

RIPPLE EFFECT

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FADE IN:

**EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP COMPLEX - DAY**

Fog obscures several white buildings connected by enclosed walkways. Snow blankets everything except the roadway leading to the entrance.

SUPER: Ben Nevis Spacetime Observatory, Scotland, United Kingdom - Present Day

A convoy of three cars pulls up. The first and third are armored military vehicles displaying the UK emblem, the second a luxury car. A late-model Bentley to be precise.

The Bentley's driver, HUMPHRIES (33), leverages years of practice keeping a lid on his Cockney accent to chat respectfully with his passenger.

HUMPHRIES (O.S.)  
I'm all for keeping informed, Sir,  
but sometimes there's just no  
substitute for seeing for yourself.

The observatory's director, DR. JOHNSON (60), balding but otherwise robust for his age, emerges from the entrance and holds the door open against a stiff wind.

HUMPHRIES (O.S.)  
We're here. Won't be a second, Sir.

Humphries exits the Bentley, hurries around to open the rear door for KING EDWARD IX (58). Edward strides to the door in a long coat, followed by the stocky Humphries.

All three cars drive off to park, the Bentley driverless.

HUMPHRIES  
His Majesty, King Edward the Ninth.

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Edward and Humphries, out of their coats and in business attire, follow Dr. Johnson down a brightly lit passage.

At the end, Dr. Johnson uses a keypad and palm scanner to open a bulky metal door to

**INT. SPACETIME OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS**

Metal stairs descend into a cavernous room dominated by a huge set of gleaming metallic rings all spinning in different directions around a single point ten meters above the floor.

A dozen labcoated TECHNICIANS around the edges of the room operate holographic displays. All eyes turn toward the King.

EDWARD

Please, as you were. Doctor Johnson, pictures do not do your spacetime telescope justice.

DR. JOHNSON

Quite right, Your Majesty. I'd be happy to take you on a tour of the whole facility, but first let's see what I know you came to see.

He leads the King and Humphries to a vacant workstation. Technicians trickle over to watch.

INSERT: HOLOGRAM

The image shows Dr. Johnson and all of the Technicians standing in front of a small platform.

DR. JOHNSON (O.S.)

We were preparing to send our package when the appointed time arrived to watch for... you know, incoming packages.

POP! A ripple emanates from the platform, and now a caged mouse and a small box sit on the platform. The recording continues with a male East-Indian Technician waving a Geiger counter over the arrivals.

EDWARD (O.S.)

So this is a recording of the package's arrival. Extraordinary.

The East-Indian Technician lifts the box, plugs it into a tablet device.

DR. JOHNSON (O.S.)

No, Sir, this is the recording we received IN the package. From eighteen minutes in the future.

RETURN TO SCENE

The hologram clicks off. Edward looks around.

EDWARD

Where is that gentleman?

DR. JOHNSON

That's something we're working to uncover, Sir. He doesn't work here.

A female West-Indian Technician raises her hand.

TECHNICIAN

I know who he is. He was one of the other finalists for my position. His name escapes me at the moment.

DR. JOHNSON

My God, you're right, Miss Leaping-Fox! But I hired you six YEARS ago.

The Technician shrugs. Others look at their labmates as if maybe something has changed about them.

Humphries' confused expression eventually twists to the point where his mouth is open.

HUMPHRIES

Sending a package eighteen minutes back in time changed something six years in the past?

Dr. Johnson looks up, watches the rings move hypnotically.

DR. JOHNSON

Theoretically, the package could arrive with a "splash" in the spacetime continuum with ripple effects before or after. Makes me wonder who's looking at the package we sent.

EDWARD

This is quite literally an historic achievement, Doctor Johnson. But we would advise extreme caution moving forward.

(smiles)

Or backward.

**INT. MOVING BENTLEY - DAY**

The convoy rumbles down a mountainside road with a steep drop-off on the left. Humphries sits in the driver's seat and maintains respectful eye contact with the King via the rear-view mirror.

HUMPHRIES

I hear Spain's having trouble with Texas and California again. Both at once, this time around.

Edward peeks at the escort vehicles in front and behind.

EDWARD

We may have lent the separatists a small measure of technical assistance. Discretely, of course.

HUMPHRIES

(chuckles, winks)  
Of course, Sir. Wager it'll be Louisiana all over again.

In front of the lead vehicle, high-strength netting launches from the right side, latches onto the guard-rail on the left. Lead vehicle stops instantly, nearly uproots the fence posts.

A collision warning BLARES inside the Bentley, then CRASH! The car JOLTS again as the third vehicle rear-ends it.

