

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Where There's Thunder



Richard Hoover

Published by Jigsaw Publications
Vancouver, BC, Canada

First Published August 2015

Editors Jez Strickley & Bob Furnell

Where There's Thunder
© 2015 by Richard Hoover

Doctor Who © 1963, 2015 by BBC Worldwide
The Doctor Who Project © 1999, 2015 by Jigsaw Publications

A TDWP/Jigsaw Publications E-Book

Cover designed by Alex Lydiate
Interior Design by Bob Furnell

Brief Encounters logo © 2009 Brian Taylor
Cover © 2015 Alex Lydiate

Typeset in Corbel

The moral right of the author has been asserted. All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to any persons living or dead is purely coincidental. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any forms by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording or any other information retrieval system, without prior permission, in writing, from the publisher. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.

It occurred to Jamie McCrimmon -- as he flew through the air, the stench of his own burnt flesh in his nostrils -- that it had started as such a fine day.

* * * * *

Three Hours Earlier

With a rumbling wheeze the TARDIS filtered into existence amongst a swirl of dry leaves, turned yellow with the season. It stood upon a knoll unnoticed except by a couple of crows, which took flight as the door of the battered blue box swung open.

"Aye, now this is more like it, Doctor." Jamie McCrimmon breathed the cool air of the countryside as he stepped from the TARDIS. His blue-eyed gaze took in the rolling hills covered by trees and bushes in the process of shedding their summer cloaks. Oranges, yellows, reds, and even the occasional patch of green caught his eye. The faint smell of salt tickled his nose and hinted at a nearby sea. It wasn't his home of Scotland, but here and now it was close enough.

"I think it's ghastly." A petite girl in a sparkly catsuit wrinkled her nose as she stepped next to the young Scot.

"Now, now, Zoe," the Doctor said as he followed his companions out of the TARDIS and locked its door. "It may not be the clean lines of the future you're used to, but it has an undeniable charm." The Doctor looked about him in satisfaction and interlocked the fingers of his hands. "Yes, quite charming."

"It's Earth, isn't it, Doctor?" Jamie asked.

"Oh, yes, Jamie. Yes, I think so." The Doctor rubbed his hands together. "Why don't we see what there is to see, shall we?"

"Hey, Doctor," Jamie said.

"Look over there," the Doctor pointed into the distance. "I rather think that's some sort of road."

"Doctor," Jamie tried again.

"Come along, Jaime, Zoe. Let's see where it leads, shall we?"

"Doctor!"

"Doctor," Zoe tugged at the Doctor's long rumpled coat. "I think Jamie's trying to say the road leads here."

"Mm?" The Doctor turned about. "Oh, my word."

Jamie turned as well to look at the structure he'd noticed behind the TARDIS. It was a simple barn, its wood bleached grey from the sun. But it wasn't the barn that caught the eye.

"What's that tower?" Zoe asked. "It looks like metal."

The narrow tower looked rickety to Jamie, more like the bones of a tower really with its thin metal rods crisscrossing back and forth. It was nearly three times the height of the barn. A whistle and rattle filled the air as a gentle breeze blew through the struts.

Jamie stepped around the side of the barn to get a better look. "Doctor, come see. There's another one."

The Doctor scurried over. "Quite so, Jamie. And another just over there."

"Oh, aye," Jamie said. "And a fourth one. But it's not finished."

"What are they, Doctor?" Zoe asked.

"Well, I don't exactly know. But I'm curious to find out."

Jamie followed the Doctor and Zoe along a beaten dirt path leading from the barn down the short hill towards the cluster of towers. The reddish dust they kicked up showed sharply on Zoe's white boots but seemed quite at home on the Doctor's rumpled clothes and Jamie's leather shoes.

As they drew near the collection of towers, Jamie saw scattered bits of cobbled together machinery. He couldn't make anything of the devices covered in odd metal collars and pipes and mounted on wooden carts. The towers themselves formed a square, each one about thirty paces out from an odd metal cage only slightly taller than a man.

"Remarkable," the Doctor uttered.

Before Jamie had the chance to ask what had caught the Doctor's attention, faint voices locked in an argument drifted up on the wind.

"Rubbish, Faraday. My experiments clearly indicate we'll have far better success by the use of electromag--"

"No, no, no, William. I'll admit your work has been instrumental to the tower construction, but we're talking of the harnessing and direction of fundamental properties of nature."

"Fundamental properties? We are creating a new science. It demands a rigorous, methodical approach."

"I use a rigorous, methodical approach."

The Doctor cleared his throat, catching the attention of the two quarreling men. The one called William had bristly graying hair, a high forehead, and a long slim nose. Despite the day's heat, he was dressed in a dark, high collared jacket. The other man was some years younger, his dark hair parted down the middle and flowing over his ears. He'd forsaken any sort of jacket, and had the sleeves of his white shirt rolled past his elbows.

"Who are all of you?" William shot a dark look across the three time travelers.

"Oh, well, I'm the Doctor and this is, this is Jamie and Zoe." The Doctor put on a charming smile.

