

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

AN ATTACK IN TIME



Timothy Farr

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Bonus Feature The Lost Stories

A Word From Bob Furnell

The story you're about to read was originally intended to be part of The Doctor Who Project (TDWP) series of stories dedicated to past Doctors – Doctors one through seven. The original idea Kyle and I had for this series was a collection of stories published in omnibus form, just like the full season omnibuses. We initially put out a request in 2001 to our writers that we were looking for stories centering on past doctors. If memory serves me correct, there was quite a bit of interest expressed in this idea and we received several story outlines involving past Doctors. The writers put pen to paper so to speak and the first two stories we received were Timothy Farr's first Doctor story "*An Attack From Time*" and Will Hadcroft's sixth Doctor and Mel story "*Something More Than A Cricket Bat*", both of which Kyle and I enjoyed and intended to publish in our first collection. It was our intention to publish the first collection in 2001. Time passed and sadly due to one thing and another, we eventually abandoned the idea. Both Kyle and I felt quite bad that we had abandoned the project, and we really wanted to see Timothy and Will's stories published at some point, but where? It wasn't until early 2006 when we came up with the idea to publish the stories on the TDWP website.

Susan ran her finger along the spidery scrawl across the pages of an elderly notebook. "Q79," she whispered, and a paper plate bearing two long thin sticks appeared in a compartment in the wall.

Sixty-six circular wooden panels covered six wooden walls, supported by six stout wooden pillars opposite the six joins of six wooden control panels, bearing sixty-six lights, dials and switches. The disorientating effect of so perfect a pattern was fortunately broken by the presence of only two chairs and the room's one elderly occupant. His ghostly hair fell back from a lined forehead, his body slumped in the chair and his arms hung limp over its sides. Yet his face belied this exhausted posture. Intelligent grey eyes stared fixedly out over high cheekbones at the fairy-lit console, studying the rise, recoil and rotation of the brightly illuminated central column as it chased shadows up and down the wall. In and out of these tidal shadows slid the subtlest diversions from the room's numerical theme. The faintest of faint outlines of two opposing doors seemed to materialise and dematerialise with the motion of the translucent column.

The Doctor raised his head from the back of his chair as one of these outlines made a more significant intrusion into the six-fold symmetry, diminishing the roundels to a mere sixty-three. The triple-circled door had unmasked a slight silhouette with short dark hair. Tentative curves indicated the girl's earliest advances towards maturity. She walked in with a smile, a paper plate and a notebook but let the old man speak first.

"Ah, there you are, my child. That was very quick of you. You know those young legs of yours do seem to make the food machine seem much nearer than it is."

"Yes, Grandfather. Here's your notebook."

"Thank you, Susan. Oh, but then of course, space is every bit as relative as time. Did the machine accept the new code?"

"Yes, but Grandfather its come out an unusual shape. The Venusian Night Fish is more like a rod than a bar."

"Yes, well, it's probably one of the higher codes. An 'R' or something."

"A 'Q'. Q79."

"Well, just so long as it tastes alright the shape isn't too important. Pass me the plate, would you, Susan?"

"Mm? Oh yes, sorry, Grandfather."

"That's quite alright, child." A loud crisp crunch, hotly pursued by a chewing sound announced that the Doctor had begun his meal.

Susan settled into the other chair. This was a restful moment. Everything around her combined to produce an atmosphere that she had become accustomed to finding reassuring amidst all the adventure and danger she had seen after being so firmly uprooted from everything she previously knew. There were familiar smells: either the Doctor moonlighted here with a duster, or the TARDIS itself contrived to produce the smell of beeswax polish in this particular wood-lined control room. She kept trying to stay awake and find out, but never once succeeded. The Night Fish also provided an instantly recognisable scent and was a long-standing favourite of the Doctor's.

Familiar sights: the roundelled, wooden, hexagonal room with matching, scintillating control desk and the ever-illuminated central column. The chalk white hair that framed the Doctor's hawkish face surmounted an eccentrically noble costume. A pale yellow waistcoat carried a silver watch and chain over a shirt with a wing-collar bound by a formal black necktie, which almost reached down to the firmly creased, checked trousers.

And familiar sounds: the muted hum, which accompanied every second aboard this remarkable vessel and which she had come to take for granted, was particularly keen here. The faint whisperings of the console instrumentation and regular pulse of the translucent

column were faithful friends. Even the nearly finished crunching of the Doctor's latest meal had become a way of keeping time for her. Except, suddenly, she could hear a sound that wasn't quite so familiar. And now there was a sight to go with it. One she hadn't often seen before.

"Ah, delicious! Quite simply superb. Do you know, child, I do believe I've got the code spot on this time! Yes."

"Grandfather!"

"Yes, spot on. So I suppose that I no longer have any excuse for lengthy visits to Venus, and I suppose that we shall... what is it, child? What are you staring at?"

