

Dr. Who - Cottonopolis

by

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INT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Manchester, 1843. The vast insides of an inactive cotton mill, lit by flickering gaslight. Huge, metal machines, flanking a central aisle, tower up into the darkness of the rafters. Wheels, pistons and looms cast jagged shadows across a silent factory floor.

At the far end of the mill a heavy, metal FACTORY DOOR slides open and CABOT, a stout, troubled man, steps into view. He is the mill's owner, and is playing reluctant guide to the FARLEYS, wealthy American industrialists on a study tour of Europe.

Upon entering the factory floor, MR. & MRS. FARLEY are immediately taken aback by the magnitude of the machinery. Their bored eight year old son, TIMOTHY, suddenly springs to life at the sight of the enormous, complex machines. He sprints off down the central aisle, too excited to know where to start and what to touch first.

MRS. FARLEY

Timothy? Timothy, be careful

CABOT

We've...ah... just had these new looms and engines fitted. The whole factory goes back to full production capacity tomorrow, I don't think he should be playing around down there, it could be...

MR. FARLEY

Timothy!

The adults race after TIMOTHY, who darts off the central aisle, disappearing among the pistons and presses.

MRS. FARLEY

Timothy!

CUT TO:

INT. FACTORY WORKSPACE- NIGHT

TIMOTHY, meanders along a narrow path, in among the machines, drawing to a stop near a large steam engine. Out of the corner of his eye he catches something - the copper on a nearby cylinder seems to be undulating, almost breathing.

The boy leans in closer, fascinated. He raises his hand to touch the apparently living metal. As his finger is about to make contact...

MR. FARLEY O.C.  
Timothy Farley, come out of  
there at once!

The boy starts and turns to find his irate father now also standing among the clutter of mill machinery. Scolded, TIMOTHY runs back to find comfort with his mother.

MR. FARLEY stands alone and begins to wander between the machines. He throws a glance back in the direction of his wife and CABOT, then, assured he cannot be seen, removes a notebook from his waistcoat pocket. FARLEY begins to make furtive sketches of the advanced factory technology. Soon, he too notices the expanding, golden machinery. His mouth drops.

CABOT O.C.  
Something peaking your  
interest, Mr. Farley?

Like his son before him, MR. FARLEY jumps, whipping the notebook behind his back as he turns to face CABOT.

MR. FARLEY  
I was just...uh...admiring the  
workmanship of your  
machines. Unique. We have  
nothing to rival this in the  
States.

CABOT  
No. I should think not.  
Excuse me for a moment,  
won't you, I shall be back  
presently?

Barely able to hide his disgust at MR. FARLEY's corporate espionage, CABOT makes off, back towards the FACTORY DOOR. He passes MRS. FARLEY, who is reprimanding TIMOTHY.

MRS. FARLEY  
Don't talk such nonsense,  
machines are not like trees,  
they do not grow by  
themselves!

CABOT

Excuse me for a moment, Mrs.  
Farley, pressing business.

As CABOT reaches the far end of the factory floor, he looks up into the darkness and mutters, between his teeth.

CABOT

These three are yours.

CABOT exits, sliding the huge FACTORY DOOR shut behind him. The noise of the closed door startles TIMOTHY and MRS. FARLEY but they are quickly distracted by the sound of wrenching metal. And then another noise - a man's scream.

MRS. FARLEY

Nathan? Nathan?! Stay here,  
Timothy, please, I'm just  
going to find your father.

MRS. FARLEY bustles down the central aisle and disappears into the factory apparatus. TIMOTHY waits anxiously.

Beat.

Then the sound of tearing metal again and another scream, this one distinctly female. TIMOTHY stands frozen to the spot. He is terrified. The metallic sound echoes through the factory again, growing louder, getting closer.

TIMOTHY bolts for the FACTORY DOOR. He pulls on its handle, desperately trying to escape, but the door seems to be locked from the other side.

From high up, among the roof's cast-iron beams, something crawls. It closes in on TIMOTHY, pausing to observe the boy from above as he struggles with the locked door below. Then it lunges, down from the darkness. The sound of torn metal from above causes TIMOTHY to look up just as something drops onto him. The metallic screams mix with TIMOTHY's and the opening credit swirl -

CUT TO  
TITLES

CUT TO:

INT. TARDIS - DAY

All is quiet as the TARDIS runs a series of diagnostic routines, the main console flickering with varied patterns of lights. THE DOCTOR and ANNE (ASSISTANT, see what I did there?) lie on a blanket nearby, playing chess. THE DOCTOR is looking rather impatient as ANNE appears to be taking an eternity to make her next move.

THE DOCTOR

Anne?

Nothing. ANNE is lost, deep in thought. Her hand hovers over numerous pawns, unable to decide which piece to move.

THE DOCTOR

Anne!

ANNE

What?

THE DOCTOR

I realise time is somewhat relative for someone like me but could you please hurry up?

ANNE

I'm concentrating on my next move. Don't know what to do with these stupid pawns.

THE DOCTOR

Pawns.

ANNE

There are loads of them, they appear to be of no use and I don't like them, so I have nicknamed them 'prawns'. Okay?

THE DOCTOR

Pawns possess great value. They can change the flow of the game.

ANNE lets out an exasperated sigh, then impulsively moves a random pawn.

ANNE

There.

THE DOCTOR looks at her with a pained expression.

THE DOCTOR

Unless you make a move like  
that, of course.

He picks up a bishop and moves it into a check mate  
position.

ANNE

That's not fair, you rushed  
me!

THE DOCTOR

You took over 45 minutes to  
move one pawn two squares!

ANNE

I needed to weigh up all my  
options.

THE DOCTOR

Your indecision was your  
undoing.

