

UNFORESEEN CHANGES

Written by

Loyal Subject

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP COMPLEX - DAY

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

SUPER: Ben Navis Spacetime Observatory, Scotland, United Kingdom

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.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
(female, British accent)
Some scientific discoveries are so brilliant, so profound, that they must be seen to be believed.

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.

The Bentley's driver, HUMPHRIES (33), exits, hurries around to open the rear door for KING EDWARD IX (58). Edward strides to the door in a long coat, followed by Humphries.

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

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edward and Humphries, now in business attire, follow Dr. Johnson down a brightly lit passage.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
This was one such discovery, and His Majesty King Edward the Ninth came to see it for himself.

At the end, Dr. Johnson keypads 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 10m 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've prepared everything right here.

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

INSERT: HOLOGRAM

Dr. Johnson and all of the Technicians stand 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. An male East-Indian Technician waves a Geiger counter over the arrivals.

EDWARD (O.S.)

So this is a recording of the 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. From eighteen minutes in the future.

RETURN TO SCENE

The holograph 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

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

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

DR. JOHNSON

Or it's an alternate timeline. We haven't sorted that bit out yet. 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 drives and maintains respectful eye contact with the King via the rear-view mirror.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

King Edward believed in keeping the British Empire's enemies at bay through technological superiority.

HUMPHRIES

I hear Spain's having trouble with Texas and California again. At the same time, this time around.

Edward peeks at the escort vehicles in front and behind.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And to maintain that superiority,
he was willing to take risks.

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.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But he was not the only one willing
to take risks.

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.

System failure warnings flash all over the dashboard 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. American Separatists.

EDWARD

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

The enemy gunfire converges on the right rear window, but the
occupants seem unconcerned. Humphries pulls out a pistol,
then lugs out a toolbox, hands it back to the King.

Edward rummages through the toolbox, indifferent to the
Americans being slaughtered outside. He 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, Your Majesty.
For amputations in dire accidents.

Edward replaces the saw, sees cracks form in the window.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Yankees HAD seen what happened
in India, and they learned how much
firepower they needed to bring.

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?

INT. SPACETIME OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Humphries 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

I can't imagine the risks, but I
can't imagine not trying, either.
God save the King.

A white bubble forms around Humphries.

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'.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

We may never know what else
changed.

FADE OUT.