

Doctor Who And The Locusts of Time

By

Johanna Mead

EXT. - SAN FRANCISCO UNION SQUARE, DAY

The DOCTOR and LUCIE MILLER are walking across the square, the St. Francis hotel at their backs. The Doctor is enjoying an unusually sunny morning, although a hint of concern is apparent in his eyes. Lucie, meanwhile, is torn between grumbling and gawping.

LUCIE

It's definitely San Francisco. But I don't seen a forty-niner anywhere.

DOCTOR

Yes, Lucie, I know that I promised you the Gold Rush but *something* here-and-now pulled the TARDIS off course.

LUCIE

Pulled? *Pulled*? More like wrenched, if you ask me. I'm going to have a bruise the size of a dinner-plate on my-

DOCTOR

(interrupting)

And I'm sorry about that, too.

(distracted)

I'm a little worried, though. It was a rather nasty bump.

Lucie rubs her behind and winces.

LUCIE

I *know*!

(pause)

The TARDIS will be alright, won't it?

DOCTOR

(doubtfully)

I think so. She just needs some time to unscramble herself, poor girl.

(pause)

Although...

The Doctor looks around the square, apparently searching for only something he can see. He rummages in his pockets and, as he speaks, pulls the following objects from various pockets: a gyroscope, a pocket watch, some unidentifiable, glowing electronic device the size of a golf ball, a length of metallic tape, etc.

(CONTINUED)

LUCIE
Although what?

DOCTOR
There were those rather worrying
readings on the TARDIS instruments.

LUCIE
Before they melted, you mean?

DOCTOR
Yes

The Doctor starts assembling the assorted pocket junk into
some sort of device.

LUCIE
Well, yeah, that *is* a bit on the
unusual side.
(aside)
Even for the TARDIS.

DOCTOR
Be nice. The TARDIS has been
through quite a bit...

The Doctor's voice trails off as he's distracted by putting
the final touches on his device.

DOCTOR
There! Now we should learn
something.

LUCIE
Very pretty. What is it?

DOCTOR
Isn't it obvious?

LUCIE
Not really, no.

DOCTOR
It's a bit of a lash-up, I'll
admit, but this will provide a
little insight into any space-time
disturbances in this area. I really
should have a proper toroidal
chronal displacement unit, but I
think the flavanoid interface from
a Sirius Cybernetics drinks
synthesizer will probably do the...

As the techno-babble becomes increasingly incomprehensible, Lucie wanders away and spots a slightly ragged newspaper. Curious, she picks it up and idly pages through the tabloid.

DOCTOR
...so if it flashes green, we'll
know!

LUCIE
(paying more attention to the
paper)
That's great.

The Doctor is slightly hurt by this indifference.

DOCTOR
Lucie...

LUCIE
What? Oh, yeah! Right. Give it a
whirl then. My breath is bated.

The Doctor frowns at the sarcasm, but his hearts aren't in it. With a little flourish, he flips the switch on the device and stares at it, expectantly.

LUCIE
Er, is it working?

The Doctor stares fixedly at the device, hope giving way to disappointment.

DOCTOR
No.

LUCIE
(sarcastically)
What a surprise.

The Doctor is about to protest the situation, but then notices the paper in Lucie's hand.

DOCTOR
Well spotted Lucie! Sometimes the
simplest ways of determining time
and place are the best. Let's have
a look.

CUT TO: NEWSPAPER

The newspaper, tabloid style, in Lucie's hands. The date on the upper right of the page shows that it is June 7, 2008. Two 'local interest' articles share the top half of the

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page. The dominant article features the headline: CAL SCIENTIST CONTINUES HUNT FOR ELUSIVE PARTICLE, and describes efforts to prove the existence of chronons, a discrete component of time.

The adjacent article - only one column wide - features a more modestly typeset headline reading: 'QUAKESTORM' CONTINUES INTO THIRD WEEK. A simplified map of the Bay Area illustrates a cluster of quakes along the Hayward fault in the east bay - including Berkeley. Lead text mentions that such 'storms' of frequent-but-minor quakes are a part of living in a seismically active area, etc.

RETURN TO: SCENE

DOCTOR

I don't like the look of that.

LUCIE

Me either! They're not about to have a *big* quake, are they?

