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The lecture hall was pleasantly warm. Behind professor Thaddeus Fitch, busily writing on the chalkboard, pencils scratched earnestly in spiral notebooks, fluorescent lights hummed, feet shuffled. A Beach Boys tune wafted in through open windows from the quad.

“And so,” he continued, “travel backwards in time would violate causality, and hence appears to be impossible.” He turned to face the class. “The problem is most commonly illustrated with the ‘Grandfather Paradox.’

“Imagine that I had the technology with which to visit my grandfather in his youth. Once there, what is to stop me from killing him before he'd had the opportunity to reproduce? But if I did succeed, who was it who had traveled backward...”

A collective gasp interrupted his lecture. As Thaddeus realized that the students were all staring at his chest, he glanced downward to see a red dot glowing on his white shirt. The professor next noticed, in the back row of the hall, a young man who seemed to be aiming some sort of pistol at him. The would-be sniper's hand seemed to shake in unison with the wobbling of the red spot.

The young man was not enrolled in the Introduction to Physics class, yet he looked somehow familiar to Thaddeus. Perhaps it was the angle at which he cocked his head, or the shock of bright red hair, or the piercing green eyes. In a rush of *presque vu*, Thaddeus recognized a version of himself.

The modernistic handgun with its (laser?) sight, the anachronistic clothes, the look of fanaticism ... it suddenly all clicked. "My grandson, I presume."

His visitor nodded.

"It can't be done. *Something* must cause such an attempt to fail." His spine tingling despite his heartfelt conviction, Thaddeus's eyes resumed their standard lecture-hall sweep. "Class, as I was saying..."

Two loud shots rang out almost as one. The noises released the students from their paralyzed shock. As they wrestled his assailant to the floor, Thaddeus realized that the first shot had been the backfire of a passing vehicle, and that the unexpected noise had startled his grandson enough to throw off his aim. A hole in the chalkboard showed that causality had needed only inches of deviation to protect itself.

A soft "pop" emerged from the pile-up of students who had tackled the time traveler. The pile collapsed, as if its central support had vanished. As confused students gradually untangled themselves, it became clear that Thaddeus' grandson had, in fact, disappeared.

\* \* \* \*

Thaddeus' early afternoon lecture started little different from his morning session. The hall was perhaps slightly warmer; the music from the quad was now by the Everly Brothers. The fluorescent hum was occasionally submerged by the buzz of students discussing the morning's excitement.

"Imagine that I had the technology with which to visit my grandfather in his youth. Once there, what is to stop me from killing him before he'd had the opportunity to reproduce? But if I did succeed, who was it who had traveled backward..."

A large pigeon chose that moment to fly through an open window into the hall. Its stately path abruptly veered downward, and it thumped, flapping feebly, to the auditorium floor. Thaddeus had just noticed what appeared to be the handle of large throwing knife when a mob of enraged students rushed the returned, red-haired attacker.

Once more, the time traveler disappeared from the pile of bodies to the accompaniment of a pop.

\* \* \* \*

Word of mouth had filled Thaddeus' third lecture of the day to overflowing. The crowd warmed the hall to an uncomfortable degree; expectant muttering masked any music that might have been playing on the quad.

"Imagine that I had the technology with which to visit my grandfather in his youth. Once there, what is to stop me from killing him before he'd had the opportunity to reproduce? But if I did succeed, who was it who had traveled backward..."

Thaddeus' now all too familiar look-alike appeared in the aisle behind the last row of lecture seats. Moments later, an ovoid object came hurtling towards the professor.

Mid arc, the grenade disappeared with a pop. His grandson vanished with a second pop.

\* \* \* \*

Order eventually returned to the lecture hall. Students took their seats. All eyes turned questioningly to the professor.

“I believe that we've seen the last of our troublesome visitor,” said Thaddeus.

He paused. He shrugged. He smiled.

“I've decided that I'll never have children.”

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