Well, remember how I said we were looking for a metamorph?”

“Yeah.”

The Doctor took another step back and two Roses, dressed completely alike, stepped into view.

“Doctor, stop walking away!” one of the Roses demanded. “You can’t just leave me with this thing!”

“Thing?! You’re the ‘thing’!” the other Rose argued furiously.

“Doctor!” they both shouted.

“And I thought there was one too many of me before,” the older Rose groaned.

“Doctor, I’m serious. What am I supposed to do?” one of the identical Roses pleaded.

“Quite honestly, I have no idea,” the pinstriped Doctor confessed. “Just stop moving. I’m trying to think.”

Both younger Roses stopped side by side and older Rose looked them over. They were exactly the
same. They had the same makeup, same t-shirt, same white hoodie around her waist, and even the same scuff mark on their right shoe.

“Okay,” said the pinstriped Doctor. “How’d this happen? Did you see what did this? Did anything touch you?”

“No, I didn’t see anything,” one of them answered.

“Nothing touched me,” said the other.

“Like it said,” the first one agreed.

“Okay… well, one of you is the metamorph, so one of you is lying. But can you agree on those facts?”

“Yes,” they chorused as they glared at one another.

The pinstriped Doctor took out his sonic screwdriver and scanned them both. “Well, that’s not good.”

The bowtie Doctor stepped up and took a look at the readings. “Both are blank. No readings whatsoever. How is that possible?”

“Interference?” asked older Rose. “Maybe try the red setting?”

The pinstriped Doctor looked around at her in confusion. “It doesn’t have a red setting.”

The bowtie Doctor took out his sonic screwdriver and it glowed red at the tip when he scanned them.

“That is your sonic?” the pinstriped Doctor asked incredulously.

“Jealous?” the other Doctor teased.

“Oh, stop it. What does the reading say?” older Rose asked in frustration.

“Nothing.” The bowtie Doctor showed the other Doctor his sonic readings. “No reading at all. I mean, it’s like there’s no sign of life in either of them. Have you touched either of them yet? Are you sure they’re physical?”

“That’s a good question.”

The pinstriped Doctor walked up to the Rose on the right and the bowtie Doctor took the one on the left. The pinstriped Doctor lifted Rose’s short sleeve shirt and rubbed it between his fingers. He then lightly poked her arm.

“The shirt feels like real cotton and her skin is soft and pliant,” he reported.

“Same here. Cotton feels right and her arm’s nice and squishy,” the bowtie Doctor declared.

“Squishy?” the other Rose asked heatedly.

The Rose next to him folded her arms across her chest. “What do you mean by that?”

“You’re offended? Why are you offended? Rose, why are they offended?” he asked the older Rose.

“Because squishy makes it sound like you’re calling me fat.”
“No, of course not. Anyone can see you’re not fat. You’re just squishy. I like squishy. Makes for a nice pillow. Especially the breasts,” the bowtie Doctor clarified. Older Rose blushed and hid her face in her hands. “Anyway, that experiment has narrowed the possibilities quite a bit. Metamorphs can copy a person’s image, but not many can copy layers and textures.”

“How can she do that?” asked the Rose on the left as she pulled out her own key. “I thought you said the TARDIS key can’t be duplicated.”

“Hold on, I’m not done,” the pinstriped Doctor said calmly. “The problem that comes in now is that the second Rose that showed the key actually knew what it was. The first Rose showed it, but didn’t explain its significance. The second Rose already knew.”

“I’m not the metamorph!” the Rose on the left heatedly declared. “Just because I took it out second doesn’t mean I didn’t know about it! I’m Rose! I swear!”

“Feel like sharing any of those thoughts?” asked older Rose.

“No, I’d be able to detect their body-print technology. It wouldn’t be nearly as good without it. They also hide the host bodies away. No, whatever this is, it’s more talented than a Zygon,” the bowtie Doctor answered.

“Just because we weren’t fooled by them doesn’t mean they didn’t trick someone else.”

“This is so not good,” the pinstriped Doctor moaned.

