



Back To The Future – Draft 1980 - Novelle

Chapter One

The credits began to roll across the TV screen for the movie *Close Encounters* as the 3/4-inch cassette finished copying over to Beta and VHS. Seventeen-year-old Marty McFly looked up from his issue of *Rolling Stone*, where he was checking out an ad for a guitar amp. Maybe after a few more pirated tapes he would have enough money to buy it.

Marty set the magazine down and stopped the tapes, rewound them, then took a pen and carefully wrote, "Close Encounters, Original Edition" on the labels. He placed the master tape in a drawer. Other titles of bootlegged videotapes jumped out at him as he did so: *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Star Crazy*, and *Superman II*.

Marty turned off the video equipment and picked up his schoolbooks, along with the other two videocassettes. He walked into another room connected to the video lab. This one was much larger, filled with workbenches covered with electronics, chemical equipment, and dust.

"Professor Brown!" Marty called to the older man at the other end of the lab. "It's almost eight thirty -- I'm outta here!"

"Shhhhhhhh!" Professor Emmett Brown hissed, his white head bent over what looked to Marty like a solar cell. At 65, he was considered the town eccentric, an inventor who's inventions didn't always work the way they were supposed to. Professor Brown was tall - - though his posture had grown more hunched with age -- and had a mane of shaggy white hair that was almost always unruly and uncombed. At the moment, the Professor was trying to get the cell positioned under the skylight in a certain way, maybe to catch the sunlight. Marty stepped closer to him, curious on what the project was.

Whatever he was working on it looked old, maybe 30 years. The Professor poured some kind of chemical solution into a compartment in the cell and plugged a patch cord from it into a Voltmeter. A light bulb on the panel glowed dimly and the meter needles moved slightly.

"Blast it!" Professor Brown exclaimed. "Twenty four measly volts!" He threw a flask across the room in his frustration, shattering it against the wall. Marty jumped back, startled.

"The power of a million hydrogen bombs," the Professor ranted, pointing to the sun that shone down through the skylight, then to his experiment, "and we get twenty four measly volts. It's not fair! I've been working on this power converter since 1949, and you'd think in all that time, I could find the right chemicals that would efficiently convert radiation into electric energy! But no! Thirty three years of dedication and research, and all I've got to show for it is a bootleg video operation!"

"That reminds me," Marty began, "if we could scrape up enough for a 35 film chain, I've got a connection with a projectionist in a first run house -- we could be sellin' new movies on the street before they're even in the theater."

"A 35mm film chain...." Professor Brown mused. "I'll see what I can do...." He turned his attention back to his power converter.

Marty crossed the room, heading for the front door. He paused at the door next to it, the one with five locks on it, and tried the knob. It was still locked. *Big surprise*, he thought with some disappointment.

"Won't give up, will you, Marty?" Professor Brown asked without turning around.

Marty grinned. "One of these days you're gonna leave this door open and I'll find out what's in there."

Professor Brown glanced at him. "Did you ever consider that some doors are locked for a reason?"

"Nope. The way I figure it, doors are made to be opened. See you after school."

"Oh -- Marty -- what time did you say it was?" Professor Brown asked.

Marty stopped in his tracks, a few steps away from the stairs.

"Eight thirty."

"AM or PM?"

Marty rolled his eyes. "Pro, the sun's out!"

"Oh, right, right," the Professor said, glancing up at the skylights.

"Jeez," Marty continued, "for a guy with a ton of clocks, you sure don't pay much attention to time."

Professor Brown looked quickly at all the synchronized clocks around the room. "On the contrary," he said, standing up and walking toward Marty. "I may not pay much attention to the measurement of time, but I'm very aware of Time itself. I believe time to be its own dimension...to be controlled...to be contained...."

Marty ran down the stairs, having had enough of the Professor's weird ramblings. "Catch you later!" he called over his shoulder.

Professor Brown continued to speak, to the empty room walking to the locked door. "...To be traveled through," he finished softly. He reached into his lab coat pocket and pulled out some keys. One-by-one, the Professor unlocked the locks on the door. Finally, he opened it and walked inside.

A tangle of equipment was in the center of the room with a number of lenses at the end of the maze. It resembled nothing so much as a large ray gun or laser. Professor Brown stood back and admired it. "If only I could harness enough power!" he said wistfully.

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Marty opened the door at the end of the stairs and stepped out on the street before the Orpheum Theater. The place had been abandon years before, it's windows boarded over. The marquee still spelled out the last movie that had played there, *Assembly of Christ*. Professor Brown resided on the third floor of the structure, the only person who used the premises now.