"Grandfather, the time path indicator."

"Good heavens! Something is travelling the same space time co-ordinates as we are."

"It can't be...them, can it?"

"Now Susan, who else would have the technology and the inclination to pursue us?"

"But couldn't it just be coincidence?"

"Amidst all the aeons of time and infinities of space? A course that similar, a vector that exact? Why the chance is so slight, it isn't a chance at all, child."

"They haven't come after us so far."

"And what kind of reason is that to presume they won't, hmm?"

Susan looked at the Doctor across the control for a moment, during which time the whisperings of the instruments and the TARDIS' hum were deafening. Then something else captured her attention. "Grandfather, the indicator's getting more insistent."

"Yes, child. It's catching up."

"Well, shouldn't we do something? Rematerialize or something? Get out of its way?"

"It's moving too fast! I don't have time to engage the co-ordinate program. It's hopeless!"

"The fast return switch?"

"That would only make us collide with it. I'm sorry, child."

"It's all over, then." Her eyes stung, and the sting trickled down her cheek.

"Well, now, I don't know about that." The Doctor's voice had softened and shed its despair. He rested a reassuring hand on her shoulder. He could never bear to see Susan this unhappy, no matter what the circumstance. "We shall just have to see what can be done when they arrive."

"How? How soon will they catch up?"

"Well, were I you, child, I would make very quick use of this, hmm?" He held out to her a folded white handkerchief. As she dried her eyes he added, with an encouraging wink, "Now let's see if we can't face them with a little dignity, eh?"

They staggered back suddenly from the console, as the rich mahogany colour of the room faded away beneath a haze of white light. It was pulsing angrily from the centre column with an almost liquid intensity. It was becoming stronger, and Susan and the Doctor backed further and further away from it. The light was dazzling, but it had a mesmerising quality. It was only the horrific sensation of something looming behind her that made Susan look round. With startled amazement she realised that she had backed up right against the wall.

The fluid edge of the light source had by now reached beyond the confines of the translucent column. The flickering outline seemed to pulse towards one side of the room and then the other, reaching ever nearer the Doctor and Susan as it continued to grow.

"It's obviously after one of us but can't decide which."

"Why doesn't it leave the console, Grandfather?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it can't. Maybe it's caught a part of itself in the force field generator."

"It's growing!"

"There's no telling what it might do once it's able to reach us. I must think of something!" The Doctor's eyes darted rapidly around the room as he quickly considered. The tensing of the lines around those eyes left Susan in no doubt that his mind was working ever more rapidly. Then those lines relaxed slightly.

"We can't allow it to keep growing like this, therefore, we've got to get rid of it. It can't leave this part of the TARDIS therefore we can't separate this part of the TARDIS from it. We've got to get rid of this part of the TARDIS before it spreads any further."

"Deletion?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it's the only answer. Someone will have to go to the secondary control room and tie the dimensional control subsystem into the architectural reconfiguration program. And that someone is going to have to be you, Susan."

"But I can't, Grandfather!"

"Of course you can, child. You must!"

"But I-" Susan was almost on the verge of tears, "I don't know how to."

The Doctor reached into his waistcoat pocket, dropped his notebook onto the floor and kicked it across. "Page sixty-three. I would pull the relevant circuit out of this console with a piece of string, but I would have to open up the underside of the console and that might release whatever it is, which would rather defeat the object, and us."

Susan slid carefully down the wall and grabbed the notebook. Then she carefully pushed herself back up to her feet.

"Well, hurry along, child!"

"I can't, Grandfather! I can't! I'll have to go around the chairs to get to the doorway and I'll be in its reach."

"Don't worry, child. I've an idea. When I shout 'now', dive through the door and run as fast as you can!" The Doctor shuffled to the left towards one of the columns that joined the walls together. As he had expected, the fluid edge of the pulsing light, which was now halfway to the edge of the console, moved to follow him.

"Now, Susan!"

The Doctor ran towards the edge of the console, and just as the liquid edge of the light moved to intercept him, he ducked under the console and lay there, out of reach for the moment, gasping for breath.

Susan hadn't waited to see what the Doctor had in mind. She had dived through the door and scrambled, breathing hard, to her feet. Then she had run as she had never run before, all the time threatened by nightmare visions of the mysterious invader engulfing the Doctor. Finally, she skidded past the food machine into a cream reflection of the room she had not long departed and leaned heavily on its pale green console. Then she withdrew the Doctor's notebook from her pocket and began to thumb rapidly through the pages.

