

Fedora the Explorer

From the start, the fedora was on a mission.

The brown, rabbit-fur hat had found its way into Janie's shopping bag the last time she'd visited Portobello Market on a Friday. If she'd known where it had come from, she'd have returned it to its rightful vendor, *tout suite*. But the market was teeming with vintage clothing stalls that afternoon. It could've come from anywhere. Any attempt to hand it back would only have made her look like a common thief. Besides, it was a tatty, old thing with scorch marks on the brim. Worth five quid, tops.

So, she kept it.

In the weeks that followed, the fedora grew progressively brazen. Janie would leave it on a shelf in her bedroom, only to find it hanging on the coat rack next to the front door when she returned home from work. One morning, she found it hiding amongst a bag of costumes she'd mended and packed away the previous night. The sight of a crumpled, flannel shirt carelessly strewn on the floor had given away its position.

It's most recent lark?

It had snuck into Janie's Corsica and wedged itself under the driver's seat. The fedora remained there, out of sight, until Janie cleared out the discarded water bottles and myriad wrappers from her car.

With a heavy sigh, she pulled it out and turned it over in her hands. Stroked the soft, worn fabric and ran her fingers along its pinched, dented crown.

'Right. You're coming with me,' she said, surrendering to the fedora's crafty tactics. 'You obviously want to.'

She tossed it onto the passenger seat and made her way to Pinewood, where the studio lot was aflutter with activity. Janie donned the fedora and climbed out of her car, then wended through the throng of people busily preparing for a special guest's imminent arrival.

'You're late!' her supervisor barked the moment Janie stepped into Sound Studio H. 'We're expecting Mr Ford any minute.'

Ah, yes. The 'legendary' Mr Ford the entire cast and crew had been buzzing about for weeks. Janie was too young to have appreciated him in his prime. Hadn't seen a single film he'd starred in. Frankly, she couldn't care less about a geriatric Hollywood relic who'd appointed himself Executive Producer of some ill-conceived reboot about a treasure-hunting archaeologist. She'll hide out in the costume store until he's gone, thank you very much.

Only, she missed her chance to slip away unseen.

The studio erupted in applause as Harrison Ford made his grand entrance.

Janie stood stock-still and stared at the ageing actor (who looked remarkably fit for eighty-three) with her mouth agape.

Mr Ford flashed a crooked smile when he clogged the fedora on Janie's head. 'Is that for me?'

A profound hush fell over the studio.

'Um.. yes?' She removed the hat and handed it to him.

Tears welled up in his hazel eyes as he caressed the scorch mark. 'I've missed you, my old friend. You've found me at last.'

(500 words)