



THE FAST AND THE FÜHRER-LESS

By John Busser

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Cast of Characters

DR. LEON ABERMAN: Male, 30's - 50's, Head of the Project, wears glasses
DR. ELSA ZWIRSKY: Female, 30's - 40's, Chief Physicist
DR: SIMON GETZEL: Male, 20's - 30's, Hot-Headed Physicist
DR: ZELDA PINKUS: Female, 20's - 30's, Engineer and Physicist
THE TRAMP - MR. CHAPLIN: Male, 40's - 50's, Man out of time

Place

The Teller Institute of Advanced Temporal Physics

Time

Tuesday, Early Evening

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At lights up, four scientists sit in a boardroom at a prestigious scientific laboratory. They are celebrating with glasses of champagne. The project head, DR. LEON ABERMAN, stands. He raises his glass and toasts the others...

LEON

Congratulations, Dr. Zwirsky! As of today, you and your team mates, Dr. Getzel and Dr. Pinkus have done the seemingly impossible. Mazel tov! And well done! *(They clink glasses and drink)*

ELSA

Our thanks, Dr. Aberman. But we couldn't have accomplished anything without your part in this.

LEON

A small part, perhaps Elsa, I merely facilitated the work done by the rest of you. *(LEON pulls a cigar from his breast pocket)* Anyone care to join me in a celebratory cigar?

ELSA

Leon! You know better than to smoke in here. What do you think, it's 1950?

LEON

(He chuckles) We could make it so, thanks to you three and your device.

SIMON

To think, we've built an actual time machine!

ZELDA

I never thought we'd pull it off! But we did!! *(She hugs GETZEL)* Simon, you're a genius!

SIMON

I only did the math, Zelda, my love. It was you and Elsa who worked out the practical applications of it. At last, man will sail the very oceans of past and future!

ZELDA

So poetic for a physicist! And hot! *(They clink glasses, kiss each other and drink again)*

ELSA

Well Simon, now you can give Chaucer or Keats a run for their money... literally.

LEON

You are all to be thanked. But now, as they say, it is time for us to make a most momentous decision. Before we make our announcement, we must have a plan.

ELSA

A plan? Is our work not accomplishment enough?

LEON

It is not enough to have achieved this remarkable feat; it must also have a purpose. We must have an idea that will please not only the Board of Directors and the Government, but the public itself. Inventing the wheel was just a first step. But not until someone made use of it, did it catch the public's eye.

ELSA

So, what you're saying is, we need to have a reason to travel through time.

LEON

Yes. A good reason.

ELSA

Well, there are many, many applications for a time machine, I would think.

LEON

We need to start making a list of them, right away. Then we can present this to the world at large.

ELSA

Well, that shouldn't be a problem... Sooooo, how about... providing historical accuracy.

ZELDA

Getting a first-hand perspective on past events.

ELSA

A more accurate look at life before the history books.

At this point, SIMON quietly gets up and leaves the room.

ZELDA

Charting future events before they happen?

ELSA

See where Global Warming is a century or two down the line.

ZELDA

Testing the Grandfather Paradox!

LEON

These are all wonderful ideas. Simon, anything from ...? (*Looks around*) Where is Simon?

At that moment, a loud electrical noise happens offstage. Bright lights flicker offstage building in intensity until the noise and light are overwhelming. Then lights and sound fade to silence. The 3 scientists look at each other. Before a word is said, SIMON reenters the room. His clothes are tattered and burned. His hair is disheveled and there is black soot on his face. He walks in smiling.

SIMON

Well, I did it.

LEON

What? What did you do?

SIMON

I did the thing this time machine was made for... (*Beaming*) I just killed Hitler as a baby.

LEON

You what?!!

ZELDA

Aww Simon, I wanted to do that...

SIMON

I'm sorry my little *ketzele*, (*pronounced ket-ze-lah, meaning "kitten"*) I couldn't resist!

LEON

But why, man?

SIMON

Why do you think? The man was a monster!

LEON

But that's not why we invented the time machine.

SIMON

Maybe *you* didn't...

LEON

This is unacceptable. We are scientists, not murderers. We must undo this at once!

SIMON

Now hold on a moment, Leon...

At that moment, ZELDA leaves the room while the others argue.

LEON

No! No matter what he did, we are not here to pass final judgement.

ELSA

We need to think of the benefits...

LEON

Oh Elsa, if anyone understands how wrong this is, it should be you.

At that moment, the electrical noise and bright lights happens again offstage. They build in intensity and then fade. ZELDA walks back in, looking very satisfied with herself.

ZELDA

Don't worry Leon. I fixed it.

SIMON

(Taken aback) What do you mean, you *fixed* it?

ZELDA

Sorry love, I went back to 10 minutes before you arrived, and switched infants. Baby Hitler is still alive.

SIMON

You say that like it's a good thing.

ZELDA

Isn't it? I saved Baby Hitler, didn't I? (*She thinks about what she just said*) Ooh, when you say it out loud like that, it doesn't sound quite right, does it?

LEON

So, that means you just murdered an innocent baby?

ZELDA

Not me, Dr. Aberman. Simon there killed all the kids.

LEON

So that makes it ri— Wait a minute. *All* the kids?

SIMON

It was a maternity ward, I can't read German, I didn't want to risk it, so I burned the whole place down.

LEON

You killed an entire room full of infants?!

SIMON

I didn't know who was who.

ELSA

Was there no way to narrow it down?

SIMON

It's not like he had the mustache back then!

ELSA

Wait, if Simon killed all the babies in the maternity ward, then just switching one baby doesn't help.

ZELDA

No, it's alright. I got him out of there. I gave him to a surprisingly hot young woman next door.

ELSA

A woman nex--? Wait, what was her name?

ZELDA

Ummm, Shickle-something, I think. Definitely NOT Hitler.

ELSA

Oy...

At that moment, SIMON leaves the room.

LEON

This is not good! They will crucify us for this!

ELSA

Leon, don't... say it that way.

LEON

Sorry.

ELSA

Zelda, if you arrived 10 minutes earlier, then why didn't you stop Simon when he showed up?

ZELDA

I hadn't the heart to stop him. His intentions were good.

LEON

He burned down a hospital! How is that good?!!

ZELDA

To take out that monster, he would risk anything! And so would I!

LEON

Then why did you save the child if you wanted him dead?

ZELDA

I saved him from Simon because... *I* wanted to be the one to kill Hitler as a baby!

At that moment, the electrical noise and bright lights happen again. SIMON enters dressed as a German woman from the 1890's. He looks surprisingly hot.

SIMON

I'm sorry, little Zelda, but I just went back in time and killed Hitler's mother and took her place, so that when you went back in time to give Baby Hitler away, you were actually giving him to me.

ZELDA

I wondered why she was so hot looking.

LEON

You killed Hitler's mother? Then what you did with the still-alive Baby Hitler?

SIMON

(Proudly) I threw him off a bridge into the river. He will never trouble us again.

ZELDA leaves the room.

LEON

This is madness!

SIMON

This is science!

ELSA

When do I get to try it?