The Doctor had recovered from his sudden burst of energy and was now crouched beneath the wooden panelled console, considering his next problem. Somehow, he was going to have to get out through the door. He would have to make it soon, because he estimated that by now the menace would be almost able to reach over the edge of the console. Keeping his legs as flat against the floor as he could, the Doctor eased them out from under the console and, stretching them across the floor to press against the fore legs of the nearest chair, he pushed. The chair was now right up against the wall. The Doctor kept pushing. The back legs of the chair began to ease up the wall. The chair started to tilt forward. With a slapping sound, the paper plate fell to the floor. The Doctor gradually

eased his feet back, letting the chair settle on its hind legs again. He could see the fluid light frantically trying to stretch down towards his legs as he slid them, and the paper plate trapped beneath his left foot, back underneath the console. He clutched the plate in triumph, watching the dimensions of the room in search of results from Susan.

At the pale console's internal systems panel, Susan nervously pressed the 'Integrate' key and sighed with a sudden release of tension as the word 'Accepted' appeared on the screen in front of her. Then she raced out of the room, hoping desperately that she hadn't been too late.

Beneath the wooden console, the Doctor closed one eye, concentrating hard. Barely perceptible, but becoming increasingly more so, was a difference in size between the wooden roundels in the console room and the grey ones in the corridor. Susan had done it. The room was collapsing in on itself.

He would have to make his move now. Between the rooms shrinking and the menace growing, he would soon be within the reach of the fluid light. Furthermore, he wasn't eager to be jettisoned with this room.

"Grandfather! Are you alright?"

"Yes, child, yes. My stick is just by the door." Susan was stunned to see the light-thing suddenly concentrate on the console panel nearest the door. The Doctor had seen it too, but didn't stop. "Reach in, grab it and hook it onto the door, because when I come out, you're going to slam that door closed as fast as you can."

"Yes. I've got it. Oh, hurry Grandfather, the door's nearly down to my height!"

The Doctor crouched under the console section nearest the door like an Olympic sprinter on the starting blocks. He swung his arm around in a bend and with a flick of his wrist the paper plate flew up towards the exterior doors. Unsure whether or not the fluid light was following it, the Doctor sprinted in a crouch through the now playhouse sized interior door. A pulse of light behind him demonstrated that it had followed the decoy, just before the door slammed to.

The Doctor staggered to his feet and turned to watch the outline of the door fade from the corridor wall forever. "Well, child, it looks as if we will have to settle into the secondary control room."

"Yes, Grandfather. But isn't it the unreliable one?"

"Well, it was obviously good enough for you to delete the primary one. Anyway, at least we won't have to go so far for the food machine in future, will we? Hmm?"

"No, I won't, will I?"

Any reply the Doctor might have made to that was curtailed as the corridor pitched suddenly and he and Susan were sent sliding towards the secondary console room at a faster rate than they had imagined.

"I was afraid of this, Susan. Without the stability of the other console room the ship is out of control. The delicate power balance has been destroyed." By now they had fetched up against the pale green console.

"Grandfather, the fault locator!"

One by one, a column of numbers on a wall-mounted screen were beginning to flash with light.

"Yes. This single console can't maintain all her systems. The TARDIS is going out of control. Hmm, I think...yes. Yes. We must make an emergency materialisation." The Doctor pulled himself up over the edge of the console and shoved with all the strength he could muster at a lever in the centre of the adjoining panel. Suddenly the TARDIS' customary hum began to rise in intensity and the floor levelled out. The Doctor dragged his sleeve across his brow.

"Well, thank goodness for that! Hmm? You know, it's a pity we weren't able to communicate with that creature," he said, as he helped Susan to her feet. "It was obviously intelligent."

"Intelligent?"

"Yes. You saw how it reacted when I used the word 'door'. Perhaps if we had been able to make contact we would still have a functional TARDIS. Well, let's see what we can find out. Switch on the scanner, Susan!"

This room had a monitor screen hanging over one wall. Once Susan had found the right switch, it lit up to display a padlocked iron gate.

"Dear me, child, we really are in a mess. I can't get atmosphere readings or spatial co-ordinates. The time co-ordinator can only display local time." He pointed at a panel reading 0000019630623. "Most of the systems appear to be burned out and I don't even know if it is safe to go outside. We're marooned, child. Marooned!"

Next Episode:
AN UNEARTHLY CHILD

Timothy Farr

Timothy was a member of a British Doctor Who fan club called “*Timeless*” that I got to know through the Internet. He was a regular contributor to “*Jigsaw*”, a science fiction & fantasy television themed fan magazine I was editing and publishing and I had mentioned to Timothy on several occasions about TDWP. He expressed some interest in the project, but was actually more interested in writing a story featuring one of the original seven Doctors than our fictional eighth. Once Kyle and I decided to go ahead with the past Doctor series, Timothy submitted the idea for “*An Attack From Time*”. Since Timothy originally submitted the story in 2001, he and I lost contact, but once again thanks to the Internet, Timothy and I ran across one another on the Outpost Gallifrey forums in early 2006. “*Attack*” is an enjoyable story and I’m glad we’ve finally given it a chance to be read by all of you.