“We ended up on a planet called Adeki once. We just wanted to do some fishing. A few telepathic metamorphs happened upon us. They looked like some of my old companions. Those companions told me someone kidnapped and stranded them there. See, those metamorphs were stuck on the planet and were running out of food and they wanted me to let them in the TARDIS and take them
off planet. Well, I say running out of ‘food’, but I mean people. They make a telepathic connection with someone and change into anyone from that person’s memories. They play out that lie while draining the life force out of their target.”

“One of those is the metamorph and is draining the life force out of the other?” older Rose worried.

“Yes,” the bowtie Doctor affirmed.

“So how do we figure out which is the right one?” she asked.

“I am! I swear I am! Please don’t let it do that to me. I’ll prove it however you want!” the Rose on the left said ardently.

“No, this is crazy! If she’s reading my thoughts, she’ll know the answer to anything you ask! I’m me. I’m Rose! You have to do something!”

“What do you want to do?” the pinstriped Doctor leaned in to ask the other Doctor.

“I don’t know. Take a chance and bubble one up?”

“What if we’re wrong and the metamorph gets away?”

“At least we’d know which was the real one,” the bowtie Doctor rationalized.

“That’s true… Your TARDIS is closer.”

“But it’s in the Box Room…” Both of them groaned. The Box Room was the least organized room in the TARDIS.

“It’s the best idea we’ve got right now,” the pinstriped Doctor conceded.

“Alright, this is what’s going to happen,” the bowtie Doctor announced to the gathering of Roses. “The Doctors are going into the TARDIS and you’re all going to wait right here. Rose Tyler is the absolute worst when it comes to wandering off and now there are three of you. Triple trouble. I tell you seriously though – if you don’t want to get stranded here without a TARDIS, you’ll stay right where you are.”

“We’ll only be inside for a few minutes. I promise. Just wait, alright? No wandering. Just wait,” the pinstriped Doctor instructed as he pointed a finger at all of them.

Both Doctors disappeared inside the bowtie Doctor’s TARDIS and older Rose leaned against the wall. They didn’t say it, but she knew that the Doctors had left her there to guard the other two.

“I don’t like this plan of theirs,” the Rose on the left worried. “What did they mean ‘take a chance’?”

The Rose on the right looked pretty concerned, too. “When they say ‘bubble one up’ what do they actually mean by that? It sounds like they don’t like the option, but they’re going to do it anyway?”

“And that metamorph thing might even get away,” the Rose on the left said as she pointed to the Rose on the right.

“I’m not the ‘thing’; you are!”

“That’s enough,” said older Rose. “They wouldn’t chance hurting the real Rose.”

“Then what’s that whole ‘take a chance’ thing that they said?” Rose on the right asked.
“I’ve got it!” said Rose on the left. “I know what to do! I can prove it!”

Before she even finished talking, she began running down the road. Older Rose and the other that was left were aghast.

“She’s got the key to the TARDIS!” the other Rose shouted in horror. As soon as the thought hit her, she was running after. Of course, older Rose couldn’t let them get away, so she was right on their heels.

“Is this really what I’m like?” older Rose wondered aloud. She was slightly faster than her younger self and caught up to the one that was closest. From there she shouted to the one in the front.

“Nothing you can get will convince them! The metamorph is in your head and can duplicate anything!”

“But I have an idea!” she shouted back.

“It’s no good! You can’t even get in the TARDIS right now!”

The Rose in front stopped. “What do you mean?”

“You can’t get in the Doctor’s TARDIS when he’s in another TARDIS,” older Rose lied, finally catching up. “When he’s in a different version of the same TARDIS, the other one locks itself up so not to create a paradox.”

“But I can prove it. How am I supposed to…” the Rose that first ran off looked down dejectedly.

“It’s okay,” said older Rose. “I’ve got an idea of my own. As easy as it gets. I want you to snap your fingers.” She then looked at the Rose beside her and instructed, “You step back.”

The identical Roses looked at her uncertainly.

“You want me to snap my fingers? You think that the metamorph can’t snap?” the first Rose asked skeptically.

“I’m clever. I’ve got my theory. If you’re the real Rose, snap your fingers,” older Rose insisted.