Dashboard warnings flash as Humphries and the King watch a dozen SOLDIERS pour out of the two armored cars. Sustained GUNFIRE pelts the Bentley's windows.

SOLDIER (V.O.)

(over radio)  
Contact. Yankees.

HUMPHRIES

Boggles the mind why these Americans want out of the U.K.

EDWARD

Someone put the idea in their heads and armed them. We haven't been able to determine who.

The enemy gunfire converges on the right rear window, but the Bentley's occupants seem indifferent to the Americans being slaughtered outside.

HUMPHRIES

My money's on the French.

One Soldier drops his weapon, grabs a wound on his leg. Humphries snarls, pulls out a pistol.

EDWARD

Didn't they see what happened to the fools who tried this in India last month?

The King idly pulls out the emergency toolbox, rummages through it, pulls out one tool.

EDWARD

Humphries, this is a state-of-the-art fuel cell vehicle. Why on Earth is there a saw in this kit?

HUMPHRIES

That's a bone saw, Sir. For amputations in dire accidents.

Edward regards the saw with raised eyebrows, gingerly places it back in its slot.

Humphries' eyes grow wide as cracks form in the window.

HUMPHRIES

I think maybe they did see that muck-up in India, and got their hands on heavier weapons.

The window shatters, and a lone miniature guided missile arcs in to strike Edward through the heart. Humphries fires through the window, kills the final American.

A tear rolls down Humphries' cheek as he looks at the battle scene, then the wooden fence anchoring the ambush net. He grabs the saw, exits the car, walks up the road.

SOLDIER

Sir?

HUMPHRIES

(into handset)  
Doc Johnson, spin up your rings.

#### **INT. SPACETIME OBSERVATORY - DAY**

Humphries - soaked from the knees down - stands on the platform, the bonesaw in one hand and his pistol in the other. The telescope rings spin rapidly.

HUMPHRIES

That road was scouted twenty-four hours ago. Send me back twenty-three. I'll weaken the fence, save His Majesty.

DR. JOHNSON

Twenty-three hours? That could change anything in the past! One. Go back one hour and warn the security detail.

A white bubble forms around Humphries. He nods.

HUMPHRIES

Smart thinking, there. One hour.

**INT. SPACETIME OBSERVATORY - DAY**

POP! A ripple reveals Humphries on the platform, shocking the Technicians. The machinery is in slightly different positions than before, more noticeable is that the Technicians all wear clean-room suits.

HUMPHRIES

Where's His Majesty's security detail?

TECHNICIAN

You can't be in here like that!

HUMPHRIES

It's an emergency, you bookworm.

DR. JOHNSON

I thought I explained to you that the spacetime telescope is a supremely delicate instrument.

HUMPHRIES

That's why you have that electrostatic shield ten feet above the floor.

Dr. Johnson and the Technicians glance at one another.

HUMPHRIES

You didn't think I was paying attention on the tour, but  
(taps temple)  
I'm always taking it in. Now where is the detail?!

Dr. Johnson looks at the wall just above the holographic terminals, murmuring, chin in hand.

TECHNICIAN

They already left.

HUMPHRIES

(checks watch)

What? We left forty-five minutes ago, and I went back an hour.

TECHNICIAN

Is your watch still on Standard Time or something?

HUMPHRIES

Given that it just came through a bloody time machine, I'd call this watch decidedly non-standard.

DR. JOHNSON

Yes, about three meters up would work.

HUMPHRIES

Doc, focus. I need to radio the detail.

(to TECHNICIAN)

Wait... You're still using Daylight Savings Time? It's been almost twenty years since --

The Technician taps a sequence of commands into a panel on her clean-room suit's forearm, takes off her helmet revealing herself as the West-Indian, and plops it on Humphries' head.

HUMPHRIES (V.O.)

(over radio)

Doc Johnson, spin up your rings.

Humphries spikes the helmet on the floor with a primal yell.

HUMPHRIES

No more half-measures! I am not letting a damned Spring Forward kill my king. Twenty-three hours back, and I'll weaken the fence where the ambush happens.

DR. JOHNSON

Twenty-three hours? That could change something centuries ago.



HUMPHRIES

We already had this conversation.  
We tried it your way, now my way.

A white bubble forms around Humphries.

DR. JOHNSON

God save the King, but we may never  
know what else changed.

**EXT. MOON'S SURFACE**

Earth hangs serenely in the background. In the foreground,  
the flag of Great Britain planted in the regolith.

A ripple emanates from a point on the Earth, sweeps the  
entire frame, changing the flag to the United States'.

FADE OUT.