"Doctor?" William glared at his companion. "Did you invite him here, Faraday? We don't need any more doctors. We have quite enough already. Assuming you can actually be called a Doctor, Faraday."

"Time draws short," Faraday replied. "We can use all the help we can get."

"Gentlemen, please," an accented voice interrupted. "It is unseemly to argue before guests and strangers." The voice belonged to a Frenchman, tall and with an aristocratic bearing and a thick beard. The man turned to the Doctor. "You must forgive our hosts. They are brilliant men, but they tend to fall to the quarrelling that such men are wont to. Allow me to present Doctors Michael Faraday and William Sturgeon. And I am Alexandre Le Coq, Baron d'Hervey."

"Oh, a pleasure," the Doctor scurried forward and shook the Baron's hand with both of his. "Faraday and Sturgeon, did you say?"

"Oui."

"Forgive me, Baron, but what brings you to England in this year of 18...?" the Doctor trailed off and looked meaningfully at the baron.

"1832?" the baron frowned as he looked the Doctor up and down.

"1832, yes, of course." The Doctor shot a glance at Faraday and Sturgeon. "Together in the countryside. Curious."

"Papa, did I get this correct?" a boy of no more than nine or ten appeared from behind the metal cage at the centre of the four towers. He held a square of wood covered in looping bits of wire.

"Doctor--" Zoe pointed at the board the boy carried.

"Hush now, Zoe. We shouldn't interrupt a father and his son."

The baron studied the board and smiled at the young boy. "It looks très bien to my eyes. But perhaps you should confirm with Doctor Faraday."

Jamie caught the Doctor's elbow and tugged him and Zoe to one side. "All right, Doctor, what's going on?"

The Doctor waved Jamie off. "What makes you think anything's going on, Jamie?"

"You have that look in your eyes."

"What look?" The Doctor narrowed his eyes as if to disguise them.

Zoe sighed, "The look that says something is wrong."

"There's nothing wrong here. Well, not exactly wrong."

"Doctor--" Jamie started.

"Well, don't you see? Michael Faraday? William Sturgeon? The two were rivals. They'd never cooperate on a project. Now, I want to take a look at this computer that the boy has brought out."

"Computer?" Zoe laughed as she looked over the wire covered board the young boy was showing to Faraday. "Doctor, it looks more like a, a rat's nest. A plate of spaghetti."

"Now, Zoe. It's these early experiments in electronics that lead to the sleek machines of your day." The Doctor waggled a finger. "That said, these experiments shouldn't be happening for another, oh, eighty years or so."

Faraday nodded in approval at the work the boy presented him. "Well done, Marie-Jean-Léon. We'll make a scientist of you yet. Now come along and we'll install this in the computator."

"Rubbish name that," Sturgeon said as he followed the two over towards the centre of the four towers.

"Make yourself useful, William, and finish winching up the conductor rods. There's a good chap," Faraday shot back.

Sturgeon stomped off towards the incomplete tower, shaking his head.

"Jamie," the Doctor pulled the young Scot aside. "I think it might be best if you follow the good Doctor Sturgeon there, whilst Zoe and I learn more about this computator."

"I'm nae sure it's a good idea to split up, Doctor. It never ends well."

"Now, now, Jamie. It's a glorious day out. What could possibly go wrong?"

* * * * *

Zoe shook her head as she watched the Doctor poke and prod at the computator. The contraption was set on a wooden podium inside the large cage at the centre of the four towers. The cage itself seemed like something to keep an oversized parakeet in.

"You see, Doctor," Faraday explained, "the computator acts as a control mechanism for the towers. By making adjustments here at the micro level we can affect change on the towers at a macro scale."

"Yes, yes, yes." The Doctor waved a hand as he peered into the workings of the computator. "But what does it actually do?"

"I'm not sure I follow you?"

"The towers," the Doctor explained. "What are they for?"

"For? My good sir, they're for the great experiment."

"Oh? What experiment?"

Faraday's eyes went foggy. "The undertaking. That we're all here for." Faraday shivered, then took the panel from the boy that had accompanied them. "Take a look here, Marie-Jean-Léon. Let's see if we can't fit this board in properly."

Zoe sidled over to the Doctor and whispered, "Doctor, why won't Faraday tell us what he's working on?"

"Hmm? Oh. I rather think it's because he doesn't know."

Zoe laughed. "What? He's done all this and doesn't know what it's for?"

"His *hands* have done all this, certainly. Beyond that...I wonder."

"It was the dreams, Doctor." The young boy had stepped away from Faraday at the sound of Zoe's laugh. He had a round face and peered at the Doctor with dark eyes.

"Oh, yes? And what dreams were these?" the Doctor asked.

"From the night of lightning. It was scary."

* * * * *

"Learning, McCrimmon. That's how you banish fear. Learning." Sturgeon fiddled at the side of a large metal drum connected by wires to an odd pulley system.

"Oh, aye. Learning," Jamie replied absently. He looked to the centre of the four towers. There were too many carts and odd mechanical devices in the way for him to see the Doctor and Zoe. "But I don't see how this wee, what did you call it?"

"Block and tackle, my boy. Block and tackle."