The first Rose sighed, but lifted her hand and snapped her fingers. Older Rose swung her grocery bag back and brought it around hard to beat first Rose in the head. She hit her so hard that it knocked the girl off balance.

“You!” older Rose shouted to the one behind her. “Snap your fingers! Quick!”

Older Rose hit the first Rose again with her bag and the girl fell to the pavement. “Bloody hell! I said snap your fingers!”

The second Rose snapped and her jaw dropped when an open door appeared in the trunk of a large tree.

“In!” older Rose commanded.

The second Rose ran through the door and older Rose followed. The door closed and older Rose sighed in relief. “I’m so glad that worked. It could have been really bad if I was wrong.”
The second Rose snapped and her jaw dropped when an open door appeared in the trunk of a large tree.

“In!” older Rose commanded.

The second Rose ran through the door and older Rose followed. The door closed and older Rose sighed in relief. “I’m so glad that worked. It could have been really bad if I was wrong.”

The younger Rose was stopped halfway up the ramp and was looking around in awe. “This is a TARDIS. This is a TARDIS disguised as a tree. But, the other Doctor’s TARDIS is up by Sainsbury’s. This…”

“This TARDIS is mine, well, ours,” older Rose explained. “Sorry, but do you mind getting off the ramp? We’d rather not risk touching, remember?”

Younger Rose nodded and moved. “Yeah, I’ll never forget that mistake. No paradoxes. What if it was really me that you hit with your bag?”

“I was pretty confident with my guess and even more confident with my test, but it really was a big risk. I’m sure I’ll be chewed out for it later.”

“How’d that work though? How’d the TARDIS open for me?”

“Because you’re me. The TARDIS is far more clever than us. She knows who should be allowed in and keeps everyone else out.”

“But this is your own TARDIS. It’s not the Doctor’s. How do we get our own TARDIS?”

“It was sort of a gift. I got a piece of TARDIS coral that could be grown into a TARDIS so that’s what we did.”

“And you can fly it on your own?” young Rose asked in surprise. She watched as her older self typed quickly on the key pad and paged through things on the touch screen. Older Rose seemed to know exactly what she was doing, but young Rose hadn’t a clue.

“It’s rather complicated, but still easier than you think. I helped build it so I sort of know how things work. Okay, I’m sorry, but I want to run a test really quickly.” Older Rose took a small black slab device from under the console and asked young Rose to put her hand on it. “Sorry. I know you’re me, but I still want to take extra precautions.” Older Rose spun the monitor so younger Rose could see the readings. “Definitely Rose Tyler.”

“Now we have to find a way to prove that outside of the TARDIS. We have to catch that metamorph and I don’t want anyone second guessing me again. We know it can duplicate anything visual, but what about other senses?”

“Oh, that is brilliant!” older Rose cheered. “I’ve heard that most metamorphs can’t mimic smells. I don’t know if that counts for all of them though… Oh, but this is the Doctor we’re talking about. Especially your Doctor.”

“Taste,” they answered together.
“That man will lick anything he’s curious about,” younger Rose said as she grimaced and shook her head. “So what do we use?”

“I don’t know. Let’s head to the kitchen.” Older Rose led the way, but she really didn’t need to. It was set up like the TARDIS young Rose was used to.

“It looks so much the same, but it’s so different,” younger Rose commented.

“Oh, this isn’t ‘different.’ Wait until you see the Doctor’s TARDIS as it is now. The TARDIS makes huge changes. Stairs everywhere. Bright lights. Glass floors. I just really liked the TARDIS you travel in now, so this is what I got.”

“If you’ve both got your own TARDISs, does that mean you always travel separately?” younger Rose worried.

“No, we very rarely travel separately. I have a garden in his TARDIS where I park mine. Then we switch and he’ll park in mine. We have to use both of them regularly or they get restless,” older Rose explained.

They entered the kitchen and both started looking around. They weren’t sure what they were looking for and stopped to look at each other.

“I guess it really doesn’t matter. I know it’s sticky, but…” The older Rose held up a jar of jam and set it on the table.

Younger Rose shrugged and undid the top. “Where do I put it?”