ANNE

That's easy for you to say.  
You're 900 and blahdy blah.  
You probably invented the  
game then taught it  
to...Genghis Khan!

THE DOCTOR

Never played him at chess  
actually. Probably best, he  
wasn't a very good loser.  
Like someone else I could  
mention.

ANNE

And now your comparing me to  
Genghis Khan. I didn't know  
time travel could be this  
much fun.

THE DOCTOR

Oh but it is!

THE DOCTOR excitedly leaps up and runs over to the  
central console.

THE DOCTOR  
And the TARDIS finishes its  
diagnostic tests in...three,  
two, one, we are time and  
relative dimensions in space  
a go-go! So where do you  
want to go...go?

ANNE  
Ouuu, ummmm, ahhhhhhh...

THE DOCTOR  
Anywhere you like.

ANNE  
Fouuuuuu...

THE DOCTOR  
Absolutely anywhere.

ANNE  
Wummmmmmmmm...

THE DOCTOR  
Crystal Palace!

ANNE  
(disappointed,  
confused)  
Football?

THE DOCTOR  
The Great Exhibition of  
1851, *the* Crystal Palace.

THE DOCTOR begins to race around the console,  
pulling levers and setting coordinates.

THE DOCTOR  
Oh-ho-hooo, just you wait,  
you'll love it. Ah, if we  
run into Queen Victoria,  
best not to mention me by  
name. Don't ask, things got  
a bit... hairy between us  
once. London, 1851 here. We.  
Come.

He pulls down a lever and the central column starts  
its rhythmic movement.

ANNE  
Do I get to dress up again?

THE DOCTOR

Oh yes.

ANNE squeals with delight. THE DOCTOR smiles affectionately as he watches her run off to get changed.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEN HILL - DAY

Those familiar scraping groans are heard as the TARDIS materialises on a foggy hillside. After a pause, the TARDIS door opens and THE DOCTOR proudly steps out.

THE DOCTOR

May I present to you the  
wonder of the Crystal...  
Palace...

THE DOCTOR'S P.O.V - Some miles in the distance is a city of factories and smoking chimneys. The whole metropolis booms to an industrial heartbeat and is shrouded in a choking smog.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARDIS ON GREEN HILL - DAY

Confused, THE DOCTOR heads back inside the TARDIS.

CUT TO:

INT. TARDIS - DAY

THE DOCTOR runs to the central console and begins checking readouts. ANNE, dressed up in the best Victorian finery, stands looking from the TARDIS door to THE DOCTOR and back again.

ANNE

What? What is it? Where have  
you not taken us to now?

THE DOCTOR

Just, just a minute. I think  
we may have made a short  
detour. The question is why?

ANNE

You can't drive?

THE DOCTOR studies data from various sources on the console.

THE DOCTOR  
Aha! I think the riddle is solved. It would seem that the TARDIS, while en route to London 1851 picked up an anomalous reading from Manchester, 1843. And I'm a very good driver, I'll have you know.

ANNE  
Anomalous reading?

THE DOCTOR  
It means something here is out of place.

ANNE  
I know what it means. I meant what, specifically, is reading anomalously.

ANNE frowns at the pronunciation of 'anomalously', as if she is unsure it's actually a word.

While continuing to analyse various data readouts THE DOCTOR points to a dull, pulsing blue light on the console.

THE DOCTOR  
That is.

ANNE  
What is 'that'?

THE DOCTOR  
Radiation. The sort of radiation that is normally associated with the propulsion systems on star ships.

ANNE  
Star ships? In Manchester? In 1841?  
(ANNE begins to sing)  
"Duh-duh-duhhhhh! The chances of anything coming from Mars, are a million to one, he said."

THE DOCTOR stares at ANNE, nonplussed.

THE DOCTOR  
Moving on. The readings are faint and erratic which makes me think 'crash landing'. But it definitely shouldn't be here.

ANNE  
Here being Manchester not London and 1843 not 1851.

THE DOCTOR  
Yes. Again, nothing to do with my driving.

ANNE  
Do you think they'll need our help?

THE DOCTOR grins.

THE DOCTOR  
Do you think they have a choice?

ANNE  
Come on then, let's go find some crash landed aliens!

THE DOCTOR  
That-a girl.

THE DOCTOR bounds towards the TARDIS doors, turns and offers his hand to his companion.

THE DOCTOR  
It may not be a Crystal Palace, but let me introduce you to the other side of the British Empire. Anne, welcome to Cottonopolis.

THE DOCTOR throws open the TARDIS door and he and ANNE step out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANCHESTER FIELD - DAY

THE DOCTOR and ANNE trudge through a muddy field, the industrial sounds noticeably louder.

ANNE

Should we be looking out for anything in particular?

THE DOCTOR stops and checks the sonic screwdriver. He begins to scan the area for visual clues.

THE DOCTOR

Anything that looks a little incongruous.

ANNE

Besides from you.

THE DOCTOR

I never look incongruous. I blend. I'm a blender.

ANNE

What about that coat in your wardrobe? The one that looked like a paint shop had exploded over it?

THE DOCTOR

That was a faze I was going through. Aha!

THE DOCTOR points up to the chimney cluttered skyline of Manchester. Just visible, in the furthest distance, is a huge, crude radio tower (think the RKO radio tower), poking out above the smokestacks.

THE DOCTOR

I think we may have a winner.

ANNE

Wow.

THE DOCTOR

I think someone is trying to phone home.

ANNE

Well, let's go help those stranded aliens.

The duo head off towards COTTONOPOLIS.

ANNE

I hope they're friendly and throw us a thank you party for rescuing them. That would be nice for a change.

THE DOCTOR

You never know, maybe they  
will.

ANNE

They're going to try and eat  
us, aren't they?

THE DOCTOR

Probably, yeah.