DOCTOR

Don't be silly. That won't happen until two thousand and-

The Doctor pauses and glances at the date on the paper.

DOCTOR

Well... I'm sure we won't be here all that long. No, Lucie, I meant *this-*

The Doctor taps the paper, indicating the other article on the page.

LUCIE

Let me guess? Meddling in things we're not meant to?

DOCTOR

One of your species' most endearing and most irritating traits. And they probably have equipment I could make use of... Berkeley's not far from here, let's go!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWRENCE BERKELEY LAB. LATER SAME DAY.

The nicely landscaped gardens around the Lawrence Berkeley research labs. The lab is perched near the crest of the Berkeley foothills, overlooking the town proper and commanding a panoramic view of the bay and, in the distance, the Golden Gate Bridge.

A taxi pulls away from Lucie and The Doctor. He strides towards the main entrance of the lab, whilst Lucie pauses to admire the scenery.

LUCIE

Wow. I suppose that was worth the cab-fare.

(calls after the Doctor)

Good thing for you I've still got my credit cards, innit?

The Doctor stops, looks back at Lucie and then, belatedly, notices the stunning view.

DOCTOR

Hm? Oh yes. Still, it's a fair trade for a ride in the TARDIS, don't you think?

LUCIE

(to herself)

When it works.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, what was that?

LUCIE

(brightly)

Nothing! So this is the place, then? It doesn't look like much.

DOCTOR

Don't knock it. Some world-shattering discoveries have been made here.

LUCIE

Er... Literally?

DOCTOR

In a way, yes. Many of the Earth's greatest scientists have spent time here. Unfortunately, a rather disproportionate amount of research is done with war-mongering in mind but...

(CONTINUED)

The Doctor shrugs.

DOCTOR
Let's see what they're up to, shall
we?

The pair enter the laboratory.

CUT TO:

INT. LAWRENCE BERKELEY LAB HALLS, SAME DAY

The Doctor and Lucie stroll down several corridors, pausing at occasional signs pointing out the location of this and that. At least one sign so examined points out the location of something described as "DSE NASA Collaboration. Phase 2"

Occasionally, the Doctor peers curiously into this room or that, only to have his sleeve tugged by Lucie before he gets too entranced.

Shortly, a sign for the "Chronon Lab" is spotted, and the pair continue with a more purposeful stride.

CUT TO:

INT. LAWRENCE BERKELEY LAB - CHRONON LAB

The limits of space and funding are apparent in this lab. Equipment is piled onto every horizontal space and some of it is mounted on to the walls. Large banks of equipment are apparently connected by yards of wire, thick and thin, and half a dozen monitors display various inscrutable graphs and tables of data. Whichever walls aren't blocked by equipment are covered in dry-erase boards, notes scrawled all over them.

The space isn't disorganized, just crowded and clearly used to the absolute maximum possible.

In the midst of this frightfully scientific scene is DR. MORGAN RANDALL.

Morgan is in her late 40s and apparently fits the stereotype of a scientist who cares far more for her work than the niceties of appearance. She's wearing clothes that keep the weather off, and that's all she needs. At least two pens hold her hair back from her face.

Morgan is staring at a monitor, scrutinizing a set of charts, newly created and muttering to herself.

(CONTINUED)

MORGAN

There it is again. Damn. I'd hoped it was a glitch after the last quake-

The Doctor steps up to the same workstation and peers at the monitor, while Lucie wonders how she keeps getting into these situations.

DOCTOR

Oh, now. That's very interesting. I didn't think you'd be able to detect that, just yet.

MORGAN

What is it, then?
(double-takes)
And who are you?

DOCTOR

(still looking at the monitor)
I'm the Doctor. And I suppose that you are Dr. Morgan Randall?

MORGAN

Yes, but what-

DOCTOR

Jolly good! That's my associate, Lucie and, as you know already, I'm the Doctor. Now, let's talk about *that*.

The Doctor jabs a finger at the monitor.

DOCTOR

Whilst I hate to distract you from a potentially world-changing moment, do you understand what you've found here?