"Aye, how is this wee block and tackle going to lift all this to the top of the tower?" Jamie gestured to the stack of metal pipes and rods lying next to the tower's base. At Sturgeon's direction he'd tried to shift one but found it much too heavy.

"In point of fact, it won't. No, this simple mechanical device is merely here to pull into place the elements that will do the real work. Now, if you could pull this rope here, that's right."

Jamie hauled at the rope, which looped through a set of pulleys at the top of the tower and back to a similar set at the bottom. The lower pulleys were hooked to a heavy metal beam with a bunch of wire looped about it. Sturgeon and Jamie had already hauled several such beams up the tower to varying heights. They dangled above and Jamie kept an eye on their ropes, watching for any fraying.

"That's it. Yes, that's fine," Sturgeon said when he was happy with the height of the pulley system. "Tie that rope off. Now stand back and I'll show you how we'll move the support struts into position."

Jamie stepped away from the tower and crossed his arms over his chest. He wasn't sure what Sturgeon was on about and didn't much care. He was more concerned about the Doctor and Zoe.

Until Sturgeon turned on his machine.

Jamie's mouth opened as the topmost pipe lying next to the tower floated from the ground into the air. The pipe wobbled for a moment as it floated close to the lowest of the wire wrapped beams they'd hauled up with the pulleys.

Sturgeon worked a couple knobs on the metal drum he stood at and turned a small metal wheel. The pipe dipped for a moment then floated towards the next highest beam. In this fashion, the doctor passed the pipe up the tower from one beam to the next to the unfinished top.

Jamie said, "Well that's all well and good, but now what? Doctor Sturgeon?"

Sturgeon had gone rigid where he stood. Jamie walked about him so he could see the man's face. Sturgeon's gaze was unfocussed. He didn't even blink when Jamie waved a hand before him.

From above came a sharp *bzzzt*. Jamie looked up in time to see a flurry of red sparks fall and disappear into the air. The pipe now stood on end and was welded into place with the rest of the tower.

Sturgeon worked the controls on the drum again, raising another pipe up the tower. All the while his gaze stared into the distance.

Jamie paid more attention this time. As the pipe floated into position, a bolt of red, like raging lightning, ran up the tower. It burst into sparks where the pipe touched the tower. As the afterglow cleared from Jamie's vision he saw the pipe welded securely in place.

Jamie glanced at Sturgeon. The man was already moving a third pipe up the tower.

* * * * *

"The thunder was so loud," Marie-Jean-Léon told the Doctor. "It was all around us. It shook the walls. Day had become night, but the lightning made it day again."

"What do you mean day had become night?" Zoe asked.

"The sun was hidden. It was all dark."

"I rather think he's talking about an eclipse, Zoe," the Doctor supplied. "An eclipse with a lightning storm. But no storm clouds, am I right?"

"Oui, Doctor," Marie-Jean-Léon nodded. "And then the lightning and thunder were there but, but they seemed a long way off. And everything became peaceful."

"And when did all this happen?" the Doctor asked.

"Three months ago, Doctor," Marie-Jean-Léon's father supplied. "It was after that my wife and I decided on a trip from France to England."

"Was it indeed?" the Doctor tapped his lip with a finger.

"Doctor! Doctor!" Jamie raced towards them, his kilt flapping about his legs. "Doctor, you have to see this."

The Doctor looked over at Jamie in concern. "What is it?"

"That wee tower, Doctor." Jamie pointed over his shoulder.

Zoe looked to the tower. Her eyes opened in surprise. A metal rod rose along the tower and welded itself in place.

"It's magic, Doctor." Jamie gasped for breath.

"No, Jamie," the Doctor's voice was grave. "Not magic. Something much, much worse."

* * * * *

"I understand your concern, Doctor." Sturgeon reclined in his chair and tented his hands in front of him.

At the Doctor's insistence, everyone had adjourned to Doctor Faraday's house, which lay a hundred paces from the tower site. Wood was the order of the day in the lounge Jamie found himself in. Dark wood floors and darker wood furniture, upholstered in faded red and gold.

"Rest assured, electromagnetism is a simple force. I'm in complete control," Sturgeon finished his remark to the Doctor.

"Simple electromagnetism, yes." The Doctor took a seat, found it not to his liking, and was back on his feet. "But that was no simple electromagnetism."

"I am *the* authority in this field, sir. Not even Faraday here knows as much on the subject as I." Sturgeon looked smug.

"But how did you counter the exponential drop off of magnetic attraction?" Zoe spoke up.

"Eh? What are you on about, girl?"

"The attractive force of magnetism decreases nearly exponentially with distance. Your equipment shouldn't have been able to lift those pipes, let alone float them from one magnet to another."

Sturgeon looked uncomfortable. "Clearly you fail to grasp the fundamental principles at work here, my dear."

"She grasps them only too well," the Doctor chided Sturgeon.

"I really can't answer the questions of uneducated laymen. Lay...women."

"Then perhaps you can answer this question," the Doctor grew quiet and very still. "What exactly *is* your great experiment?"

"The undertaking. That we're all here for," Sturgeon answered. There was something in his voice that made Jamie think the answer wasn't coming from the man himself.