“Well, I think it should be a secret between us, so why not lift your shirt a bit and draw a line just above your waist.”

Younger Rose did as suggested then looked up at her older self in thought. “Maybe you should, too. If it can mimic anyone from my memories, it might pretend to be you instead.”

“Good point.” Older Rose did the same and put the jar back in the refrigerator. “Are we all set then?”

“Ready as we’ll ever be.”

The two Roses exited the TARDIS together and started looking around for the metamorph. It wasn’t anywhere they could see so they started walking together toward the bowtie Doctor’s TARDIS, careful to keep a safe distance between them. They were halfway up the street when they heard an angry shout behind them.

“Rose Tyler!”

They turned and saw the bowtie Doctor storming up to them.

“Where have you been?! One simple instruction! ‘Wait here.’ Is that really so hard to understand? ‘Wait here’ does not, in any language, translate to ‘ignore the Doctor and take a field trip’!”

Both girls giggled and he looked at them suspiciously.

“Where’s the other Rose?” he asked with concern.

“We don’t know where the metamorph got off to, but we’re both Rose,” the younger Rose answered.
“And how am I supposed to believe that from you?”

“You don’t have to hear it from her, you can hear it from me,” said older Rose. “This one is the real one.”

“How do you know?” he asked as he scrutinized the younger of the two.

“I came up with a test. One failed. This one passed,” she explained.

“What kind of test?”

“I can’t say. You’re just going to have to trust me.”

“Why can’t you say?”

“Because how are we sure you’re not the metamorph?” younger Rose answered. “It got away and can mimic anything from my mind. How do we know you’re not it?”

“Yeah, well how do I know you’re both not metamorphs? I don’t know how many there are,” he questioned.

“Just one,” they both answered.

“My Doctor was tracing it. That’s why we were here,” younger Rose explained.

“And while we were in my TARDIS, I did a quick scan for different life forms and it came back with one,” older Rose informed him.

“You took this Rose into your TARDIS?!” the Doctor shouted. “What if-?”

“I told you, I figured it out,” older Rose reminded him. “I have no doubts that this is the right Rose. No doubts whatsoever. You however… Ugh… I don’t know what to think.”

“But I’m me,” he said pathetically.

“You found them!” the pinstriped Doctor shouted in relief as he jogged over to them. “Seriously! How hard is it to understand ‘don’t wander off’? You are so impossible sometimes. Wait… where’s the other one? We’re missing one. How do we know which one this is?”

“She’s the real Rose and I’m the real Rose, but we have no idea about you two.” Older Rose shook her head in frustration. “Oi, Pinstripes. How many metamorphs are there?”

“Pinstripes? Did you just call me ‘Pinstripes’? That’s kind of rude, don’t you think?”

“That’s rich coming from you,” younger Rose laughed. “Just answer her question.”

“One. Just one metamorph.”

“There you go, Bowtie,” younger Rose said playfully. “Is that confirmation enough? Three people agree that there’s only one metamorph.”

“Okay, I’ll take that as confirmation then. So, both Roses claim that they’re absolutely sure that the other is really her. I’ll trust that. So this metamorph-”

“Could be either of you for all we know,” younger Rose reminded them.
“Me?” the pinstriped Doctor asked in surprise.

“You found them!” a voice called out to them. “We’ve been looking everywhere for-” The sentence trailed off as the man caught sight of his double. Two pinstriped Doctors glared darkly at one another.

“Okay…” older Rose said slowly. “My Doctor, I apologize for doubting you.”

“Same to both Roses,” he said in return as he looked between his identical younger selves. “So, Rose, either Rose, now might be a good time to let me know about your foolproof identity test.”

“I don’t think the metamorph will fall for it twice,” younger Rose said doubtfully. “Rose taught it a pretty good lesson the first time.”

“I don’t know what I could say or do to prove myself,” one of the pinstriped Doctors said as he continued to glare at the other.

An idea suddenly came to older Rose and she rushed up the bowtie Doctor and pulled him down so she could whisper in his ear. “The sonic. If it’s still younger me that it’s draining, the metamorph and younger me won’t scan, but the real Doctor should still scan as Time Lord, right?”