MORGAN

No. That's what I was just-

DOCTOR

That is proof of a localized disturbance in the space-time continuum. You really shouldn't be spotting such things for at least, oh, another three hundred years but that's the thin end of the bell-curve for you-

(CONTINUED)

The Doctor's attention is suddenly distracted by a nearby whiteboard. He abandons the monitor in its favor and smiles at the equations written upon it as he would an old friend.

DOCTOR

Will you look at this? It takes me back to the old academy days. But, wait...

He takes a marker in hand and edits the equation, slightly - erasing a couple of key figures and finishing the final expression.

DOCTOR

There you go. Easy mistake to make, really. Everyone does it the first time. Not me, of course-

Morgan approaches the board, mouth slightly agape.

MORGAN

You just... You... *How?*

LUCIE

Let me guess. Unsolvable?

MORGAN

Apparently not! But I'd been working on it for months!

LUCIE

I wish he wouldn't do that.

The Doctor is now cheerfully examining the lab's equipment, as is his wont.

MORGAN

Looks like you can't stop him.

LUCIE

You have *no* idea.

DOCTOR

(overhearing Lucie and Morgan)
It's just a matter of understanding the rather slippery nature of quantum time.

The Doctor hands the marker to an increasingly boggled - and reluctantly impressed - Morgan.

(CONTINUED)

MORGAN

Slippery is right. Detection of chronons has proven very difficult.

DOCTOR

They're there only for as long as it takes for the present to become the past, hm?

MORGAN

Yes, that's an elegant way of putting it.

(she indicates the white board)

You have an idea of the challenges, obviously.

LUCIE

Hey! Want to explain it to the person who doesn't have a PhD in weird science?

Morgan frowns at this.

MORGAN

(to the Doctor)

Where did you say you were from, again?

DOCTOR

UNIT. I'm their scientific adviser. Lucie is my, er...

LUCIE

(icily)

Assistant. Administrative assistant.

DOCTOR

Yes, that's it-

LUCIE

Underpaid and, as usual, underinformed and-

DOCTOR

Yes, *thank you*, Lucie. I promise you we'll, er, review the pay scales when we get back.

LUCIE

Yeah, right.

(CONTINUED)

During this, Morgan has turned to another computer and tapped a few keys.

MORGAN
UNIT, you said?

DOCTOR
(hesitantly)
Er, yes. Doctor John Smith.
(mutters)
Although I'm on a bit of a
sabbatical, of sorts.

LUCIE
Here we go.
(to the Doctor)
No dungeons in here, are there?
Prison cells?

DOCTOR
(slightly baffled)
No.

LUCIE
That's something.

MORGAN
(relaxing)
Alright. The system says you're
legit, although you should have
checked in at the front desk.

LUCIE
I don't believe it!

MORGAN
What?

LUCIE
Oh, er, nothing.

DOCTOR
Have you been tracking
electro-magnetic variances, as
well?

MORGAN
No. There's no point.

DOCTOR
Oh? Why's that?

(CONTINUED)

MORGAN

(confused)

The nature of the study... You might as well track sunspots for all the relevance they have.

DOCTOR

But it might *be* relevant. Everything is interconnected.

MORGAN

(sarcastic)

If you want holistic philosophy, that's down the road.

DOCTOR

My point is that you might be missing something with such a narrow focus.

The Doctor starts rummaging through a pile of printed data.

MORGAN

The funding remit only goes so far.

DOCTOR

(to himself)

Electro-magnetic disturbances, tachyon shifts, anti-chronons...

Morgan gives a sharp look at that last.

MORGAN

Anti-chronons?

DOCTOR

Yes. What about them?

MORGAN

I'd speculated about a counterpart to the chronon - I called it a *strange* chronon, mostly because it is. Something that might move backwards through time. The idea wasn't well received by the big boys, but I think it's as important - if not more so - than the chronon itself.

DOCTOR

(warily)

Why's that, do you think?

(CONTINUED)

MORGAN

Learning to understand a particle traveling from the future to the past could teach us about the universe's future - on a quantum level, that is.

DOCTOR

(still wary)

Indeed. And what have you learned?

MORGAN

(deflated)

Surprisingly little, really.

DOCTOR

That's probably because you don't have one - a future that is.

(Various expressions of surprise)

DOCTOR

My own instruments have suggested a massive space/time rip is going to occur in this area, very soon and *that's* why I need to know what other anomalies you've detected - no matter how small.