The Doctor looked around the room. Faraday and Sturgeon were there as was the Baron d'Hervey, his wife, and his young son. The Doctor made sure they were all watching him then boomed into the silence, "*What is the experiment?*"

Jamie rocked back at the Doctor's tone and saw Zoe do the same. Everyone else froze in place. As one they said, "It is the undertaking. That we're all here for."

Jamie rose to his feet. He approached Faraday, the man nearest to where he sat. Faraday's eyes were unfocused and foggy.

"Hey, Doctor," Jamie said, "Have a look at this. This is how Sturgeon looked working on that magnet thing."

"Yes, I saw something similar with Faraday when I asked him about the experiment earlier."

"But what is it, Doctor?" Zoe asked as she examined Faraday.

"I rather think they're under some sort, some sort of post-hypnotic suggestion. For completing those towers, I imagine."

"Why?" Jamie asked. "What're they for, Doctor?"

"I don't know, Jamie. Not yet."

"Aye, well, maybe we should just go back to the TARDIS and let them get on with it."

"No, Jamie," the Doctor frowned. "No, there is something quite, quite wrong here. The strength of the electromagnets. The computator circuitry. Faraday and Sturgeon are key figures in their fields, it's true. But all of this is well beyond them. Well, beyond anyone in this century."

"Doctor Faraday?" a voice called from the entry of the house. "I say, hello? Doctor Faraday?"

A young man with straw blond hair stepped into the room. His arrival was like the flip of a switch. All the frozen people started to life.

"Neil," Faraday greeted the new man. "I didn't hear you come in."

"I got the last of those parts you needed, Doctor Faraday." The new man, Neil, carried a wooden crate full of knobs and coils of wire.

"Splendid. Yes, this is exactly what we need."

"Glad to be of help. Er, Doctor Faraday, who are these people?"

"Where are my manners? Neil, this is the Doctor and his associates, Jamie and Zoe."

Neil offered his hand to the Doctor and Jamie. Jamie felt confidence in the strong handshake. The young man seemed uncertain around Zoe.

"Good day, miss," Neil said to the young time traveler.

"You should get these parts back to the computator, Faraday." Sturgeon tapped the box Neil had passed to Faraday. "My part's almost done. Best be sure yours is too before tonight."

"Quite so. Quite so."

"And why is tonight so important?" the Doctor asked.

"Monsieur," the baron's wife, Mélanie, spoke up. She was a heavy set woman with a pleasant face. "Tonight will be a time of celebration. Tonight they complete the ex--"

"The experiment. Yes. Whatever that is," the Doctor huffed.

Mélanie turned to Zoe. "Come, child. We will make the dinner most magnifique, oui?"

"Me?" Zoe looked surprised.

"But of course. We must leave the men to their toils."

"But...but..."

"I'll lend you a hand, Zoe," Neil said. "I'd just get in the good doctors' way." Neil started to hold out his hand, changed to crooking his elbow, still wasn't satisfied, so let his arm drop to his side.

Zoe suppressed a laugh.

Jamie was unimpressed. This Englishman seemed a bumbler to the young Scot but something had caught Zoe's eye. "Aye, I'll come too."

"Oh, Jamie." Zoe rolled her eyes.

"What? McCrimmon lads had to learn their way around a kitchen. Besides, the Doctor doesn't need me, do you, Doctor?"

"Hmm? Oh. No, Jamie. Go right along. Doctor Faraday, could you do with some company?"

"I'd welcome it." Faraday smiled.

As the group broke up, the Doctor caught Jamie's arm. "Keep an eye on Zoe, Jamie. And watch out for anything unusual."

"Like what Doctor?"

"Like what you might find in a dream."

* * * * *

After Jamie, Zoe, Mélanie, and Neil had retired to the kitchen, Jamie was having a difficult time keeping an eye on anything more than the cast iron, wood burning stove before him. Four pots were arrayed on its dark surface and it was Jamie's job to keep their bubbling contents stirred.

"Non, Jamie," Mélanie said as she eyed the pots. "You must keep them from boiling over."

Jamie gave each pot another stir and only partially succeeded in reducing the bubbles of the rolling boils.

"We're privileged to be here, Zoe," Neil said as he and Zoe kneaded fresh bread dough on the wooden counter across the room. "Sturgeon and Faraday are geniuses. The ideas they have are amazing."

"Really? I find them rather limited. Electromagnetism? I was playing with that when I was five years old."

Neil shook his head. "You say the most delightfully peculiar things. And you dress in the most delightfully peculiar way."

Zoe laughed. Jamie grimaced.

"Here now," Jamie called to Neil. "How'd you meet these two doctors of yours?"

"I've assisted Doctor Sturgeon for nearly two years now. And when Doctor Faraday and the d'Hervey's came through town, well, we just had to help them."

"They came to you?" Zoe asked. "But the Doctor said Faraday and Sturgeon were rivals."

"They set their differences aside for the sake of the experiment."

"What's going to happen when the experiment is over?" Zoe asked.