Marty walked down the street, headed for Wilson's Cafe. Parked a hundred feet down the street was a black van. The sign on it read "N.R.C." and two men were carefully putting samples of water from a gutter into little test tubes. Marty glanced at them for a moment, somewhat curious. They ignored him. He reached the cafe and went inside.

The owner, Dick Wilson, was sitting behind the counter. Only thirty-five, he already had lost more hair than remained on his head. Even though he was a good hundred pounds overweight, he was eating a Babe Ruth candy bar while reading a newspaper.

"Morning, Dick," Marty said, taking a seat at the counter.

Dick set the candy bar down. "Marty. What's for breakfast?"

"Gimme some chili, fries, and a Tab," he said, glancing down at the newspaper lying on the counter.

"Hot tip," Dick explained as he brought Marty his drink. "Rubber Biscuit in the third race at Arlington."

Marty nodded. "Dick, what's with those guys out there in the gutter?" he asked, tilting his head towards the window.

Dick squinted out the window and shrugged. "Third time they've been out there this week."

Marty watched them for a moment, loading up the water samples in the van. "What's N.R.C.?"

Dick shrugged again. "I don't know. National Cash Register?"

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Later that afternoon, Marty stared at the textbook page in his hand. It showed a photo of a mushroom cloud with the words, "Last above ground atomic test, March 18, 1952, Atkins, Nevada." He took his pen and wrote the letters "M.M + S.P." on the cloud and drew an arrow through it, like a valentine. He added at the bottom, "How about the dance Saturday? We'll have a BLAST!"

In the background his science teacher, Mr. Arky, droned on with the day's lecture. "There were only three above ground Atomic Tests in the United States, so the government took every opportunity to study the effects of radiation. Actual single family tract homes were constructed on the test site, totally furnished with refrigerators, TV's, furniture...."

What a waste of perfectly good stuff, Marty thought.

"...Anything you could find in a typical home," Mr. Arky continued, "just so scientists could learn what kind of damage an atomic bomb would do to a typical town. They even put mannequins in the houses, just like in auto crash tests."

Marty tore the page with the picture and note out of his book. He turned to look at Suzy Parker, the pretty alburn-haired girl across the aisle and a seat behind him. He quickly folded the page and winked at her before tossing it deftly on her desk. The teacher didn't notice.

"But the fact remains that today, thirty years after those early nuclear tests, the threat of nuclear annihilation is as great as it ever was. Certainly, nuclear annihilation is something you all must have thought about. Any questions, comments, ideas?"

No, Marty thought, glancing around. Everyone in the class apparently agreed with him.

"Anyone?" Mr. Arky asked. "I'm talking about the complete and total destruction of the entire world. Doesn't anybody have *anything* to say about it?"

No one raised a hand. Mr. Arky's face began to turn red. "How about you, Mr. Jackson?" he asked, raising his voice. "Would you like to share some of your wisdom with the class?"

Jackson didn't look up from the textbook, ignoring the teacher. Marty felt something brush against his foot and looked down to see the folded note that he had given Suzy on the floor. He leaned over and scooped it off the floor. Mr. Arky continued to ask for volunteers.

"Mr. Gomez? Any thoughts? Miss Parker? Mr. Crump, any reaction?"

Marty unfolded the note and looked at it. Beside the cloud the words, "That's sick!" had been written in loopy cursive. Marty turned the page over. On the back was the word, "Yes." He smiled, then was rudely snapped out of his thoughts by the science teacher's irritating voice.

"How about you, Mr. McFly?" Arky asked, strolling over to his desk. Marty quickly crumpled the note and shoved it in his pocket before the teacher could see it. He stared at his graffitied desk top, wishing Mr. Arky would go away. "Did you even hear the question, Mr. McFly?" the teacher demanded, glowering at Marty.

Marty looked up, facing the inevitable. He might as well give his honest opinion. "Yeah," he answered. "You want to know what I think about atomic bombs. Well, I'd kind of like to see one."

Mr. Arky leaned forward so his face was a few inches from Marty's. "You'd like to see a nuclear holocaust?" he asked, his voice rising a few octaves.

"Not a holocaust --" Marty began, realizing his mistake.

Mr. Arky interrupted him. "Mr. McFly here wants to nuke it all, just so he can see it!" the teacher boomed out to the class. A couple students started to laugh.

Marty sat up straighter, glared at the teacher. "You know damn well that's not what I meant."

Mr. Arky ignored him. "All I can say is, that's one helluva attitude, Mr. McFly. 'Let's explode a hundred megaton Geothermal nuclear device, just to see it.' "

Marty felt his face turn red with anger and embarrassment. "Yeah, explode it up you ass," he muttered under his breath.

