

The wind continues to blow, and treeless leaves continue to dance around a console, the central column of which continues to rise and fall with the wheezing of a grampus. Around the console there continues to gangle a man, pressing switches, inspecting read-outs and pulling levers. Continually. The hatstand, bereft of life and of little overall opinion therefore about anything in particular, continues to be a hatstand.

Not a lot has changed.

The gangler looks up, somehow straight at me. Smiles. Grins, even. All lank and leg and chin and grin, he is. And although he can't see my face, never has and never will, he is somehow managing to look me in the eye.

The Constant Companion

by Nic Ford

"So..." the Doctor opines slowly, head turned back to the console, "...I thought they were rather good. What about you?"

I liked them, I agree. They were good.

"That's what I said," he says.

I want more.

He looks up, straight at me even though I knew he can't see me, and grins. "Well, of course you do," he says. "You always want more, don't you? And, simultaneously, less of course."

I don't know what he means.

"Come on," he goads. "You know what I'm saying. You want me to stay for a hundred years, and also to be gone already. That's what you want."

I don't. I really don't. I just want more.

"All right," he says at last, the grin never wavering. "All right, it's all yours."

What is, Doctor? I demand.

“Me. My lives. They’re all yours.”

It is an extraordinary gift. So many of his enemies have tried to take it/them before, so very many times – I know, I was there. And he’s offering them to me?

“I’m offering them to you,” he says, as if he knows what I’m thinking. “I’ve worked you out, you see. You consume my life – that’s what you do. That’s what you’re there for. But you don’t *take* it, do you? You don’t *steal* events, you leave them mine. You just... share them a little. Make them happen even, who knows? You’re... you’re the observer at the heart of the quantum interaction of my existence. -Es. Existences.”

And is that... a problem? Do you want me to stop?

“No... no, it’s all right. At least, I think it is,” he ponders. “I mean, there are some bits I’d like to keep from you, no doubt. How and where I sleep for example – you’re not having that. And the bits with River... well, they’re best left to the imagination. Mine, not yours.”

But...?

“But the rest of it – yes, I think you can have that.”

Are you sure, Doctor? I ask.

He pauses. Looks me again in my unseeable eye.

“My previous lives, they’re yours already; you’ve already had them. Not much I can do about those. But my future ones...?”

He pauses for an everlong moment, eking out the torment. And then...

“Yeah, I’d be glad to have you there with me,” he relents. “The constant companion, always along for the ride. And when you get older, who knows? Maybe you can actually tell me where to go! Of course you must come along with me.”

And, of course, I shall! We all will, won’t we?

He jumps up onto the tertiary control room’s console, and raises his arms to the impossible rose moon hanging in the improbable sky. The wind snaps up with his mood, whipping leaves in and out of the ruined columns and the hatstand, hitting him repeatedly in the face and hair and chin.

He doesn’t care. He just laughs.

“Be my guest!” he shouts to the moon and the wind and to me. “Another fifty or five hundred or five thousand years? Why not!”

And he grins and dances and shouts and shrieks and fixes me, once again, the gods

know how, in my unseeable eye. And even though he can't really see me, he knows I am there with him every step of the way.

If he could plant a kiss on my smackers now, he would. We both know it. But of course, both culturally and pragmatically, he can't.

Instead he shouts the only thing he can.

"GERONIMO!"

CLASSIC DOCTORS · 50 YEARS OF ADVENTURE

BBC
DOCTOR WHO

**THE
CONSTANT
COMPANION**



BY
NIC FORD

CCPS VOL IV · DIATRIBES OF THE DEMICENTENNIAL

CCPS VOL IV · DIATRIBES OF THE DEMICENTENNIAL

NIC FORD
BY

