

TIMES HAVE CHANGED

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MOTEL HELLO
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“You’ve certainly picked an interesting neighborhood,” Oscar says, eyebrow cocked, as he peers out the window. “Whatever possessed you to time-travel?”

“Hey, I was following this girl who put something in my drink!” Jason pauses as Oscar’s other eyebrow raises and their gazes meet. “No, Oscar, I meant that she put something in my drink that caused it to spell out, *‘Tell Oscar someone needs his help in the future.’ Really.* That’s just too damn strange to make up, don’t you think?”

“So she gets up to leave,” Oscar sighs, “and you decide to follow her back to the future—minus the DeLorean?” Jason’s blank stare prompts Oscar to shake his head and continue: “Why didn’t you call for backup—especially from Max, whose area of expertise this is? Haven’t you learned *anything* from his briefings on the uncertainty of temporal mechanics?”

A knock at the door interrupts the debate. Jason reaches the peephole before Oscar can restrain him. In the fish-eye lens, he sees a big buzz-cut African-American gentleman in a black duster—yes, in Vegas in July!—and black shades. Standing next to him is the cat-suited redhead from The Mausoleum nightclub in 2003.

Jason leaps back in surprise and bewilderment.

“It’s her!” he blurts out. “How the hell did she find us?”

Oscar, now standing on the balls of his feet and ready for action, says, “That didn’t sound like a girl knocking. Unless she has your upper-body strength.”

“Some big black guy is with her. What the hell do we do?”

Before Oscar can answer, a female voice calls out, “Can you please open the door? We can’t be out here all night, and the cops are on their way here.”

At that moment, the computer terminal on the end table springs to life, displaying the logo of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police and blaring out a stern announcement voiced over a rhythmic klaxon.

“This is a Police Special Patrol!! Please remain in your rooms and do not interfere with routine police business!! Repeat—this is a Police Special Patrol!! Do not interfere, do not panic!! Remain calm and remain in your rooms until the police have left the premises!!”

At the end of the announcement, the terminal goes dark and the locks on the door to the room click with seeming finality.

Jason and Oscar hear a man and a woman curse out loud from the other side of the door.

TO BE CONTNUED