"Unfortunately," Mr. Arky continued, a malicious smile on his face, "the way things are going, you may get your wish. You may see the entire annihilation of the world. If not, you'll certainly see the destruction of all our natural resources. We can already see the air we breathe, not to mention the pollution in our rivers and lakes. We'll see all of our oil reserves depleted, in fact, all of our energy sources. Yes, you people have a lot to look forward to -- a lot to see."

"Hey, Mr. Arky, gimme a break!" Marty exclaimed, rolling his eyes. "I'm seventeen years old! I'm not responsible for all these problems!"

The anger in Mr. Arky's face suddenly vanished. He sighed, a sound of defeat. "No, of course you're not. Not for the problems, no. But for the solutions...yes."

The bell rang, ending the school day. Everyone leaped out of their desks and rushed for the door. "See you tomorrow," the teacher added.

Ten minutes later, Marty was outside at the front of school, heading for a group of his friends, who were already giving other students videotapes in return for cash.

"Hey Marty," Rafe Newton called to him, heading his way. "Sport me fifty 'til the weekend, would ya? I'm down to my last twenty."

Marty shook his head. "Can't man. I'm savin' up for that new amp."

"Well, when you're a big rock star, how about loanin' me a grand?"

"You got it!" Marty grinned. He checked his watch. "I gotta go."

Donaldson, one of his friends, stood next to him. He looked at Marty's watch. "Hey man, what happened to your digital quartz?" he asked.

"In the shop," Marty explained. "So I'm sporting this antique." He lifted up his left hand with the watch on it. "Check out this wind-up action," he added, pointing to the gold timepiece. Donaldson looked at it with minor interest as the both of them went down the front steps of the school.

"Hey, you wanna come over?" Donaldson asked when they were at the bottom of the steps. "Get high?"

"Maybe tomorrow. I gotta dupe some more tapes."

Donaldson snapped his fingers. "Hey, that reminds me -- my brother's gettin' married next week and I'm throwin' a party for him. Can you provide some entertainment?"

Marty nodded, having the perfect thing in mind. "Yeah, I can run something off this afternoon," he promised.

Chapter Two

The man and woman were really going at it now, breathing hard and moaning. Typical sounds of sex. Marty watched for a moment, then shook his head and turned away from the porno video he was copying for his friend. Twisting the volume down as the couple started to get really noisy, he fished some cash out of his pocket and placed it in the cigar box where he was storing all the money he was saving to use for that new amp. He got up from his chair and walked out of the room into Professor Brown's lab.

The Professor was lying on his cot, asleep, with a heavy blanket covering him. Marty walked quietly over to the refrigerator and opened it, taking out a bottle of Coke. As he was pulling the soft drink out, his hand accidentally bumped against an orange lying beside it. Before he had a chance to catch it, it bounced out of the fridge and rolled across the floor, vanishing under the cot.

Marty set down the Coke on top of the fridge and bent down to pick the orange up. He pushed aside the blanket and saw a crate, purple radioactive emblems on it. Marty frowned as he read the labels. *Extreme Danger! Radioactive Plutonium! Authorized Personal Only! Do Not Handle Without Radiation Suit.* Near the bottom were the words, "Property of San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant, San Onofre, California."

Right next to the word "California" was the orange. Taking a deep breath, Marty stood up and kicked the orange out from under the cot with his right foot. He slowly backed away, his eyes on the crate, before picking the orange up and tossing it into the trash can next to the refrigerator. Marty glanced at the Professor, relieved to see that he hadn't woken up.

Trying to forget what he had seen, Marty picked the Coke bottle up and twisted the cap off, taking a quick swig from it before walking over to a cage with an organ-grinder monkey in it.

"Hey, Shemp," he called softly. "How ya doin'?"

The monkey gazed back at him with dark eyes. Marty unlatched the cage door and let the animal out. Shemp quickly climbed up his arm and sat on his shoulder. Marty crossed the room, over to the table where the power converter was still set up, resting on some old blueprints. He leaned over for a closer look at those.

The top blueprint was for something called, "Photo-Electric Chemical Power Converter." The sketch on the blueprint matched the power converter that the Professor had been messing with earlier. Marty flipped that blueprint back to look at the others one-by-one. "15 Tube Mechanical Home Butler." It looked like some kind of robot. "Aero-Mobile," a weird-looking flying car. And a "Write-O-Matic," which looked like a pen with a suction cup at the end of an attached wire.

Marty let the blueprints flip back and stared at the power onverter. The last few rays of the afternoon sunlight filtered through the skylight and shone down on the photo-cell. Marty looked closer and noticed a funnel shaped thingy jutting out of the chemical chamber. He looked at it for a moment, temptation building, then reached over and poured some of the Coke in the funnel.

