

# *Snow no more*



*Wendy Louise*

An annoying squeaking sound, caused by the wheels of a train, was the only thing that interfered with the silence at the train station. Accompanied by two suitcases, a young woman stood waiting. Apple-red cheeks, caused by the icy winter wind, decorated her face. A face that moved frantically from right to left and back again. Impatiently, almost frightened.

Slowly, the train entered the station. Doors were opened and she noticed how the thin layer of snow on the platform was crumbled by passenger's footsteps. As if in slow motion, she picked up her suitcases and boarded the train.

After making sure the carriage was empty, she sank back into one of the leather couches. Her cheeks warmed instantly and she dared to actually relax a little. The farther away she went from home, the quieter it became. Carefully she started believing that she was going to pull this off. 'You're gonna do this Rose. You're so close!' she'd kept telling herself over the past three days. Gosh, had it been three days already? No wonder she was tired.

But it would all be worth it. Soon she would be free, free for the rest of her life. While she unhooked the strap and removed her bonnet, she looked back on the trip so far.

She had snuck out in the middle of the night. As silent as one can be, carrying two heavy suitcases, she had succeeded in getting out of there unseen. It took her a whole night and half a day's bus trip to get to Canada. Once there, she had hired a private Cessna to fly her to Anchorage, Alaska. To see snow, one last time, had been her greatest wish. The real snow, not the wobbly-bobbly-slushy-brown mess a fresh layer of snow at home turned into, after a day of being walked on. She knew she had to go to Alaska for the real deal. As she heaved a heavy sigh, she let her head rest against the compartment wall. Blimey! The hairpin keeping her hair together almost pierced her skull. Another thing she was dying to do, letting her hair down and getting rid of those horrific black stockings. 'But hey, that's the way an Amish girl is supposed to dress', she shrugged, while she automatically sat up straight.

After she dozed off for just a few minutes, the sound of footsteps woke her. Heavy, ominous footsteps kept getting closer while her heart started pounding faster at each thump. Not now, she had come so far! 'Please don't let them find me,' she whispered, 'and make me go back. O Lord, please don't let them punish me...' In spite of the cold, Rose started sweating big time, trying to control her breath and simultaneously the rhythm of her heart. The footsteps stopped as suddenly as they had started and she held her breath. As the door to her carriage flew open, Rose cried a smothered shriek. Two friendly eyes stared back at her, while an even friendlier voice assured her he meant no harm at all. 'I'm so sorry Ma'am, I didn't mean to startle you. I just want to check your ticket.'

As he continued his route throughout the train, Rose laughed out loud. The poor man, she nearly gave him a heart attack! Newly relaxed, she leaned back and looked out of the window. Only to find herself struck speechless again. The sight of enormous white glaciers, their distinguished tops, high in the sky, warmed her heart. The blueness of the sky was intensified by the immaculate whiteness of the snow below. She fought the urge to jump out of the train and plunge into what looked like a fluffy, sweet blanket of marshmallows.



Instead she glued her face to the window and started taking photographs with her mind. Deer running around in deep layers of snow, clouds hanging like luxurious lumps of cotton wool around the glacier's peak, the afternoon sun making a frozen lake look like a tray of silver lace, she even saw children building a snowman. Throughout the entire trip, she soaked it all up like a huge sponge. She only freed herself for five minutes to get a hot coco in the cafeteria carriage. The thought of marshmallows making her dare to leave her safe hiding place. That would be the last time too, craving hot coco. There would be no need for that at her final destination.

After departing the train at the station she was supposed to, Rose felt a little pang in her heart while watching the train continue its journey. She could have sat there forever, mesmerized by the beauty of the snow. Never in a million years would she have thought snow to be so romantic. She had always dreamed about riding off into the sunset on a tropical beach with her Prince Charming, warmed by the last rays of sun and sipping loads of cocktails. One bowl, two straws of course. But that was before Jack.

She had met Jack in the snow, fell in love with him during ice-skating and kissed him for the first time during a blizzard. Little flecks of pure snow kissed her lips each time Jack pulled back a little to look at her. It had been the sweetest sensation, even in spite of the freezing cold. They met secretly, nobody was to know they were seeing each other. Therefore, their encounters always took place at night. She remembered seeing the darkness lit up by the falling snow. A fresh layer of snow on the pavement had the same effect as lightning thousands of candles in a darkened bedroom. She decided at that very instant that there was nothing more romantic than snow. And as tears tried to fill her eyes, she shook her head firmly and lifted her suitcases. No time to linger, she had to move. Quickly.

Another Cessna stood waiting for her at the little airport next to the train station. The felonious looks of the pilot didn't scare her. She climbed on board, suitcases never leaving her side, and buckled into her seat. This was going to be the final chapter of her ridiculous journey. The journey to freedom. She was not going to let this creepy pilot spoil it for her. Taking off and so displaying an even greater view of the wonderful world of snow below, tears now did fill her eyes. 'Goodbye snow' she mouthed, as she realized that this was definitely the last time. She could never go back. She would see the snow no more.

The fake passport lay heavily in her hand. Whilst mumbling some Spanish words under his breath, the customs officer pulled the passport out of her grip, looked at it, looked at her and (hallelujah!) gave it a gorgeous dark blue stamp. She walked on, or better she glided off. She could hardly believe it... She was actually there! She would never ever be able to leave again, but no one could harm her here. She was free, finally!