MORGAN

(at first computer)

I haven't tried mapping this -
(taps the screen)
- to an electromagnetic scale.
There didn't seem to be any reason to.

Morgan shrugs acquiescence.

MORGAN

There's no harm in trying.

LUCIE

Famous last words.

DOCTOR

That's *not* very helpful.

LUCIE

Excuse *me* for breathing, I'm sure!

(CONTINUED)

Irritated and confused, Lucie's attention wanders and she pokes around the lab as the dialog continues in the background. She sits down at an unoccupied workstation and takes the mouse in hand, unnoticed by the others. She clicks a few icons on the screen.

MORGAN
(offscreen)
I can bring up a log of
electro-magnetic field readings
during observation attempts. And
what about-

Lucie looks at the monitor, first puzzled and then somewhat alarmed.

LUCIE
Whoa! What kind of screen-saver is
that!

CUT TO: COMPUTER SCREEN

Lucie's computer. The screen displays a black-and-green image (not unlike doppler radar) of a swarming, seething mass. Individual shapes are *almost* indiscernible but there is an impression of dozens of similar masses, each of them alike and insectoid.

RETURN TO: LAB

The characters gather around Lucie's computer.

MORGAN
Oh, that's just-
(trails off)
I've no idea. What were you doing?

LUCIE
Honestly? Looking for a game of
solitaire or something. You lot
lost me back at *charming chronons* -

MORGAN
Strange chronons.

LUCIE
Whatever. So I was just looking for
something more interesting and
found *this*.

MORGAN
It looks like you've opened up the
data logs and mapped them to...

(CONTINUED)

(extremely puzzled)
How did you *do* that?

LUCIE
Just pressed some buttons.
Naturally talented, I guess.

The Doctor, meanwhile, grows increasingly aghast.

DOCTOR
Oh no.

LUCIE
What is it?

DOCTOR
They are bad news.

MORGAN
What do you mean? This is just an
unusual data display. It's not
impossible for patterns to manifest
on certain scales-

DOCTOR
This isn't some happenstance
application of chaos theory!

MORGAN
Then what is it?

DOCTOR
Horacridoideans would be the best
description.

(Various interrogative noises)

DOCTOR
Creatures that exist in time. *Only*
in time. Usually. Usually harmless,
too.

LUCIE
Except..?

DOCTOR
When they swarm.

MORGAN
Acrid... Grasshoppers?

Morgan looks at the display, again.

MORGAN

Or locusts?

DOCTOR

Yes. Locusts.

MORGAN

That's ridiculous. What do you mean, *existing only in time*? That's not possible.

DOCTOR

I assure you it is. Many species do it - chronovores, vortisaurs...

LUCIE

Er, don't try to explain, Doctor. It never ends well. Get back to *that*.

Noticing Morgan's increasing skepticism, the Doctor sees the sense of Lucie's suggestion.

DOCTOR

Lucie's moment of inadvertent insight mapped your findings to the less-usual spectra...

The Doctor is momentarily lost in thought.

MORGAN

Fine, supposing you're not completely mad. What does it all mean? I'm guessing it's not good.

DOCTOR

No. Just like grasshoppers, Horacridoideans are usually harmless. They can be quite useful, in their way, nibbling at the edges of time. My people would occasionally use them to that end - herding them in certain directions to consume potentially harmful chronal energy. It's a very effective way of preventing spontaneously occurring time-loops before they could develop into a full-blown cataclysm in the vortex.

LUCIE

But grasshoppers become locusts when the grub's plentiful, right?

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Yes.

MORGAN

But why here and now?

LUCIE

Maybe you got it's attention, like.
Doing what you have been.

DOCTOR

It's possible. This equipment no
doubt rings like a gong in the
vortex

(beat)

Or it might have nothing to do with
what's going on here/now. In an
area like this, matters can be
quite turbulent. Where there's
significant tectonic activity,
there's usually corresponding
weakness in time. And this area...
(waves vaguely)

(ALL)

The earthquakes.

MORGAN

You're not suggesting..?

DOCTOR

It's possible.

MORGAN

Now wait a minute. Creatures in
time is one thing, but I'm *not*
going to entertain the notion that
I'm giving the Hayward fault the
hiccups.