He hadn't even pulled his arm back when a bright spark shot out of the opposite end of the device, making a loud cracking noise. Marty jumped several feet away, his heart pounding, almost dropping the bottle in his hand.

"What happened?!" he heard Professor Brown demand, jumping out of his bed and running over to the table where the power converter sat.

"Well, I'm not sure exactly -- I accidentally spilled some Coke in here," Marty said, stretching the truth a little. He pointed to the funnel. "Just a drop!"

The Professor quickly hooked up the voltmeter and light bulb to the converter. "Give me that!" he added, snatching the bottle from Marty's hands. He poured some more of the drink into the funnel. The bulb started glowing brightly and the meter jumped. The whole thing started to make a humming noise. Professor Brown dumped in more Coke. The light grew even brighter, then suddenly exploded!

Marty flinched, but didn't turn away. He was dying to know what that thing was supposed to be doing. He wanted to know almost as bad as he wanted to get into that locked room several feet away. The voltmeters needle raised off the scale as the power converter began to vibrate, so violently that it fell off the table!

The Professor stared at the floor where the converter lay, his hands starting to tremble. He had a strange look on his face, disbelief mixed with excitement. He looked carefully at the Coke bottle.

"What's in this stuff?"

Marty gave a shrug, not understanding why Professor Brown wanted to know. "Nobody knows the formula for Coca-Cola. It's the most closely guarded secret in the world!"

The Professor was silent for a moment, his gaze far away. He finally picked the power converter up and walked across the room, taking out a key ring from his pocket. "I'll see you tomorrow," he said as he began to unlock the forbidden door. Before Marty could ask him any questions, the Professor opened the door and shut it firmly behind him. Marty heard the sound of locks clicking into place, then all was silent.

That evening, wearing headphones plugged into his turntable, Marty walked around his bedroom, following the music on his own electric guitar. Posters of rock stars covered the surrounding walls. He was trying to find the drill he had been using earlier, moving the miscellaneous junk that covered his furniture and floor with the top of the guitar's neck. Under the Rolling Stone on the dresser were some tools -- but not the drill. A couple issues of Heavy Metal and the Lampoon hid some homework on the desk he had forgotten to turn in.

The record ended and Marty took the headphones off. "Who stole my drill?" he yelled out the door.

"Dinner's ready!" his mom answered.

With a sigh, Marty set his guitar down and went downstairs. He stopped in the living room on the way to the kitchen. His father, George McFly, was sitting on the couch and watching a boxing match on the TV.

"Anybody seen the drill?" Marty asked. Dad continued to stare at the TV, ignoring or not hearing the question. Eileen McFly looked into the living room from the kitchen.

"I've been calling you for five minutes!" she said to Marty. "Didn't you hear me?"

"I was practicing," Marty said with a shrug. "I've got an audition next week -- I gotta practice. How am I gonna get famous if I don't practice?"

Mom shook her head. Once, a long time ago, she had been quite attractive. Now, at the age of 47, it was easy to see the toll age had taken. Her brown hair was streaked with grey and her face was puffy, lined with wrinkles. Both of Marty's parents hadn't aged that gracefully. "You won't get famous if you don't eat, either," she said, ducking back into the kitchen.

Marty turned back to his dad. "Dad, you seen the drill?"

"What drill?" his father finally said.

"The drill!" Marty repeated, exasperated. "The power drill I bought you for Christmas. I was using it last night."

Dad didn't move his gaze from the TV. "It'll turn up."

Marty shook his head and went into the kitchen, sitting down as his mother put the food on the table. She leaned back into the living room. "George, dinner's ready!" she called.

Marty's father continued to stare at the TV, fully absorbed in the boxing match. "Coming, Eileen," he said, making no move to get up.

"Now, George," Mom insisted. "Dinner's ready now."

"Coming, Eileen," Dad repeated. A moment later a commercial came on the TV and George McFly finally got up and started to roll the TV on its stand to the dining room.

"How was school today?" Marty's mom asked him.

"Fine," he answered automatically.

"Learn anything?"

"Oh yeah."

Mom smiled. "That's good."

His dad finished adjusting the TV and sat down. "How was school today?" he asked Marty, picking up a fork and starting to eat.

Hadn't he just done this? "Fine," Marty said.

"Learn anything?"

"Oh yeah."

"Good."

Dad turned his eyes back to the TV as the match resumed. Marty looked down at the newspaper, examining the sports scores, and his mom stared off into space. There was complete silence, during which the sportscaster did his blow-by-blow on the TV.

Eventually Mom spoke, during another commercial break. "By the way, that reminds me," she said, gesturing to the TV's burger ad. "Saturday night we're taking Grandma Stella out for Chinese food."

"Eileen, Chinese food again?" Dad groaned.

