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The Time Machine

An Alien Voices Production

A Radio Play

Adapted by
JOHN de LANCIE

From a script by
NAT SEGALOFF

Original story by
H.G. WELLS



Dramatic Publishing

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Radio Play Manuscript)

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The Time Machine

A Radio Play

For a flexible cast

(playing multiple roles, if desired)

VOICES (in order of speaking)

Filby

John

Samuel

Colin

James

Mrs. Watchett

Meendo

Eloi #1

Weena

Recording #1, #2, #3

The Time Machine

Adapted by John de Lancie
From a Script by Nat Segaloff
An Alien Voices Production
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FILBY (NARRATION)

My name is Filby...and perhaps that is all you need to know about me – except that I speak the truth. Three years ago something quite extraordinary happened...it was... how shall I put it...a...lesson about time. Yes, time...a most interesting and, for some, a very difficult concept. Imagine, if you will, that in the time it takes me to finish this sentence...we have moved into the future! And the words I have only just spoken are, already, in the past!

SOUND: The clattering of dishes and silverware fades up.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let my story be told as it happened...

VICTORIAN HOUSE – DINING ROOM

1

SOUND: A heated conversation has been going on.

SOUND: Occasional dinner sounds; silverware, wine pouring, etc.

JOHN

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! All I'm asking you to do is question what you were taught in school. If you will follow me carefully you'll see that every geometry lesson was wrong.

SOUND: General gafuffa.

SAMUEL

Oh, come now!...

COLIN

...the very idea...

JAMES
I beg your pardon, John!

FILBY
...How can you say such
a thing...

JOHN
Hear me out, Filby! Let me explain.

SAMUEL
We're waiting.

ALL
Yes! Yes!

JOHN
It's nearly 1900. A new century!

SAMUEL
And...?

JOHN
And...we're on the brink of an age of
science. We can't afford to look at
this new world in the old way.

COLIN
Why not? Mankind has been well served
for thousands of years, if you ask me!

JAMES
We're not asking you!

JOHN
(getting hold of the
conversation again)
A new age demands new thinking. And
what better place to start than with
the physical nature of reality.

SAMUEL
Now we're back to something I
understand!

JOHN
Look at this. What am I holding?

SAMUEL

A cube...plain to see.

JOHN

Yes, a cube...and I'll place it on this table.

SOUND: Object being set upon a table.

It has three dimensions: height, width and depth. But suppose we subtract one – say, depth. Does the cube still exist?

FILBY

No – if it only has two dimensions, it would be a square.

JOHN

Right, Filby. Take away a dimension and the cube is gone.

SAMUEL

(grumbles)

Humph! So?

JOHN

(ignoring Samuel)

Now I want you to add a dimension.

SAMUEL

Add a dimension?!

JOHN

Yes, add a dimension! I put it to you, gentlemen, that an object exists in four directions, not just three. It exists in duration: in other words, Time. Is that clear?

JAMES

(unsure but lying)

Very clear, John – I think.

SAMUEL

Nonsense! It's not clear at all! I can see if an object is tall, or wide, or deep. But as for its existence in time?

SOUND: Stiff paper – card stock.

JOHN

Always being practical, aren't you, Samuel? Well, I can be practical, too. Here are photographs of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at twenty-three, and so on. These are examples of his travel through time. You look skeptical, Colin.

COLIN

A man ages automatically, John. One travels through time regardless!

JAMES

Aging!

JOHN

Yes, but what if we could move faster or slower – forward or backward in time?

(Beat)

I want to show you something.

SOUND: Box placed on table, locks being opened, and a small, tinkling machine taken out.

SOUND: Presence of a den or study; clocks ticking softly in b.g.

This is my miniature prototype, gentlemen, for a machine that travels through time.

SOUND: Everybody “oohs” and “ahs.”

JAMES

It's beautifully made. It's like a toy.

JOHN

This is no toy, James. It took two years for me to make.

SAMUEL

Two years on – that?

JOHN

That's right, Samuel. But what is time, eh?

SAMUEL

(to Filby)

You can never tell when he's joking.

JOHN

If I press this tiny lever, I send the machine gliding into the future. Pull it back, and it goes into the past. This seat is where the Time Traveler will sit. Have a good look at it, gentlemen. Look at the table. Check for trapdoors and mirrors. Satisfy yourselves that there is no trickery. I don't want to waste this model and then have you tell me I'm a charlatan.