DOCTOR

No, of course not. That would be
ridiculous.

Morgan looks relieved.

DOCTOR

That would be the Horacridoideans.

MORGAN

How?

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Locusts aren't known for their good manners or neat deportment.

LUCIE

You mean they're destructive little buggers.

DOCTOR

(sighs)

And a swarm isn't subject to the usual sort of boundaries.

MORGAN

...it's trying to, what? Break through into this dimension?

DOCTOR

I fear so.

During the above exchange, Morgan brings up a website - a map of the bay area dotted with concentric circles is prominent. Simultaneously, she flips through a heavily laden clip-board full of print-outs.

MORGAN

The quakes started almost a month ago. The first one was a full week after we began this type of test. But...

She continues comparing what he sees on-screen to the data in-hand.

MORGAN

The lag seems to have been narrowing, ever since then.

DOCTOR

How short is it, now?

MORGAN

If you're going to insist... three hours after each observation run, maybe less. But I still think you're seeing a pattern where none-

A small tremor rocks the building - just strong enough for it *not* to have been a truck driving past. Lucie, not really used to such things, yelps in alarm and then looks embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

LUCIE

(to the Doctor)

I've been around you long enough to think that *that* was not coincidence. Am I right?

DOCTOR

I think you are. The creatures are using your equipment to target this area.

MORGAN

But we're not *doing* anything! We're just... *looking*.

DOCTOR

An act which can effect both the observer and the object.

LUCIE

Yeah. The uncertainty principle.

The assemblage regard Lucie with a little surprise.

LUCIE

What? I'm not *thick*, you know. Sheesh.

(beat)

So, what have we got to do? Just shut this all down and it'll go away?

DOCTOR

I think it's too late for that.

LUCIE

That's a shame. It would have been nice to have a simple solution, for once.

DOCTOR

If they manage to break through, they'll consume all of time - or, at least, enough of it to matter in this vicinity. The solar system would effectively cease to exist.

LUCIE

But we *know* the solar system exists in the future. We've seen it!

The Doctor and Lucie pointedly ignore Morgan's goggling at this declaration.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Not necessarily. Time is not a line, moving from a beginning to an end. The future is not an unchanging thing.

LUCIE

Nor the past, neither?

DOCTOR

No.

LUCIE

You realize that makes no sense, right?

DOCTOR

I never said it did.

MORGAN

(interrupting)

Excuse me! I can't stop this project, even if I wanted to. I can't shut down without a good reason and, honestly, do you think that a grants board would believe *this*?

LUCIE

She's got a point.

DOCTOR

Yes.

The Doctor explores the lab a little more thoroughly, practically climbing on top of some of the hardware.

DOCTOR

What I wouldn't give for an ionic pulse generator...

LUCIE

Would that be something used for deep space exploration?

DOCTOR

Yes, as a matter of fact.

LUCIE

So might they have one down the hall, then? Back where we passed the big *Your Tax Dollars At Work* sign?

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

I beg your pardon?

MORGAN

She's right. It's one of the other projects at the lab - a collaboration with NASA, working on the next generation of exploratory satellites.

DOCTOR

Which means ion-thrust engines! Of course!

(to Morgan)

I don't suppose you could nip down there and borrow a bit of kit?

MORGAN

You're joking. It's not even vaguely related to this project.

Lucie grabs a pad of something and scrawls hastily on it.

LUCIE

Here. Sign this and I'll give it a go.

MORGAN

I can't read this at all! Something about authorization... release of... national security...

LUCIE

And your signature. Just move quickly and act like you know what you're doing. Key strategy to departmental budgets, everywhere.

Morgan can't help smiling at this.

MORGAN

True enough. Alright. You might as well try.

She signs the pad and gives it back to Lucie, who then leaves the lab.

MORGAN

I don't understand. What does a rocket engine have to do with... temporal locusts?

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR
Directly? Nothing. But with a
little tinkering...

The Doctor takes the lashed-together device from Scene 1 out of his pocket.

DOCTOR
I'm sure you've got a soldering
iron... Aha!

Happy as a clam and apparently unaware of Morgan's growing alarm, the Doctor pulls a few wires out from a particular bank of equipment and starts soldering the pocket-device into the works.