Mom frowned. "George, if you don't want Chinese food, pick a place you want to go and make a reservation."

"That means he'll have to pick up the phone, Ma," Marty interjected. As expected, his dad backed down.

"No, Chinese food is fine."

"Saturday night's the 'Springtime in Paris' dance," Marty added. "I'm taking Suzy Parker."

His mother looked thoughtful. "The 'Springtime in Paris' dance. You hear that, George? They're still having the 'Springtime in Paris' dance."

"That was our first date," she explained to Marty. "Remember George? I remember everything about that night. Remember the first time we kissed? It was during the last dance. They were playing that Eddie Fisher song, 'Turn Back the Hands of Time'. I even remember how you asked me out. We were in the cafeteria. You were so scared, you spilled your creamed corn."

Dad continued to look at the TV, not showing any sign of hearing his wife. "And I probably won't be here when you wake up Sunday morning," Marty continued. "Suzy and I are gonna go down to the lake and watch the sun rise." His dad looked away long enough from the TV to frown at him. "The sun rise? What for?"

Jeez, what did he think? "To see it," Marty explained patiently. His dad turned away to the TV, the look on his face puzzled. Unfortunately, his mom was not as easily distracted.

"You mean you're going to stay up all night?"

"Mom, how else are we gonna see the sunrise?"

"I don't think I like the idea of you staying out all night with a girl," Mom decided, shaking her head firmly.

Marty rolled his eyes. "Hey, Ma, gimme a break."

Before they could discuss the subject any further, there was a heavy pounding on the back door. "Would you answer that, George?" Eileen asked when no one else made a move to. Her husband ignored her. Heaving a sigh, Marty finally stood up to answer it.

The visitor was not one of his favorite people. Biff Tannen stood on the porch, his stomach hanging over the pants in his security guard uniform. His shirt was untucked and the tie was undone. The patch on his shoulder read "Special Security Officer." He was a 47-year-old jerk who liked to push his father around and Marty had no need for him whatsoever. Biff felt the same way about him.

"Well, well," he smirked when Marty opened the door. "If it isn't the neighborhood bootlegger, Al Capone McFly?"

"What do you want, Biff?" Marty demanded, wanting to end this little visit as soon as possible.

"Show me some respect, you little A-hole," Biff growled. "It's Special Officer Tannen to you."

The day I show respect to Biff Tannen will be the day I win a million dollars, Marty thought. "What's the matter, Biff, they're not showing you any respect down at the golf course? Don't they realize what a tough job it is keeping the criminal element away from the country club?"

Biff scowled at him. "Listen you little A-hole, I oughta --"

"What do you want, Biff?" Marty repeated, tiring fast of the conversation.

"Where's your old man?"

Marty took a step back and pointed over his shoulder to the kitchen. Biff pushed his way into the house and Marty saw he had a broken power drill and some bits in hand. He suddenly felt sick.

"Hey McFly, what's with this cheap-ass drill you're giving me?" he demanded. "Thing burned up first time I used it! Almost ruined my whole engine block!"

Marty shook his head in disgust as he sat down again at the table. His dad immediately turned away from the TV.

"Uh -- Biff," he stammered, pointing to the bits. "These are wood bits. Says so right here. You're not supposed to use them on your engine block."

Biff snorted. "Look, McFly, I know a lot about tools. This is a cheap-ass drill! You're just lucky I didn't ruin my engine block. Next time you buy tools, let me know. I'll help you pick out some good ones."

He handed George the drill, then added, "Oh -- and one more thing. My kid's selling Girl Scout cookies. I told her you were good for four boxes." Biff glared at Marty's dad. "Don't make me a liar!"

George nodded quickly and Biff left, slamming the door behind him. George turned to look at his wife, who gave at him a knowing, sympathetic look. "How do you like that guy, using wood bits on an engine block?" he finally asked, laughing nervously.

Marty couldn't take it anymore. He jumped up from the table and ran into the living room, grabbing his silver Porsche jacket out of the closet. "Where are you going?" he heard his mom yell.

Marty opened the front door and slammed it shut in reply. He pulled his jacket on as he crossed the front lawn. Reaching the mailbox, he gave the numbers on it, 777, a good slug, then kicked his dad's car beside it in the street for good measure.

Half an hour later, he was walking down a neighborhood street with Suzy Parker. "...He just lets himself get pushed around all the time," Marty was saying to her, talking about his father. "People walk all over him and he never fights back, never stands up for himself."

"No self confidence, I guess," Suzy said sympathetically. "At least you don't take after him."

"Yeah," Marty agreed. "Jesus! I wonder how he ever got up enough nerve to marry my mom."

Suzy didn't say anything for a few moments. "Can you imagine your parents in bed together?" she finally asked.