Neil shrugged, "I suspect they'll go their separate ways. I probably will too. You'll think it silly, but I want to be a scientist. An inventor, like them."

"Have many ideas, do you?" Zoe pulled at the dough stuck to her fingers.

"You need butter to help get that off." Neil took Zoe's hand and helped her remove the clinging dough. "Doctor Sturgeon says ideas are easy, it's brilliant ones that are hard. But I think I've learned enough from him and Doctor Faraday."

"Well *our* Doctor thinks there's something odd here," Jamie interrupted. "And if there's one idea you can count on, it's that the Doctor will stop anything he doesn't approve of."

Neil arched an eyebrow as he stared at the young Scot. Jamie shifted uncomfortably and turned to one of the pots threatening to spill over its sides.

"Excuse me a moment, Zoe," Neil said. "I've remembered a bit of equipment I was supposed to give Doctor Sturgeon. Left it on the cart in the barn."

After Neil had left, Jamie felt Zoe's glare on his back. "Jamie McCrimmon, you could be nicer to Neil."

"Aye? Well, you seem more than nice enough to him as it is. Making bread together and all."

"Oh, Jamie. You don't know the first thing about gir--"

BOOM!

The thunder was deafening as a cannon shot. The house trembled and the windows rattled in their panes.

"That came from the towers!" Jamie shouted.

Zoe's eyes widened, "Doctor!"

* * * * *

After leaving the house, the Doctor followed Faraday to the central cage. As Faraday worked the controls of the computator the Doctor busied himself studying its workings. Loops of wire covered the planks of wood that comprised the internals of the machine.

"It really is quite marvelous," the Doctor said.

"What is, Doctor?" Faraday asked.

"The wire lengths. Taking advantage of the transmission speed. The calculations must have been quite complex." The Doctor looked at Faraday from under the fringe of his black mop of hair. "How did you develop them?"

"It's the oddest thing, but they came to me in a dream." Faraday laughed. "The human brain is as miraculous as the world around us."

"And the design of this cage. Was that a dream as well?"

"Now that you mention it, yes. That's why I keep a notebook by my bed. Although, half the time I can't even read my own writing when I wake."

"Hmm." The Doctor narrowed his eyes and interlaced his fingers. "This great experiment, how did it start? Whose idea was it?"

"That was the baron."

"Isn't it odd that a French baron would travel to England to unite two rivals in the field of electricity? He must be rather accomplished in the field himself to convince the both of you."

"Accomplished? Baron d'Hervey? He's a decent chap to be sure, but he wouldn't know the difference between a battery and a capacitor."

The Doctor darted around the computator to stand next to Faraday. He wrung his hands and said, "Then how did he get you and Sturgeon working together? Think man!"

"I...It's the great experiment."

"You don't even know what it is." The Doctor waved at the four towers around them. "These towers, look at their design. And your own equipment. It's all intended for channeling massive amounts of electricity. Devastating amounts."

"It's for the experiment."

"An experiment you can't even put into words." The Doctor bustled to the open side of the computator. "I'm sorry but I can't, I simply can't allow something so foolish to be performed." The Doctor reached into the computator and started pulling wires loose.

"Here now--" Faraday was cut off by the sound of an electric crackle.

Red tongues of electricity formed on one of the four towers. They swelled and bubbled about the tower before plunging towards the ground. The electric arcs sped along a thick cable stretching from the tower towards the cage. They lurched up like a giant hand above the Doctor. With an earth shattering BOOM they slammed into the Doctor.

* * * * *

"Doctor? Doctor!" Zoe shook the Doctor's shoulders.

After the blast of thunder had hit the house, Zoe, Jamie, and everyone else rushed outside. The Doctor was crumpled unconscious on the ground. A worried Faraday stood over him.

Jamie and Neil carried the Doctor inside the house and laid him on a sofa in the lounge. He never once opened his eyes.

Zoe had never realized before how small the Doctor seemed. His lined face was still, except for his eyes flicking under closed lids.

"Come away, Zoe," Neil said. He took Zoe by the shoulders and gently drew her back. "Let him rest. I'm sure he'll be fine."

"You don't know that," Zoe shot at the young man. She wheeled on Faraday. "What happened?"

"We were talking and then..."

"Yes?"

"It was an electrical discharge," Sturgeon supplied. "Faraday, I told you to ground your equipment better."

"My equipment? The charge came from one of *your* towers."

"Your device was supposed to manage any discharges like that."

"Well, *your*--"

"Enough!" Zoe slapped the top of a convenient table. She stormed for the door of the house. "I'm going to check on this equipment myself."

"I think we should stay with the Doctor," Jamie called.

Zoe shook her head. "Fine, you stay with the Doctor. I'm going to find out what's going on."

Zoe heard Jamie mutter something with the word headstrong in it. She was silently pleased when he hurried after her.

The two stepped outside and jogged to the central cage. A few scorch marks in the dirt were the only sign that anything had happened.

"That's odd," Zoe said. "None of the equipment's been damaged. Not even burnt." Zoe bent over the open side of the computator.

"Hey, now, I wouldn't be touching that," Jamie said.

"I'm just looking."

"Aye, that's what the Doctor always says and look what happened to him."