SOUND: General sounds of approval. Tapping of table, ad lib "solid," "no mirrors," etc.

Now, Samuel, since you're the most skeptical, lend me your hand.

SAMUEL

Whatever for?

JOHN

You shall press the ivory lever that launches my machine on its maiden journey through time. Go on, Samuel, press it.

(Beat)

Go on!

SAMUEL

Oh, very well.

SOUND: The machine begins to whirl. The sound increases in frequency until it disappears.

What's it doing?

JAMES

— It's glimmering—

FILBY

— it's growing dim—

COLIN

— but it's not moving —

JAMES

— it's blurry, it's getting blurry.

COLIN

— it's gone!

FILBY

Yes! It's gone!!!

SAMUEL

What have you done with it?
Where is it, John?

COLIN

Where did it go?

FILBY

Good heavens!

JOHN

(self-satisfied chuckle)

COLIN

Come, John, where is it?

JOHN

Gone in time, Colin. And yet right here.

COLIN

Do you mean to say, that machine has — traveled into the past?

JOHN

I doubt the past.

COLIN

Why?

JAMES

(figuring it out)

Because – if it traveled into the past, then it would already have been on this table...when we arrived at John's house tonight.

JOHN

That's right, James. Have I made you a believer?

JAMES

If seeing is believing, you have!

SAMUEL

It will take more than a magician's trick to convince me.

JOHN

You inspected the table, Samuel.

SAMUEL

You've invented some new method, is all.

JOHN

I've invented something new all right. Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?

SOUND: More muttering of general disbelief.

FILBY

What are you saying, John? Have you built more of these toys?

JOHN

Not toys, Filby. A real one.

COLIN

It isn't possible!

JOHN

It is and if you'll follow me, I'll show you.

SAMUEL

Of all the unbelievable...

JOHN

(interrupting)

Follow me!

Music: Sneaks in.

FILBY (N)

And for the first time ever John led us into his laboratory. There we beheld, positioned in the middle of the room, a larger version of the mechanism – alone and imposing. Part nickel, part ivory, part rock crystal ...a brass rail surrounded the contraption. In the flickering lamp light the machine appeared to shimmer.

LABORATORY – NIGHT

2

JAMES

You are serious!

JOHN

I was never more serious in my life, James! With this machine I intend to explore time!

MUSIC: Sting.

FOYER – NIGHT – ONE WEEK LATER

3

FILBY (N)

On the following Thursday we again gathered at our eccentric friend's
(MORE)

home for supper. But instead of being greeted by our host, it was Mrs. Watchett, the housekeeper, who...

SOUND: Doorbell. Presence of the room with a clock chiming seven. Door opening.

MRS. WATCHETT

Right on time as always, gentlemen.
Please come in.

SOUND: The four men enter. General greetings, etc.

I have a letter for you, courtesy of himself.

FILBY

And where is "Himself" tonight, Mrs. Watchett?

MRS. WATCHETT

If his letter doesn't tell you, I'm sure I have no idea.

FILBY

Really!

MRS. WATCHETT

(pointedly)

His instructions to me were to have food on the table at seven, regardless.

COLIN

Then I suggest we move to the dining table and not disappoint him.

JAMES

Open the letter, Filby!

FILBY

Oh, yes of course, the letter!

SOUND: Envelope being torn open, a sheet of paper being taken out and unfolded.

FILBY (cont'd)
It's from John, all right.

COLIN
Well, we assumed as much. Read it. Out loud!

FILBY
(mumbling as he reads)
It just says that he may be delayed.

SAMUEL
Let me see that.

SOUND: Samuel grabs the paper out of Filby's hand.

(Reading)
"Dear friends, I may be delayed this evening but have instructed Mrs. Watchett to feed you promptly at seven o'clock. Do not wait for me. I shall arrive in good time."
(End reading)
Well, what do you make of that?

COLIN
Damnedest thing!

JAMES
Oh, let's eat!

SOUND: A clock ticking, then chiming eight. Dinner sounds bleed into the narration.

VICTORIAN HOUSE – DINING ROOM

4

FILBY (N)
Mrs. Watchett's dinner was, even by her own high standards, superb. What a pity our host wasn't there to enjoy it. Strange, but as tight-knit a group of friends as we were, John's absence was sorely missed – it was as though we required his company in order to function. And then...