Marty laughed. "No way!"

"Me neither," Suzy said, smiling. "I've always wondered whether they slept together before they got married. You think yours did?"

"Hell no!" Marty cried, shaking his head. "The way my mom carries on about sex -- you even mention the word and she goes into cardiac arrest. You shoulda seen her face when I told her we were gonna stay up all night Saturday," he added. "Always afraid something is going to happen."

Suzy looked at him, her expression suddenly coy. " /s something going to happen Saturday night?" she asked slyly.

Before Marty could answer her, a skateboard suddenly hit his foot. He looked up to see two kids about fifty feet down the street, running an obstacle course. The one who had been on the board was slowly getting to his feet off the asphalt. Marty jumped on the board and skated over to the kid. Maybe it was because Suzy was there, but he showed off as he weaved through the obstacle, jumping over the last one and landing perfectly, then flipping the board into the air and catching it. The kids were wide-eyed as Marty handed it to the owner.

"Wow, you're good!" the kid gushed, staring at the board. Marty grinned and walked back over to an impressed Suzy.

"Just like riding a bike -- you never forget how to do it," he explained modestly.

A minute later they were standing in front of Suzy's house. "Well..." she said slowly. "Here we are..."

They stared at each other for a moment. "Thanks," Marty said softly, leaning forward and kissing her.

Suzy smiled and walked to her door. "See you later," she called. Marty watched her as she stepped inside, then turned around and started to walk back home.

A black sedan slowly passed him. A moment later, Marty noticed headlights shining from behind him and whirled around to see that the black sedan had turned around and

seemed to be following him. Marty saw the car had the letters N.R.C. on it, like that van had. He stepped to the side of the street, on the sidewalk, and the car pulled up beside him and stopped. Two tall men dressed in black suits got out. They looked like Secret Service men.

"Good evening," one said. "Agents Reese and Foley," -- he pointed to his buddy -- "from the Nuclear Regulatory Commition." He pulled out his ID and flashed it to Marty. "Mind stepping over here?"

Marty eyed them cautiously before doing so. "What's this all about?" he wanted to know.

"Routine radiation check," the other man -- Agent Foley -- said. He took a Geiger counter from the car and ran it up and down Marty's body. Nothing happened until it got by his feet, especially his right foot. Then it made loud clicking noises. The two men exchanged some kind of look.

"Have you got any identification?" Reese demanded. Marty handed him his wallet after a moment's hesitation.

"What, am I radioactive or something?" he asked uneasily, trying to figure out what was going on.

Foley shook his head. "No, no, not beyond an acceptable level." "Have you been X-rayed recently, Martin?" Reese asked, his eyes on Marty's driver's license.

"Perhaps been in contact with some luminous paint?" Foley added.

Marty frowned at them. "No..."

"Been any place unusual in the past twelve hours?" Reese questioned.

"Home, school, here," Marty answered with a shrug.

"Been in the vicinity of 2980 Monroe Avenue today?" asked Foley.

"Where?"

"Over by the old Orpheum Theater," Reese said.

Marty hesitated for a moment before answering. They were talking about where Professor Brown lived. He remembered the box he had seen under the bed. Suddenly, Marty had a million questions for the Professor. "No," he said.

Reese finally handed him back his wallet. "Okay, Martin. You have a good evening now."

"Yeah," Marty said, jamming his wallet back into his pocket. "Right."

The two men got back into their car and drove off. Marty watched them a moment, then sprinted the other way down the street!

Chapter Three

Marty ran through the streets all the way to the Orpheum Theater. The street was deserted, save for a newspaper blowing down in the gutter. Reaching the door to the upstairs of the dilapidated building, Marty took hold of the knob and turned it. It resisted and he tried again, hoping it was stuck. He juggled it around but it didn't budge. No doubt about it. It was locked. Marty took a step back and looked up, at the third floor.

A moment later the quiet of the night was shattered by all three of the third floor windows being blown out by a huge gush of air! "Jesus!" Marty gasped, ducking his head as shreds of glass rained down. A moment later he tried the door again, but it was still locked.

After weighing the pros and cons of the matter, Marty broke the glass window in the door and reached around to unlock it himself. Once inside, he ran up the steps to the lab. The first thing he noticed was that the mysterious door with all the locks was completely *un*locked! A crack of light shone brightly under the bottom of the door. Marty opened it up and stepped inside. He blinked, wondering if he was seeing right.

Professor Brown was standing next to what looked like a old furnace and hot water heater thrown together with some boiler room parts. He had one hand on a rope attached to a metal lever and was messing with some dials and gauges with the other hand. Shemp, wearing his organ grinder outfit, sat on a stool, a digital watch on a cord around his neck. Some kind of long tube with lenses in it was pointed at him.