Zoe wasn't listening. She was working out the function of the primitive computer before her.

"Well, this doesn't make any sense. This can't possibly handle the electrical requirements that Faraday and Sturgeon have."

"If you say so."

"I do say so." Zoe massaged her back. "Oh, Doctor, what did you find out here?"

* * * * *

The Doctor flew.

The red grass of a planet so familiar, but now so far away, sped beneath him. It turned green to that of the planet that he considered a second home. Well, a third after the TARDIS, of course.

The Doctor looked down at himself but saw nothing but a lightning glow. Odd that but at the same time it wasn't.

The Doctor felt the gaze of unseeing eyes upon him. As he turned to face them, he found himself surrounded by the vastness of space. Pinpricks of light stood against the black, solid and unfiltered by the atmosphere of any planet. It was such a feeling of freedom, floating through the heavens.

One point of light grew and resolved itself into a yellow sun. The Doctor became aware of other streaks of lightning like himself streaming along beside him. Together they plunged towards the sun and broke away at the last moment.

But something was wrong. The gravity was different than expected. His course deviated from the others.

The Doctor hurtled through space unable to stop himself. He crossed the vast gap separating the sun from a silvery orb.

He tore along the edge of the moon, sending up a blast of fire like a sparkling gem on a lady's ring.

The Doctor spiraled and twisted down and down from the moon towards the blue-green planet below. He hit the atmosphere. It roared and growled with the sound of thunder around his strand of lightning. Down he plunged and there was no avoiding the dark ground below. Just before he hit, he observed a single face staring up in awe.

The face of a young boy.

* * * * *

Jamie felt Marie-Jean-Léon's gaze on him. The boy sat on a wooden crate, swinging his legs, his heels bumping against the side of the box.

"Come on, Zoe." Jamie was growing impatient. "Leave it alone. Let's go check on the Doctor." The young Scot shivered at a chill breeze. He looked above and added worry to his impatience. The sky had steadily darkened with thick, grey clouds. There was an electric feel to the air that made the hairs on his bare arms stand out.

"It's almost time," Marie-Jean-Léon said.

"Almost time?" Jamie asked.

Before the boy could reply, Zoe straightened from the side of the computator. "That can't be right."

"What's that then?" Jamie turned to the young woman.

Zoe looked at the towers around them. "These towers, the controls, they're not for drawing lightning down. I think they're for sending it up."

"Up?"

"Don't you see, Jamie? The towers would focus an electrical field here, at the cage, then project it, well, up." Zoe flicked a hand skywards to illustrate her point. "When did it get so dark?"

"While you had your nose buried in that contraption. But so what if it sends lightning up? What's the point of that, hey?"

"It's the great experiment," Marie-Jean-Léon whispered. "It's starting."

The boy's words were prophetic. As Jamie and Zoe watched, the clouds above thickened and grew darker. Oppressive, they pushed inwards, swirling above the site of the towers. Flashes of red, bubbled amongst the clouds and the low rumble of thunder floated downwards.

"What's starting?" Zoe asked Marie-Jean-Léon.

But the boy didn't answer. He sprinted towards the house. "Doctor Faraday! It's time!" A bolt of lightning dropped from the sky. It bent away from the metal towers of the site and crackled into the dirt some twenty paces from Jamie. The force of the thunder rocked the young Scot.

"Jamie, look!" Zoe pointed at the control panel of the computator. A couple knobs and levers moved of their own accord. "We've got to stop it."

"We don't even know what it's doing. We need the Doctor," Jamie turned to run to the house. Neil stood in front of him, a metal rake in his hands.

"Step away from the machine," Neil said. A bolt of lightning slammed the ground behind the man. He didn't even flinch. "Step away."

"Neil, what are you doing?" Zoe stared wide-eyed at the young man.

"Making my fortune. Faraday, Sturgeon, they're weak. They've let the lightning control them. They have no idea what they've built. This is the work of the gods. Now step away."

"I don't think so." Jamie lunged and grabbed the rake Neil held as a weapon. "Zoe, get out of here."

As Jamie struggled with Neil, he saw Zoe wasn't listening. She turned to the computator as another blast of lightning struck nearby. And another. And another. Each bolt avoided the metal towers as if afraid of them.

Zoe's hands were inside the machine. Jamie couldn't tell what she was doing. He should have kept his attention on Neil.

The other man tripped Jamie's leg, sending the Scot to the ground. Jamie fumbled after Neil's feet. The two men came down in a tussle. Jamie caught an elbow to the chin as another bolt of lightning landed only an arm's length away.

Neil gestured madly at Zoe and mouthed something Jamie couldn't hear over the ring of thunder in his ears.

A lightning bolt, red as blood, leapt from cloud to cloud above. It circled inwards. Dropped towards the ground. It rumbled and skipped along the dirt. Its target was Zoe.

Jamie prided himself on fighting fair. Most of the time. This wasn't most of the time. He brought his knee up sharply into the fork of Neil's legs. The other man gasped and Jamie rolled away.

"Zoe, look out!" Jamie didn't know if she could hear him.

