

L'Esprit de l'Escalier

Written by

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INT. HOME SCIENCE LAB/BASEMENT

The dimly lit room is littered with equation covered blackboards and loose sheets of paper scribbled with diagrams.

MAXWELL CLERK (50s, focused, not disheveled exactly, maybe partially sheveled) leads three other people into the basement; ROTHCHILD (50s, bearded, tuxedoed); SAMANTHA (40s no nonsense); and KRAMER (60s, German, tweed).

ROTHCHILD

This had better be good Maxwell, I left my godson's engagement party or whatever it was.

Maxwell stands before them next to a large object covered in a sheet.

MAXWELL

Gentlemen. Lady. I have solved the mystery of time travel!

He pulls the sheet off a god damned TIME MACHINE! It is a kind of platform with a pedestal. Like a homemade treadmill.

KRAMER

Unmöglich!

ROTHCHILD

You? Impossible!

Maxwell turns a blackboard over revealing a complex equation. The three scientists study it for a moment.

SAMANTHA

He's jolly well done it.

ROTHCHILD

By jove!

While they are reading the blackboard Maxwell jumps into the machine and puts on a strange looking helmet.

SAMANTHA

Wait! It needs to be tested!

MAXWELL

Sorry folks. I simply can't wait any longer!

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CONTINUED:

Maxwell punches a few buttons on the little screen. The machine starts flashing its lights and making a whirring popping sound.

Everyone tries to shout over each other.

SAMANTHA

Be safe! And I know it's tempting but don't kill Hitler!

KRAMER

Bring something back! A newspaper!

ROTHCHILD

It's never going to work!

SAMANTHA

-and be careful of paradoxes. No one wants the universe to implode!

With a huge flash of light Maxwell disappears leaving a whisp of smoke and one assumes the smell of burning hair.

KRAMER

Vell, where did he go?

Samantha approaches the machine and looks at the screen.

SAMANTHA

... Cambridge. December 31st, 1981.

They look at each other. Puzzled.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALL PARTY - NIGHT

Cambridge 1981. There is a New Years Eve party in progress and there are DOZENS OF PARTYGOERS milling about, drinking, listening to terrible Eighties music.

In one corner is YOUNG MAXWELL (20s, wearing whatever young people wore then. A turtleneck or something) talking to YOUNG ROTHCHILD (also 20s, clearly richer than Maxwell). They are surrounded by PEERS.

YOUNG ROTHCHILD

So Maxwell, I read your paper on orbital mathematics. I liked it, you know I had a lot of the same theories.

YOUNG MAXWELL

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG ROTHCHILD

Yes. When I was 15!

Everyone laughs. Young Maxwell is incredibly embarrassed. He would disappear into his turtleneck if he could. He stammers, trying to think of a reply.

YOUNG ROTHCHILD (cont'd)

What's that, Maxwell?

Rothchild laughs and turns away, basking in his victory.

Maxwell (old Maxwell) emerges from the crowd and subtly hands Young Maxwell a small slip of paper. Puzzled, he reads from it.

YOUNG MAXWELL

"Well Rothchild, I wish I had known you, when you were at your prime."

The crowd erupts into obnoxious laughter. Rothchild looks sheepishly about at his peers.

(OLD) MAXWELL

Worth it!

He holds his hand up for young Maxwell to hi-five. Young Maxwell slaps old Maxwell's hand.

At the moment they connect the universe implodes.