"Professor!" Marty gasped. The Professor looked up, startled.

"Get behind that lead shield!" he ordered, pointing to a large grey sheet of metal next to the wall.

Marty stared at him incredulously. "But Professor --"

"Get behind the shield!" Professor Brown broke in, cutting off Marty. "I'm about to release radiation!"

Marty looked at him for a moment more, then darted behind the shield. He watched from around the side of it as the Professor pulled the rope a tiny bit. The next moment, all hell broke loose! The low hum all the machinery made grew louder and high pitched. Static electricity crackled in the air. The sounds grew louder and the monkey looked around, curious. A minute later, the Professor let go of the rope, his eyes on a watch, and a red beam of light -- like a laser -- hit Shemp directly in the chest.

Marty winced at the high pitched noise in the room. Less than a second after the laser -- or whatever it was -- hit the Professor's pet, Shemp vanished, taking the top of the stool with him! Air suddenly rushed into the room, whipping loose papers around. The noise died down and Marty stepped out from behind the shield, his heart pounding from all he had witnessed.

"Jesus!!" he exclaimed, staring at the Professor in shock. "Professor, you just disintegrated Shemp!"

Professor Brown shook his head, a smile playing around his lips. "No, Marty. Shemp's molecular structure is completely intact."

How can he just stand there, so calm? "Then where is he?" Marty demanded.

"The appropriate question to ask is *when* is he," the Professor correct him. "You see, Shemp has just become the world's first time traveller. I've sent Shemp into the future -- two minutes into the future to be exact."

Marty's mouth dropped open. "The future? What are you talking about? Where's Shemp?!"

"Shemp is right here in this room...two minutes from now," the Professor explained calmly. "And at exactly 9:02PM, we'll catch up to him."

"Now hold on a minute, Professor," Marty said slowly, trying to understand this. "Hold the phone. Are you trying to tell me that this -- all of this here -- that this is -- it's a -- a --" For some reason, he couldn't get the words out.

"A time machine," Professor Brown confirmed with a nod.

Marty found a chair and sat down in it quickly before his legs could give out on him.

"I always knew it would work," the Professor continued. "I knew it would work when I built it thirty three years ago. But I was never able to harness enough power to test it. Power is the key. Massive amounts of energy to accelerate matter to the speed of light while creating an intense gravitational field. But generating that kind of energy has never been possible...until this afternoon."

Marty took a couple of deep breaths as he waited for the room to stop spinning around him. *A time machine!* "Because of that Coke," he muttered.

"Precisely," the Professor said with a nod. He walked around the room, pointing out various parts of the machinery as explained. "The power converter, now operating at peak efficiency, thanks to the chemical makeup of Coca-Cola, channels energy into the flux capacitor, which releases several jigowatts in a fraction of a millisecond. Electron acceleration takes place here...and the result is the temporal displacement beam you saw a few moments ago. The entire process is triggered when I release the rope."

Marty finally stood, his legs still shaking a little from the shock. "I thought that power converter thing operated on solar energy. There's no sun," he added, pointing to the ceiling and walls. Not only was it night out, but all the windows had heavy shades drawn over them.

"Solar energy would have worked just fine...if I could have placed the converter about a mile from the surface of the sun. Instead, I've created similar conditions in this reactor here," Professor Brown explained, pointing to the rope. "The higher I raise the cadmium rods, the more energy I release from the plutonium core, and the further through time I can send an object."

Marty snapped his fingers, suddenly remembering. "The plutonium! That's what I came over here for! Professor, where did you get that stuff?"

"Why?" The inventor stared at him with suspicious, his eyes narrowed.

"I just got stopped in the street by federal agents checking me for radiation! I figure they're after your plutonium!"

Professor Brown looked over at a digital clock on the wall. Marty followed his gaze and saw that it was 9:01:50. Almost two minute had passed since the experiment. It had felt like twice that long.

"Ten seconds!" the Professor burst out, dashing over to the place where his beam had hit Shemp. Marty ran after him, stopping when his friend raised an arm. "Brace yourself for a sudden displacement of air!"

Marty watched the clock. The seconds lasted forever. 9:01:55...56...57... 58...59...

At that moment, a strong wind gusted in the room and Shemp suddenly appeared, literally out of thin air. The top of the stool came back with him and fell to the ground. The monkey screeched as he hit the ground and scrambled onto some equipment nearby.

"Shemp!" Marty cried. Professor Brown walked calmly over to the animal and picked him up. He quickly looked him over, the monkey squirming to get free, then examined the

watch around his neck. He held it up for Marty to see. 9:00:10. Marty checked the clock on the wall. 9:02:10.