He staggered across the space separating them. Her back was to him. The lightning was almost to her.

Jamie shoved Zoe hard to the side. He had just enough time to see a coil of torn wire in Zoe's hand.

The thunder was so loud it silenced everything else.

Jamie cartwheeled through the air. His shoulder was numb. His vision blurred. Smoke boiled around him from the burn the lightning had given him.

Jamie saw the hard, hard ground coming towards him.

* * * * *

Zoe watched Jamie hit the ground some distance away. He didn't move.

"Give me that wire!" Neil shouted over the din of the thunder.

Lightning struck faster and faster around them. It was only a matter of time before one of the bolts connected.

"No!" Zoe pushed herself to her feet from where she'd fallen. She crouched into a defensive stance, the torn wire clasped in one hand.

Neil had reclaimed his metal rake. He swung it at Zoe's head. Zoe ducked, came up fast. She yanked the rake handle. Neil stumbled towards her off balance.

Zoe dropped the wire. Her hands free, she caught Neil's flailing wrist. The man was big. Much bigger than her. She twisted and pulled. Neil sailed over her shoulder. He hit the ground.

Zoe didn't waste any more time with the fallen man. She sprinted towards Jamie. She was blinded as she almost ran into another blast of lightning. She winced at the thunder as it slammed her down again.

She couldn't see past the spots in her vision. She was disoriented. She didn't know where Jamie was.

Zoe skittered backwards on her hands, flinching from side to side as more lightning struck. Through the blaze of electricity she saw a bolt of red. It slithered towards her along the ground like a snake.

"Zoe!" Neil shouted from her side. He stood over her, the rake held high above his head, ready to come down on hers.

Zoe's hand bumped something cold. A metal bucket. She hurled it at Neil as the lightning bolt leapt.

Water splashed from the bucket, soaking over the man, over the rake. The lightning surged towards Zoe. Drawn off course by the rake and water, it grounded into Neil. The man couldn't even scream as all his muscles locked from the electricity.

Zoe ducked her gaze as skin and hair and cloth burned away from Neil. She felt water on her cheeks, from the bucket or tears, she didn't know.

Lightning swirled everywhere. The gates of hell had opened and red, blistering death rained all around. The thunder was loud enough to wake the dead.

* * * * *

The Doctor's eyes flicked open. The dream -- the message -- was over.

The house shook from the waves of thunder slamming its sides. Already some of the windows had shattered inwards.

The Doctor surveyed the lounge as he pushed himself to his feet. Faraday, Sturgeon, Baron d'Hervey, and his wife were frozen where they stood. Their eyes were vacant. Only Marie-Jean-Léon was moving.

"Mama? Papa? Please!" the boy cried to his parents.

"They'll be all right." The Doctor looked into the eyes of the frozen adults. "Yes, quite all right. It's for their safety, you know. The Galvans don't want to hurt anyone. They just want to go home. But where are Jamie and Zoe?"

The boy pointed towards the open door, swinging on its hinges. "Out there, monsieur."

"Jamie! Zoe!" The Doctor scuttled across the room. He stepped into a magnificent maelstrom.

Lightning swirled and coiled about the site of Faraday and Sturgeon's constructions. But something was wrong. It should have ended by now. The sky rumbled with the roaring cries of the trapped.

The Doctor held his hands before his eyes and peered between his fingers. To one side of the computator, he saw a man in a kilt struggling to rise to his feet.

The Doctor hurried into the storm. He hopped and skipped and muttered, "Oh. Oh," as the lightning crashed around him.

"Oh, Jamie. Jamie, where's Zoe?"

"Wha...? Doctor?" Jamie was groggy, his voice barely audible above the constant crash of thunder.

"To the cage," the Doctor cried. "Quickly now."

The Doctor and Jamie struggled across the shaking ground. They'd almost reached the cage when the Doctor spotted her. Zoe. Curled into a ball, scorched earth all about her.

"Jamie, get into the cage."

The Doctor shoved Jamie towards the cage without stopping to see if the young Scot made it. The Doctor redoubled his efforts towards Zoe. He stumbled only once, his feet catching in a coil of wire.

"Oh, dear," he muttered. He pulled the wire into the pocket of his baggy coat.

Then he was at Zoe's side. She flinched as he touched her shoulder until she opened her eyes and saw his leathery face smiling at her.

"Doctor!" Zoe hugged the Doctor close.

"Time for reunions later, my dear," the Doctor staggered to his feet with Zoe. "Quickly, into the cage. I'll see to the computator."

"Doctor, I sabotaged--"

"Yes, yes, I found it. Hurry now."

The Doctor pushed Zoe gently but firmly in the direction of the cage. Then he was running, legs and arms pin-wheeling like a floppy scarecrow towards the computator.

* * * * *

Zoe staggered into the cage moments after Jamie. The two companions hugged each other close to keep from falling to the ground. They tried to greet each other, but the thunder had become an impenetrable wall of sound. Red lightning swirled like a tornado outside of the cage, a tornado that they stood in the calm eye of.

Through the bars of the cage Zoe saw the Doctor working at the side of the computator. He was replacing the wire she'd removed. She shouted at him to stop, but he couldn't hear her.