A smile spread across the bowtie Doctor’s face and Rose stepped to his side, preparing to run. The bowtie Doctor pulled out his sonic screwdriver and very quickly scanned the identical Doctors. As soon as he finished, he nodded to the real Doctor. Older Rose seized the wrist of the correct pinstriped Doctor and shouted, “Run!”

They took off quickly, every one of them racing toward the bowtie Doctor’s TARDIS. The bowtie Doctor had a head start and got there first. He clicked his fingers even before they arrived and raced in, followed by his Rose. Rose dropped the pinstriped Doctor’s wrist so he could quickly follow in after her. The pinstriped Doctor stopped in the doorway and older Rose and the bowtie Doctor saw why. There were two younger Roses again, both desperate to be let in. The pinstriped Doctor looked devastated and helpless as he blocked the door.

“It’s alright,” older Rose told them. “We planned for this. Rose, lift your shirt.”

Both young Roses lifted their shirts to reveal a smear of jam. The pinstriped Doctor shook his head. “It can read her mind. It-”

“No, that’s not it,” older Rose explained. “I don’t know if this thing can mimic smell, but we thought that it probably couldn’t mimic taste, especially with you.”

Both Doctors’ eyes widened as they looked at each other and all the Roses.

“Alright. Time for a test then.” The pinstriped Doctor swept a finger of jam off the belly of the closest Rose and brought it up to his nose. He stared at both girls. “I don’t need to taste it. It doesn’t smell right,” he declared. He shoved the closest Rose back, seized the wrist of the other and pulled her in.

Older Rose sighed in relief, but still felt a little worried by the way the Rose outside was banging on the door.

“Clever. Very, very clever Rose,” the bowtie Doctor praised as he walked around the console toward the door.

“Yeah, a lot more clever than you, weren’t they?” the pinstriped Doctor muttered. He held a palm
sized rectangular device above younger Rose’s head and a large bubble encompassed her. Young Rose disappeared and in her place was a squat alien with a very large head. Its limbs were short and muscular. It had no torso, so its arms were on the sides of its monstrous head. It glared at them all and gnashed its tiny, razor-sharp teeth.

“Let Rose in,” the pinstriped Doctor requested.

The bowtie Doctor was already at the door and when he opened it, he immediately pulled Rose into a comforting embrace. She was shaking and hyperventilating. She’d been terrified that she was really being left behind.

“It’s okay,” the bowtie Doctor said softly as he rubbed her back. “We would never leave without you.”

“But… but…” she was having a hard time pulling herself together.

The pinstriped Doctor finished securing the bubble-like barrier and turned to face young Rose. “Oh, Rose, I’m so sorry for scaring you like that,” he said sincerely. “I lied about the jam. I thought you’d understand. I wanted to trick the metamorph into coming in here so I could capture it. I’d never leave you. I’d never give up unless I knew for certain.”

The pinstriped Doctor opened his arms to her, and she accepted the invitation, wrapping her arms around his middle while he held her tightly to him.

“You’re such a prat,” she spoke quietly against his chest.

He chuckled. “I can be, can’t I? I’m sorry.”

“So do you have jam, too?” the bowtie Doctor asked older Rose. He lifted her shirt, swiped a little jam, and licked his finger. “Raspberry! My favorite.”

Older Rose giggled and shook her head.

The pinstriped Doctor finally licked his finger, too. “Yeah, raspberry’s my favorite, too. Like he said, you girls are very clever. So very clever. But where’d you get the jam from?”

“From my TARDIS,” young Rose said with a grin.

“You mean ours?”

“No, I mean the TARDIS of Rose Tyler.”

The pinstriped Doctor turned around to look at older Rose and she playfully waggled her fingers at him.

“The reason I didn’t tell you about where and when I was supposed to meet my Doctor is because I was supposed to meet him on a different planet about a thousand years in the future,” older Rose explained. “I helped grow and build my own TARDIS.”

“Grow?” the pinstriped Doctor asked. “But that takes thousands of years.”

“Not if you shatterfry the plasmic shell and modify the dimensional stabilizer to a foldback harmonic of 36.3.” older Rose informed him.