DOCTOR
(somewhat muffled)
I know it might seem a bit strange,
but I assure you, I'm on your side.

MORGAN
Are you really from UNIT?

DOCTOR
Yes, as well as quite a few others
places - and times.

MORGAN
You're not... human, are you?

DOCTOR
That depends how you define
'human'. But if you mean *born on
planet Earth* then... no. I'm not.

MORGAN
Should you even be telling me this?

DOCTOR
That depends who you ask. Then
again -

The Doctor emerges from the depths of the machinery.

DOCTOR
Who are you going to tell?

MORGAN
Fair point.

DOCTOR

Besides the obvious, what's
the the worst that can happen?

MORGAN

You destroy millions of dollars
worth of property that's not yours?

DOCTOR

Equipment can always be replaced,
Dr. Randall!

MORGAN

Morgan, please. Why stand on
formality when saving the world?

DOCTOR

That's the spirit!

Lucie returns, awkwardly lugging a milk-crate sized hunk of hardware. Despite the fact that it was several million dollars in the making, the resemblance to a home-made electronics kit can't be denied. There are a few too many trailing wires, and pieces added as afterthoughts to other pieces - or so it seems.

LUCIE

Here we go!

MORGAN

Any trouble?

LUCIE

Nope. Walk in with a clipboard and a confident attitude and you can get away with almost anything. But we can't hang on to it for too long, though.

DOCTOR

No problem. If we don't fix this situation soon, nothing will matter, anyway.

Another tremor rocks the lab, this one slightly stronger.

DOCTOR

(to Morgan)

That's your target-capture area,
yes?

Morgan nods.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Alright. I'll install this in between the chorionic sensor and the phase array. Morgan, you route the spectra display into the interference dampener. That'll help give us a clear target to aim for.

LUCIE

Oi. What about me?

The Doctor tosses Lucie a small fire extinguisher. Morgan sits down at a computer and types, re-routing data as the Doctor suggested.

LUCIE

Very funny.

DOCTOR

I'm not joking.

MORGAN

How is all this supposed to help? Will it kill the locusts?

DOCTOR

(offended by the suggestion)
I'm not going to kill them. They can't help being as they are. No, I'm going to encourage the swarm to disperse. Convince them that the pickings here aren't as tasty as they believe.

MORGAN

That makes as much sense as anything today.
(sitting back from keyboard)
I'm done.

DOCTOR

All right. I'm almost there, too.

LUCIE

Do you really think this is going to work?

DOCTOR

Given the circumstances, it'll have to.

(CONTINUED)

LUCIE

And if it doesn't, we'll never know?

DOCTOR

Only briefly.

Another earth tremor strikes, this one distinctly stronger and longer-lasting - a full blown quake. This time, the rumbling of the earth is overlaid by an unpleasant chittering/buzzing sound.

The lab machinery goes haywire - lights flashing and alarms going off as various capacities are exceeded. Smoke trickles out of several unseen places.

DOCTOR

Not a moment too soon. Morgan!

Morgan lunges for a large switch - prominently marked on the side of the largest bank of equipment - barely able to stay on her feet. Unsecured monitors and whatnot fall over, although the heavier equipment remains stable for the moment.

Once the main switch is pulled, the few alarms and warning lights that weren't already on flash into life, vigorously and with much electronic complaint. A high pitched whine joins the cacophony.

Then, far more abruptly than it all began, the earthquake and the buzzing of the Horacridoideans ceases.

The racket of a much-abused physics lab and appropriated ion-generator continues until a slightly dazed Morgan realizes to turn it all off.

Smoke continues to emit from here and there, and a few indicator lights flash, strangely pathetic for inanimate objects.

Lucie picks herself up from the floor.

LUCIE

Is that it? Did it work?

The four of them gaze - with varying degrees of comprehension - at a rapidly scrolling display on one of the few monitors that hasn't fallen over.

DOCTOR

I think so. But...

(CONTINUED)

Morgan, surveying the damage to the lab, isn't happy to hear the encroaching doubt in the Doctor's voice.

MORGAN

But what?

DOCTOR

It seems to have worked, yes, but not in the way I planned.

