

The Time Machine

By Austin Hinkle

When the old man entered the dingy garage, he bounced with a swift purpose. His shoes patted on the floor as he meandered his way to the corner of the area, his wooden cane clicking in harmony. His eyes fell upon an intriguing apparatus situated in the shadows of the room then removed a curtain covering its components. There lay a time machine. Darkened wood coalesced with copper metal in a twisted dance, with the foundation made of polished stone. A circumferential wire entangled around the wood apparatuses and through the solid gears resting between them, winding and turning into a small switch box. The entirety of the object was about six feet in diameter in an unorganized disarray. The old man reached a leathery finger towards the extended switch and flipped it downwards with a thudded click. A mechanical whirring began suddenly as the machine began to groan to life. The wooden arms protracted outwards in a frenzy and began shifting into a circle. A chair began to form into view as the system evolved into its full form. The extensions slowly began to spin, the frequency exponentially rising. The sound reverberated across the garage in a deafening breath. The old man grunted as he collapsed into the chair. He closed his eyes and sighed, his fingers resting on his silver wedding ring. The machine continued to crescendo in speed, and then the entire blur disappeared from space in time in an instant.

The man was now ethereally floating in the chair, hovering over a barren landscape. The air whispered past him at the height, the birds soaring by his eye level. Specs of people moved below him like ants, coagulating together beside a large structure. Incomprehensibly large stones were transferred across the vast sands, the crowd below moaning from the workload. The mass in the center began to rise like a beast, a beautiful architecture spiraling upwards. Stones were carefully manipulated and jockeyed in fascinating maneuvers, years passing by as the construction continued to rise. The old man watched silently as the Great Pyramids were built. Yet, he was not impressed in the slightest by the scene. He passively nudged another switch and vanished.

A chorus of cheers erupted. The old man watched as two gladiators fought to the death in the Roman Coliseum. The two fighters donned their respective armor, striking with fierce blows as patrons applauded. The amphitheater shook from the action, a sight that only lucky eyes would be able to see. The man then watched as the Roman empire rose and fell in its entirety. Hierarchies were made and demolished, historic betrayals were undertaken, and world changing battles were fought. Yet, the man was not filled with joy or interest. He exhaled and moved onwards to the next venture.

The chair appeared above an area of dense foliage. The old man sat quietly in the still air looking downwards. The sun basked on his face as the leaves below began to shudder. A steady stream of thumps began to fill the air, his chair beginning to vibrate from each. An enormous

dinosaur burst forth through the trees. The beast's muscles clenched as it strode around a clearing of grass, its teeth reflecting light in a gleam. It moved its massive jaw towards the sky as a squeal pierced the air above. A predatory bird swooped downwards as its span of wings blocked the sun. The bird dove towards the monster below, only to connect with a massive mouth of razors. The man despondently watched as the dinosaur ate its new meal. The age of dinosaurs flew by in front of the man's eyes. He watched as evolution began to take shape, the animal kingdom shifting at breakneck speed in front of him. He finished his viewing by observing the sky turning a dark purple, the sounds of birds scattering around him. The asteroid tumbled towards him, its fiery essence taking up his entire viewpoint. The man sighed in disappointment and vanished before the asteroid connected with the Earth.

Darkness. The old man sat in a vacuum of nothingness. The man was the only one there, the only existing thing in the infinite silence. There was no direction to turn, no up or down. Just, nothing. The old man removed his silver ring and held it to his lips firmly. He closed his eyes as he released the ring ahead. The circle floated in the daze of nothing for a few moments, then began to spin. It rotated faster and faster, until it was nothing but a silver blur. The old man watched calmly as the silver haze began to turn a bright orange, the heat emitted warming the man's face. The ball of heat began to shudder, microscopic popping sounds bursting forth. Then, out of an entire void of nothing, existence was born. The ring exploded outwards, dust particles reaching far and wide out of sight. The particles buzzed around like bullets, colliding in miniscule impacts. Particles began to accumulate together into spherical lobes, then connecting with more particles in grand crashes. Planets began to take shape, gravity beginning to mold the universe in front of his eyes. Stunning, cosmic displays unraveled before him. His eyes darted from instance to instance as the entities formed together like a conscious puzzle piece. Yet, the old man didn't find this fascinating. The display was, in fact, unsatisfactory. He haphazardly turned the switch and moved on.

The chair appeared in a quaint kitchen. The room was dimly lit with the smell of pasta filling the air. Sam Cooke echoed out on a nearby record player ceremonially. Two empty wine cups sat on the edge of the table; their glass lips stained with dark red. The moon's light sifted through the curtains calmly. The fire cracked in the corner, the heat comforting the room from a few snowflakes outside falling down. Some shuffling noises came from just outside the room, followed by some laughter. Then, the old man watched his younger self dance into the kitchen, accompanied by his wife. The angelic woman laid her head in the man's chest, their dance together slow and meaningful. The man attempted to spin his wife clumsily, followed by boisterous laughter from the two. They drunkenly held each other as the music played on. The old man watched from his chair. As the two continued to dance, the old man's lips curled into a smile. Here, he decided he may just stay awhile longer.