'I hope you will enjoy your stay with us Señora Smith. If there's anything you wish for, please do contact us.' The friendly voice of the desk clerk warmed her heart, while a comfy breeze of balmy air streaming in through the window warmed her face. When the girl called her Señora Smith, she had glanced behind her for a split second. That would be the toughest part, getting used to her 'new' name. Farewell Rose Summers, hello Summer Smith!



She entered the suite and swept the curtains aside, which immediately made her jump for joy. An enormous turquoise, translucent sea smiled back at her. ‘Aaaaah!’ she squealed, sitting down on her king-sized bed, feeling like the luckiest girl alive.

Once she had passed customs she had quickly switched clothes in the airport bathroom. She had stuffed the typical Amish clothes into one of the suitcases, and had entered the hotel as a sexy tourist, a *bottie* from heaven! She glanced aside, where the black stockings, the black skirt and the white apron peeped out of the suitcase. There had to be some kind of a full moon party on this island. It would be there, where she would burn these hideous, uncomfortable clothes! She picked the bonnet up from the floor and kissed it. This ugly piece of headgear had been the icing on the cake, the ultimate show-stopper of her perfect disguise. No one could have imagined that this lovely little Amish lady was carrying two million dollar along in her suitcases.

‘Aaaaah!’ she pierced another shriek, whilst grabbing thousand dollar bills out of one of the suitcases. She made the bills fall on her head like snow from the sky and laughed out loud. She did it! She had robbed one of the largest banks in the USA. She had stolen more money than anyone had been able to in the last decade. She got out of the country and after many detours finally made it to Guardalavaca, Cuba.

The sweet sound of salsa music met her ears after she opened the balcony door. She threw her arms up and took a deep breath of salty air. Paradise forever! And just when she thought it couldn’t get any better, a knock on the door made her reconsider that very thought! As if haunted by a swarm of bees, she ran towards the door.

The sight of him filled her eyes with tears, happy tears this time though.

‘Hola lovely lady!’ The dark sound of his voice, made her realize exactly how much she had missed him. Before he could say another word, she threw herself in his arms. ‘Jack,’ she emitted a little groan of desire, ‘finally!’

It had been two years ago. After her mother died, Rose inherited a few thousand dollars. For once in her life, she had decided to do the right thing. She had opened a savings account at her local bank to stash the inheritance. It wasn’t much, but she had considered it a beginning. A beginning indeed, but at that time she could never have dreamed what it would eventually lead her to do.

Jack had been her financial advisor at the bank. Within a few weeks, it was no longer just her money he looked after.

Because she was his client they had started dating secretly. Which had proven to be utterly convenient for the next step in their relationship. One crazy night, filled with too many stars and too much red wine, they started fantasizing about robbing the bank. Rose being the daughter of solid working class people, had never had that much money to spend. Her parents worked hard in order to put her and her brother through school, but studying at a University had not been in the cards for them. When she met Jack, she had been working in a Marks & Spencer as a shop-assistant for over ten years. It wasn’t that she didn’t like her job, actually she enjoyed working there. It had been the unchanging flow of questions she had had to listen to year after year. At each birthday party, Christmas dinner or New Year’s Eve gathering friends kept asking her if she had ‘made it up the corporate ladder yet?’



Jack had felt practically the same. He also had been trapped firmly on the lower rungs of the 'bank ladder' for a long time now. When they met he was as fed up with the situation as she had been.

Almost two years had passed before they could execute their perfectly prepared scheme.

'Come on love, let's get those towels and head for the beach!'

Jack rolled her over on the bed, gave her a look of lusty seduction followed by a warm kiss. 'Not again Jack,' Rose teased, pushing him away and they both started giggling. The past two hours they had been busy discovering each other all over again, now it was time to discover their new surroundings. And as they held hands, fingers closely entwined, they stepped out of the hotel and strolled along a mangrove path until they reached the white sandy beach.

They had chosen Guardalavaca as their new home because it hadn't looked that obvious. The authorities were going to be looking for them. The Police, FBI, Interpol, the whole shebang. It seemed very unlikely they would be searching for them in this little town in the south of Cuba.

'Señor, Señora, *bienvenidos a Cuba!* I can offer you two wonderful sun loungers just over here.' A little Cuban man came rushing over as soon as he spotted them. '*Por favor*, lie down and relax. You know you deserve it. Shall I get you two Mojitos?' Without waiting for their answer, he produced two cocktail glasses seemingly from nowhere. They watched him in an agreeable silence as he expertly prepared the Mojitos in a way only the Cubans can. Instead of plain or brown sugar, he used fresh sugar-cane. On her way over from the airport Rose had seen bazillion sugar-cane plantations. The taxi driver had vividly bragged about sugar-cane being the island's number one export product. Fascinated, she watched the beach guy squeezing the cane, whilst catching the sugar water it released with their cocktail glasses.

Rose smiled as she sat down on the sun bed. Her feet playing in the white sand made her remember the wonderful nights they had spent in the snow for a split second.

'Love, on my way over from the harbour, I spotted a beautiful little house for sale. Shall we have a look at it tomorrow?' Jack whispered, just before he leaned over to lower his lips onto hers. Their new life had just begun... And with her luck being the way it was, maybe not now but in a couple of years' time, it would probably... snow in Cuba.