“Are you serious?” the pinstriped Doctor said in awe. “This is Rose? This is really Rose? She helped build a TARDIS? She can fly a TARDIS?”
“You’ve always known she’s clever,” the bowtie Doctor reminded him. “She learns fast and has a lot of time to learn it all.”

“So you don’t need to worry about me going to the supermarket on my own. I’m a big girl,” older Rose teased.

“No, I worry,” the bowtie Doctor disagreed, “but I always worry about you. I just can’t keep you chained at my side at all times. You’d get sick of me.”

“I can’t believe that I get all this time with you. You and me traveling for hundreds of years together,” the pinstriped Doctor said as he stared at his Rose. They still held each other in a loose embrace.

“Is that alright?” young Rose asked uncertainly.

The pinstriped Doctor gazed at her pensively for a few moments and slowly moved forward to kiss her. Their lips met softly, but then he pulled her closer. It was a long firm kiss and Rose blushed when they pulled apart.

Older Rose had been hitting her Doctor in the chest in excitement. The bowtie Doctor pulled her to his side where she wrapped her arms around his waist. “Do you have any idea how long she’s waited for that?” she whispered.

“Do you have any idea how long he’s wished it, too?”

“It’s such a shame they have to forget it all. If only they were allowed to remember it, it might help them through everything that comes.”

Young Rose and the pinstriped Doctor turned to their older selves. “This is it then. I guess this is where we really part ways. Thanks for the help with the gwanzulum,” the pinstriped Doctor said as he pointed at the creature in the bubble.

“It was fun,” said older Rose.

“I wish we could remember it,” said younger Rose.

“Oh, you will eventually,” the bowtie Doctor assured her. “You’ll have to live it all again when you get to our point in time. At that point, you’ll be us.”

“Time travel is so weird,” young Rose said as she shook her head.

“Many happy travels to you,” the pinstriped Doctor wished them in farewell.

“Oh no you don’t,” said older Rose. She walked over to him and gave him a tight hug. She took just a moment to breathe him in. “I love you always, no matter your face, but I’ll always miss this you. Always.”

“Is it the sexy hair?” he teased.

Rose reached up and tugged on his hair. “You do have great hair.”

“I have hair, too!” the bowtie Doctor reminded them irritably.

“Don’t worry, Doctor, you’re just as good-looking,” young Rose assured him. “I don’t want my Doctor to regenerate any time soon, but I still look forward to being with you, too.”
Older Rose walked back over to her Doctor but he stopped her. “You have to leave, too,” he told her. “I’ve got to go to Adeki to put this guy back. I’m not going through anymore metamorph mix ups. It’s easier if I go alone. Meet up with you at our last planned rendezvous?”

“Alright,” she conceded. “See you in a bit, but then it’s off to Omia 4. You promised.”

The pinstriped Doctor and both Roses walked out of the TARDIS and headed down the street for their own ships. They were all so consumed by their own thoughts that none of them spoke. Both girls stopped when they came to Rose’s TARDIS, but the Doctor hadn’t paid attention for a second and had to backtrack to join them.

“So, any last words of wisdom?” younger Rose asked.

“None that you’ll remember,” older Rose replied regretfully. “I really wish there was something I could say that would help you through. Just never give up hope.”

“It’s going to be bad, isn’t it?” asked the Doctor. “This feeling I have, the feeling that something’s coming, it’s going to be terrible.”

Rose nodded, wishing she could change it for them. She didn’t want them to suffer, but they would. It was inevitable. “As you can see though, it gets better. Take care.”

Rose snapped her fingers and the hidden door in the large tree opened. The Doctor gaped openly. Older Rose waved to them both and disappeared into her TARDIS.

Once inside, she collapsed onto the jumpseat. In just a few short minutes, all the memories of this day would vanish from the minds of the younger Doctor and his young Rose. She thought of what they were going to suffer and it brought back the pain of her past. It still stung when she looked back. It was like she told them though, it got better. At this time in her life, she was the happier than she’d ever been. It was time once again to put the past behind her and live for the future. And the immediate future? A trip to Omia 4.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!