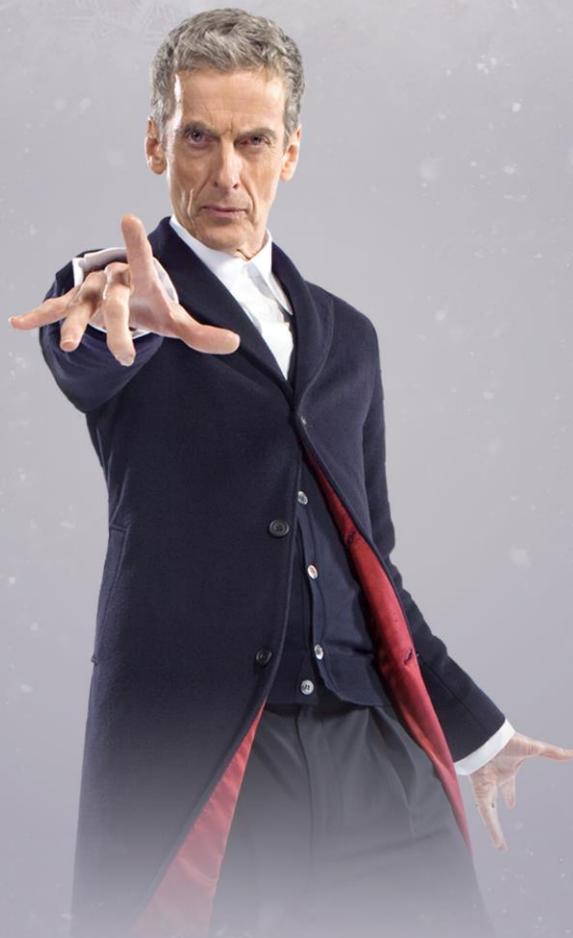


DOCTOR WHO



Behind You
Part Two

By Mark Williams

Part Two

Ceri stared in horror at the fox that had recently been Jade Martin. “It’s like what happened to Tom!” she said. “The male understudy. Just before I met you, he turned into a stag!”

The Doctor scanned Jade with his sonic screwdriver. “Something in the spotlight has re-written her DNA. It’s turned her into a hybrid – a cross between an animal and a human.”

Behind Jade another spotlight came on, above George Hollis, the pantomime dame. His brightly made-up mouth changed into a black and white snout.

“Doctor!” said Ceri.

“Ssh! Thinking,” said the Doctor, still scanning.

Fur covered George’s face as his head turned into a badger. He walked towards the Doctor, the spotlight moving with him.

“Doctor – behind you!” said Ceri.

“I’ve warned you once! No panto!” said the Doctor – just as George grabbed him around the arms and held him tight.

A third spotlight moved towards the captured Doctor. Ceri rushed to help him, stumbling over the giant pumpkin that became Cinderella’s coach. Scooping it up, she ran at George, jamming the plastic prop onto his badger head. George released his grip, just before the spotlight reached the Doctor. He grabbed Ceri’s hand and they ran out of the auditorium.

Ceri was standing in the most incredible theatre set she’d ever seen.

The Doctor had led her back to the Props Room and into the blue police box. The inside was miles bigger than the outside. Weird symbols covered the softly-glowing

walls. A big console in the middle of the room was festooned with buttons, levers and lights.

“Are you... an alien?” said Ceri in wonder.

“Top of the class, understudy! This is my ship. Welcome to the TARDIS,” said the Doctor, typing on a keypad below a monitor screen.

“It’s like a mad scientist’s lab.”

“Thanks! You can stay.”

“But what are you doing here?”

“I was flying the TARDIS in front of the Earth, trying to use it as a shield, to stop an alien spaceship crashing here. A ship made entirely of light.”

“So those spotlights changing people into animals are from another planet?”

“And we need to find out which one, in order to save them. I tracked the Light Ship to the crash site – the exact co-ordinates of this theatre. But the TARDIS was thrown off course by the collision. Right place, wrong time.” He swivelled the monitor around to face Ceri. ‘24 December 1902’ flashed in red.

“Then we’re really in trouble,” she said.

“Well, we would be...” The Doctor pulled a lever. A column in the centre of the console began to rise and fall. “...if we didn’t have a time machine.”

They emerged from the TARDIS into the pantry of the Bishop’s Palace, its shelves stuffed with festive food. The Doctor took a reading with the sonic screwdriver.

“There’s a few hours left until the ship crashes.”

“We should warn people – get them to safety!” said Ceri.

“The crashing Light Ship won’t hurt anybody. It’s what happens afterwards that concerns us. The people in 2014 are in danger, and we need to work out why.”

Outside the pantry, they followed the sound of a muffled hubbub to a closed door at the end of a long hallway. The door swung open – and Ceri froze. In front of them stood a man with the head of a horse.

“The revel begins!” the horse said. Ceri turned to run, but the Doctor stopped her.

“Wait!” he said. “Study closer, understudy.” Ceri looked again at the horse. It was different to the animal heads of Tom, Jade and George. This one looked more like a pantomime horse. It spoke again.

“The revel begins – so won’t you join in?”

“Well? You heard the horse,” said the Doctor.

They followed it into a ballroom, where an expectant crowd sipped steaming mugs of mulled wine. A small group stood to one side. Some of them were tuning musical instruments. Others had animal-head masks tucked under their arms.

“Mummers!” said the Doctor. A man nearby gave a bow. “Like a version of pantomime, performed in England til the mid-20th century. The actors would often wear animal masks.”

“The revel begins...” pondered Ceri. “Tom and the others repeated it, after they were transformed – like actors learning lines.”

“Ceri, that’s brilliant!” the Doctor shouted.

“Thanks!” said Ceri.

“And also terrible,” he added.

“Oh.” Ceri’s face fell. “Why?”

“Audience participation.” The Doctor scowled.

“Yes, you don’t like panto! I get it, OK?” said Ceri, rolling her eyes.

“No, you really don’t,” said the Doctor. “I think I know where the Light Ship came from. And if I’m right – it means the end of human life on planet Earth!”

To be continued...

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