She saw the Doctor make a final adjustment. He spun on his heel. Coat flapping, he pelted towards the cage. A whine, high pitched and keening, fluttered above the thunder. The metal towers, which had remained unstruck by the lightning, gathered a glowing haze about them.

The Doctor ran headlong into the cage. Jamie and Zoe were barely able to stop him colliding with the far side. He turned, banged the door shut.

The lightning had become an almost tangible thing. The tornado was breaking up, raining energy from the clouds into the four towers. It followed the thick cables from the towers to the cage. The energy passed harmlessly up the cage sides.

The towers glowed orange, then red, then white.

The thunder was gone. The clouds above were still except for three bolts of lightning circling like sharks.

A boom that shamed the thunder that had preceded it, knocked Zoe, Jamie, and the Doctor to the floor.

Shafts of light erupted from the tips of each tower, coalescing into a single beam above the cage. It shot like an arrow through the heart of the three blazes of light circling above.

In an eye blink, all four were gone.

Silence reigned. The waning rays of sunlight returned as the clouds faded, vanished. The towers were nothing but twisted lumps of slag now. As Zoe watched, one teetered and fell, thumping dully into the earth. The computator was also a mass of blistered metal and burnt wood.

"That went rather well, didn't it?" the Doctor said. He was already standing again. He clasped his hands in front of him, a grin of smugness on his face.

"Doctor?" Zoe asked.

"On your feet, Zoe." The Doctor helped her up.

"What happened? Ow!" Jamie cried as the Doctor touched his shoulder. Zoe saw a burnt mark on Jamie's shirt.

The Doctor fumbled in his pockets and produced a tube of foul smelling cream. He surveyed Jamie's burnt shoulder. "No permanent harm done. This should help with the pain."

"But Doctor," Jamie repeated as he worked the cream into his shoulder, "what happened?"

"Well, don't you see?" the Doctor pushed the door of the cage open. "That lightning wasn't lightning. Not all of it anyway. Those four last bolts, those were the Galvans. A sort of, a sort of space travelling race. In this case, rather young members of that race. Teenagers you might say."

"Teenagers?" Zoe asked.

"Just so. They happened to be passing the sun, riding the solar rays, when one of them crashed into the moon."

"Rather a big thing to crash into, the moon," Zoe shook her head.

"In space they travel at the speed of light, Zoe. And everyone can make a mistake." The Doctor wagged a finger. "The one who crashed was injured. They all fell to the Earth but the injured one was too weak to escape the atmosphere and make it back into space. At least, not without help."

Zoe considered this. She saw the Doctor watching her, that same smug smile on his face. It came to her then, "Faraday and Sturgeon. The Galvans needed Faraday and Sturgeon to build all this." Zoe gestured at the remains of the great experiment.

"Quite." The Doctor beamed. "The Galvans couldn't speak directly to Faraday and Sturgeon, of course, so they tuned themselves to a particular electrical frequency to influence the dreams of the good doctors."

"They did what now?" Jamie asked.

"They gave Faraday and Sturgeon the instructions to build all this in their dreams," Zoe replied.

"And left post-hypnotic suggestions to push the doctors into doing the actual work," the Doctor concluded.

"But how did the Galvans find Faraday and Sturgeon?" Zoe asked.

"Ah, they actually landed near the home of Baron d'Hervey. Where they first encountered young Marie-Jean-Léon. From him they had access to his parents, who were aware of Sturgeon and Faraday. That's why they came to England. Marie-Jean-Léon was aware of what was going on, a sensitive child that, but this is an age where children are better seen not heard, if they're seen at all. And, of course, you saw what happened when anyone tried to question the adults on what the experiment was."

The Doctor paused and sighed. Zoe followed his gaze. She shut her eyes against the burnt sight of Neil's body. The Doctor patted her on the back as he said, "It would appear Marie-Jean-Léon wasn't the only one immune to the hypnosis."

"Neil said he wanted these here inventions, Doctor," Jamie supplied.

"Did he now?" the Doctor sighed again. He brightened. "Well, we'd best be off."

"But Doctor," Zoe asked, "what about the towers? The computator?"

"All ruined," the Doctor gestured around the site. "Faraday and Sturgeon were working without understanding what they were doing. Oh, they may recreate a fraction of what they did here in the fullness of time. But only," the Doctor smiled, "only if they listen to their dreams."



1832 and an eclipse of the sun brings more than just a celestial spectacle.
As lightning falls, a young boy sees.
The TARDIS has brought the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe
to a quaint countryside farm. But amid the rustic setting stands a colossal site - four
metal spires reaching to the sky.
Parts of a device created by renowned scientists and rivals Michael Faraday
and William Sturgeon. A device capable of harnessing devastating energies.
What force has brought these men together?
What is their "great experiment"?
What secrets lie in the storm clouds gathering above?
While Jamie and Zoe fend for themselves,
the Doctor struggles to find the answers before his dreams become nightmares.

This story features the Second Doctor, Jamie and Zoe

This is another in a series of original fan authored
Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project

ISBN 0-918894-28-X