The Doctor brings up the 'screen saver' display which Lucie stumbled upon, earlier. The green-and-black image seems to be the same, but now it jumps and scatters - sometimes a double-image, sometimes flickering to black and then back again.

MORGAN

They're still there!

DOCTOR

Not exactly. They've been pushed out of phase. A tenth of a second or so.

LUCIE

That's not very much!

DOCTOR

It is at a quantum level. It might as well be a million years.

Despite this, the Doctor still sounds uncertain.

MORGAN

What's the matter? Aside from the fact that you seem to have fried my lab, that is.

DOCTOR

(dismissively)

Like I said, it can be replaced. I'm just a little concerned about... permanence.

MORGAN

What?

DOCTOR

This rather impromptu solution. It might not last.

MORGAN

Oh, God. How long? How long do you think it will last?

DOCTOR

Six... seven hundred years, perhaps.

MORGAN

(frustrated)

There's not much I can do about that!

The Doctor continues to manipulate the computer display, taking perhaps a little longer than he should to verify his findings. He speaks as he works on this.

DOCTOR

Unfortunately, no. But, by then, you'll have the technology to deal with them.

MORGAN

How do you know - oh. Of course.

Lucie grins at this.

MORGAN

I suppose I can say the lab was damaged in the quake.

LUCIE

Just don't give anyone the particulars.

MORGAN

Of course not.

Finished with the computer, the Doctor unspllices his pocket time-disturbance-detector from one of the smokier bits of equipment.

DOCTOR

I'm afraid I can't leave this with you. Causality, you know.

Morgan smiles and half-nods.

MORGAN

In theory, yes.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

I think that wraps things up. With the Horacridoideans out of phase, the TARDIS will be feeling much better. A swarm of them is just the sort of thing that would upset her.

MORGAN

What..?

LUCIE

That definitely falls under *don't ask*. Trust me.

MORGAN

All right...

The Doctor heads towards the lab's exit.

DOCTOR

Come on, Lucie. If we're quick, we can watch the sunset from the Golden Gate Bridge.

LUCIE

That'd be nice. It's still not the Gold Rush, though.

FADE OUT

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE, LATE AFTERNOON

The Doctor and Lucie are on the pedestrian walkway of the Golden Gate bridge. Rather than watching the lowering sun, behind them, they are looking east, towards Berkeley.

LUCIE

Are things going to be alright? In seven hundred years or whenever?

DOCTOR

Oh yes. By then, humans will be regularly performing their own manipulations of time, much to the irritation of the Time Lords.

LUCIE

Humans? Manipulating time? I thought your lot wouldn't allow that.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

The Time Lords are constantly caught between an urge to interfere and an desire to remain neutral. They like to think they step in only when the situation is threatening to a greater good.

LUCIE

You don't agree with them?

DOCTOR

Let's just say we have different ideas of what constitutes a threat. And the greater good, for that matter.

They admire the view for a few moments, until Lucie finds the effort to ask:

LUCIE

Doctor..?

DOCTOR

Yes?

LUCIE

Just before we left that lab. You, er, you seemed to take quite a while to 'verify your findings'.

DOCTOR

Ah.

LUCIE

I know that *ah*. That's the *I hope you weren't going to notice that 'ah'*. Come on, what were you doing?

DOCTOR

I mentioned causality.

LUCIE

Yeah. I remember - not wanting to leave technology lying around that people aren't ready for.

DOCTOR

That can include knowledge, too.

LUCIE

Them computers picked up something they shouldn't have?

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Yes. I feel a little badly,
cheating Dr. Randall out of
a certain Nobel prize but...

LUCIE

Let me guess - something we're not
going to be ready for, say, the
next seven hundred years?

DOCTOR

Approximately. Eight hundred at the
most. I just hope that what they do
in the 29th century isn't what
caused the swarm in the first
place...

LUCIE

And you get on *your* lot for
interfering.

DOCTOR

We don't disagree *all* of the time.

LUCIE

Just most of it?

DOCTOR

Just most of it.

The Doctor steps back from the bridge railing, looks
brightly around.

DOCTOR

It's getting on to dinner time. I
know of a great restaurant in
1849...

Lucie laughs, and the pair of them walk back towards San
Francisco.

FADE OUT