

When Thornton and Sam found the time machine,
everything changed... except their luck.



A PLACE BY THE FIRE

EXT. SKID ROW - NIGHT

Dark streets lined with abandoned warehouses. New York City shimmers in the distance.

Two homeless men warm themselves at a flaming trash can.

THORNTON looks relatively new to the street. Middle-aged, thin, stubble on his face, clothing not too soiled. He wears glasses with the right lens completely missing.

SAM is a veteran of the row. Elderly, overweight, sweat-stained skin, scruffy beard, dingy clothing.

Sam sniffs the air.

SAM
Smell that?

Thornton squints his right eye and peers through his one remaining lens. He searches the dark street.

THORNTON
I don't see anything.

Suddenly, a MAN-SHAPED SILHOUETTE appears ten yards away. The silhouette CRACKLES with energy and pulses with light.

Thornton and Sam stare, growing more scared as the light brightens. They shield their eyes and stagger back --

But just as the light reaches a blinding intensity, it's gone -- leaving a man standing where the silhouette had been.

This is RICHARD SURREY, 30, neatly groomed and dressed in Victorian-era clothing. He looks around, disoriented.

Richard carries a MECHANICAL CYLINDER about the size of a loaf of bread. The device, covered with dials and switches, looks crude by modern standards but smokes with raw power.

Richard sees the two homeless men and walks over.

RICHARD
Impossible! I can't believe it!

Thornton and Sam exchange a wary glance.

RICHARD
Just look at yourselves!

Thornton and Sam try to tidy themselves up.

RICHARD

If homelessness still exists, then
poverty still exists! If poverty, then
crime! If crime, then violence! If
violence, then social degeneration!

The two homeless men stare at him, blank.

RICHARD

I see public education is still doing
a bang-up job. What's the point of
time travel if you can't get anywhere?

Thornton and Sam exchange another glance.

THORNTON

You're a... time traveler?

Sam points at the mechanical cylinder.

SAM

And that's a... time machine?

RICHARD

Yes, yes. Just spin the time dial and
off you go.

Richard turns slowly around, gazing at the ruined street.

RICHARD

My day was full of such promise!
Scientific discovery! Social progress!
We laid the foundations for a new
golden age! I skip one little century
into the future for a glimpse at
paradise on earth, and what do I find?
You. This. Has nothing -- ?

As Richard turns back around, Sam punches him in the face,
knocking the time traveler out cold.

SAM

Nope, nothing has changed.

THORNTON

What'd you do that for?!

Sam picks up the cylindrical time machine. He smiles.

SAM

Always wanted a time machine.

Thornton's eyes light up.

THORNTON

We can go back and invent Google. No! Facebook! We can take the great novels and symphonies and paintings of the twentieth century, go back and pawn them off as our own! We'll be geniuses! Rich geniuses! Top of the heap! Get any woman we want and make love to her over and over and --

Sam SLAPS Thornton.

THORNTON

What'd you do that for?!

SAM

I was a banker once upon a time. I've been to the top of the world.

THORNTON

I was a teacher once upon a time. I've never been to the top of anything.

SAM

There's nothing at the top of the heap but another heap.

THORNTON

Then what do you suggest?

SAM

I don't want to run at the head of the rat race. I want to escape it.

He nods down to Richard, still unconscious on the asphalt.

SAM

Unlike this poor bastard, we have no illusions about human nature. The future! New gadgets, new cures, new distractions -- so what? It'll be the same old us. The same old context. We need to escape the modern, mechanized system that turns a man into a cog.

THORNTON

You mean, go back instead of forward?

SAM

Why not?

THORNTON

Back to a simpler time.

SAM
Exactly! Back to when a man built his
life with his own hands.

THORNTON
A clean, honest, real life!

SAM
That's it!

THORNTON
Answering to no one but my own soul!

SAM
Yes! Yes!

The two men gaze at each other, worked up. Their eyes fall to
the time machine.

SAM
You game?

THORNTON
Spin the wheel!

Sam puts a hand on the time dial -- and spins it.

Shimmering light appears around Sam. Thornton grabs Sam's arm.
The light extends around him as well.

The light grows brighter. The CRACKLING silhouette swallows
the two men and EXPLODES.

EXT. LONDON - 1840 - NIGHT

Light EXPLODES and fades, leaving Sam and Thornton standing on
a narrow London street.

MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN crowd the dirty lane. Aged before
their time, backs bent, eyes dimmed, they look like the cast
from Dickens' worst nightmare.

Everyone stares in terror at the two men.

THORNTON
Looks like London. Mid 1800s.

SAM
We were in New York. How'd we end up
in London?

THORNTON

This is just a theory, but I think we step out of the space-time continuum. We don't move an inch or age a breath. Otherwise, we'd grow younger and vanish on the day we were born.

SAM

But we were in New York!

THORNTON

We don't move, but everything else does. Earth rotates backwards under our feet. So when we step back into the space-time continuum, it's like sticking a pin in a spinning globe.

They notice several men and children warming themselves around flaming bins. Everyone stares.

Thornton adjusts his glasses, squinting. Sam sniffs.

THORNTON

Farther back?

SAM

Much.

Sam spins the time dial.

EXT. RUSSIA - 1700 - NIGHT

Light EXPLODES and fades -- and the two men find themselves on a snowy plain in Russia.

Scores of RUSSIAN SOLDIERS stand in the snow. They look as tattered as their flag fluttering in the cold breeze.

A CAPTAIN sits atop a gaunt horse.

Everyone stares in surprise at the two men.

Thornton and Sam stare back, shivering in the cold. Sam sniffs as Thornton squints through his one lens.

THORNTON

Russia. Around the time of the Peter the First, I'd say.

Glancing right, they see a group of wounded soldiers warming themselves around a pile of burning wood.

A few soldiers advance, swords raised.

THORNTON
Time to go?

SAM
Way back this time.

Sam gets a good grip and spins the dial hard.

EXT. SOUTH AMERICA - 1493 - NIGHT

Thornton and Sam find themselves standing on a moonlit beach. Peaceful. Perfect. They look to each other and smile.

Turning around, the smiles freeze on their faces.

Dozens of SPANISH SOLDIERS stand guard over a crowd of ARAWAK INDIAN PRISONERS. The Arawaks sit on the sand, warming their hands at a small fire.

Everyone stares, wide eyed, afraid.

Thornton adjusts his glasses, squinting. Sam sniffs.

THORNTON
Looks like the second voyage of
Columbus. 1493 maybe.

SAM
God, how far back to we have to go?

THORNTON
Europe, Russia, South America...

SAM
Going to spin the hell out of this
thing.

He winds up and gives the dial a ferocious spin. Thornton takes Sam's arm as light shimmers around the two men.

THORNTON
If the earth is turning under us, it's
only a matter of time until --

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The men appear in the middle of the ocean. They sink immediately, then flounder back to the surface.

Treading water, Thornton awkwardly adjusts his glasses, squints through one lens -- and sees SHARK FINS.

He grabs at Sam, who turns and sees the oncoming sharks. Sam sniffs, eyes widening.

Thornton clutches onto Sam, who barely manages to stay afloat. He struggles with the time dial.

THORNTON
Spin it, spin it!

EXT. EGYPT - 2500 B.C. - NIGHT

The two men, drenched to the skin, appear on the steps of a pyramid, high above the ancient Egyptian desert.

Thornton loses his balance and falls forward. Sam snatches his coat and pulls him back.

THORNTON
Thanks.

Turning, they climb up a few steps to the flat top of the unfinished pyramid. From here, they see the Great Sphinx of Giza, staring at them from across the sands.

Thornton squints. Sam sniffs.

THORNTON
2500 B.C., give or take a century.

Looking down, they see hundreds of small fires in the dark.

SAM
What's all that?

THORNTON
Slaves.

SAM
Still sitting around a fire. Still trying to keep warm.

THORNTON
Give me that.

Thornton tries to take the time machine. Sam pushes him away.

THORNTON
You're not doing it right!

SAM
It's a wheel! You spin it!

THORNTON
You're not going back far enough!

SAM
We've gone back thousands of years and
nothing has changed!

THORNTON
Then go back farther!

Thornton leaps on Sam.

The two men fall and wrestle, their hands slapping at the dial, whipping it faster and faster, the light around them growing brighter and brighter --

EXT. PRE-HISTORY - NIGHT

The two men lie on the ground, looking up at a sky almost white with stars.

They sit up -- and see a group of PROTO-NEANDERTHALS gathered around a fire. The proto-Neanderthals look barely human. They stare in terror.

THORNTON
You've spun us back half a million
years!

SAM
Me?! That was you!

The two men stand and look around at the landscape. So primitive and beautiful.

Thornton squints through his one lens and smiles. Sam sniffs. They gaze in awe at the unspoiled world. A garden of Eden.

THORNTON
I think we did it. We escaped history.

SAM
We can live like real human beings.

A huge ROAR rips the night like a saber-tooth tiger on steroids.

Sam and Thornton turn in time to see the proto-Neanderthals throw dirt on the fire and scatter -- leaving the world suddenly dark.

The ROAR explodes again, closer.

The two men stare out into the star-lit shadows, their primal fears kicking into overdrive.

THORNTON
History sucks.

SAM
Let's give the future a roll.

THORNTON
OK, but not too far.

The ROAR comes again, closer. The two men leap at the sound.

SAM
I'm going as far as I can!

THORNTON
Wait --

SAM
The future's all we got left!

Sam grabs the dial, about to spin. Thornton pulls Sam's hand away. He talks rapid-fire, fueled by fear.

THORNTON
Look, I've been thinking about the
earth's orbital path and how this
point here
(points to feet)
could, over millennium, cross the
orbital path of --

The ROAR explodes behind them. They leap out of their skins.

Sam spins the time dial and keeps it going, his hand slapping it over and over as shimmering light surrounds the two men.

EXT. THE MOON - THE DISTANT FUTURE

Thornton and Sam appear on the surface of the moon -- and immediately gasp for air. They whip around, panicking.

Thornton mouths the words, "I TOLD YOU!" -- and SHOVES Sam.

In the low gravity, the shove spins Sam around and around. The time machine flies from his hand, tumbles through mounds of lunar dust, and disappears over a crater's edge.

Thornton and Sam stare at each other in terror, then scramble after the time machine.

They fall to their knees on the edge of the crater, staring down into a vast black hole. They clutch their chests, faces filled with the knowledge of certain death.

The two men look up -- and suddenly their expressions change. Their eyes widen with sorrow and love.

A strange calm comes over them, their dying stares fixed on something in the distance.

They fall over, faces in the dust.

Dead.

CAMERA PANS UP

from the two men, revealing their last point of view:

The earth, shining across the blackness of space.

The small blue planet glows like heaven.

-- THE END --