"Exactly two minutes difference...and it's still ticking!" the Professor cried triumphantly.

"Is Shemp all right?" Marty asked, looking at the monkey. Professor Brown set him down on the ground he quickly ran off to the other side of the room.

"Of course. Shemp is unaware that anything even happened, other than his stool suddenly falling over. We had to wait two minutes to catch up to him, but for Shemp the trip was instantaneous."

Marty suddenly realized something. "Professor, can this thing send Shemp *back* in time?"

The Professor thought about that for a moment. "Theoretically, yes, if I were to reverse the polarity." He pointed to a switch near the rope with a plus and minus at opposite ends. It was currently up in the plus position.

"Jeez, Professor, you've got a gold mine here!" Marty exclaimed, grinning with excitement.

The Professor frowned, as if he didn't understand. "A gold mine?"

"Sure!" Marty said. "Listen -- we take the racing results from today's paper...." He grabbed an newspaper from earlier that day at a nearby table and quickly flipped through to the sports scores. "Here they are. We send 'em with Shemp back to yesterday, we get the information, put our money on the winning horses, and become billionaires!"

Professor Brown started to shake his head. "Marty, that would alter history.

" "So what?" Marty asked. *We'd be rich!*

"Don't you understand? The mere act of sending matter back in time would change the course of events, and changing history is a responsibility that I do not wish to bear," the Professor said.

Marty sighed, lowering the paper. "All I know is you're throwing away an awful lot of money."

"The future, Marty, the future is everything," Professor Brown said, his eyes sparkling. "I built this machine to see the future. So I am going to send Shemp twenty-four hours into the future. You can assist me, if you like."

"Sure," he agreed quickly.

The Professor left the room for a moment, saying something about a cassette recorder. Marty waited for a second, then quickly ripped the racing results off the sports page and circled the date with a pen that had been in his pocket. He went over to Shemp, stuffed the clipping in the pocket on his vest, then glanced out the door. The Professor was rifling through the papers on his desk, his back to the door. Marty rushed over to the polarity switch and yanked the lever to the minus sign. A couple seconds later, Professor Brown returned, a Micro-cassette recorder in hand. He locked the door, then handed the recorded to Marty.

"Take this, stand at the panel," he said, pointing to a wall of switches near the beam, "and read off the radiation levels. I want to have a record of what happens here. Be sure to tell me when we reach 85 rads."

Marty nodded and stepped over to the panel. Right before him was a meter with the rads levels. He had his eyes on it as Professor Brown fixed the stool a few feet away. "Come on, Shemp, this won't hurt a bit," the Professor murmured as he picked up the monkey and placed him on the stool again. After doing that, he returned to the rope switch, across the room from where Marty stood and on the other side of Shemp. Marty watched him carefully, but he didn't seem to notice the lever at the minus sign.

"Here we go," the Professor warned, throwing a few switches. The equipment started humming again and Professor Brown slowly reached for the rope and started tugging on it.

"Radiation level, 10 rads," Marty said looking at the meter, holding the microphone in the recorder up to his mouth as he spoke. "Stabilization coefficient, .43. 16 rads; coefficient .44. 37 rads, .46. 51 rads, .46. 73 rads, .47..."

Marty heard a loud noise from behind him and spun around to see the locked door kicked open. The dust hadn't even cleared before Marty realized it was the N.R.C. agents, Reese and Foley. Behind them he saw a huge throng of police and other official people. The agents jumped into the room with .38 guns drawn.

"Everybody freeze!" Reese shouted, his eyes darting around the room. "N.R.C.!"

"Get back!" Professor Brown cried, waving his left hand. The other one was still holding onto the rope.

"Jesus Christ!" Foley yelled, seeing the machine the Professor was standing besides. "It's a Goddamn reactor!"

Reese pointed his gun at Professor Brown. "You! Shut it down! Now!"

Marty stared at the whole scene, mouth hanging open. He felt strangely detached from it, almost as if it was a play or a scene in a movie he was watching. The microphone fell from his hand, dangling on it's cord around his feet.

"No!" Professor Brown exclaimed, his eyes wide and frantic. "Get out! I'm in the middle of an experiment!" He moved closer to the reactor, pulling the rope tighter as he did so.

Foley didn't hesitate. He swung his gun at the Professor and squeezed the trigger. The loud bang echoed in the room. Shemp screeched and leaped off the stool. Marty watched, horrified, as the bullet hit his friend right in the chest. The Professor staggered back, hand still clenched around the rope. He fell backwards to the floor, the rope pulling taut as he landed.

"Professor!" Marty yelled, finally finding his voice. He whipped his head to check the meter. "Oh my God! Release the rope! It's 4200 rads!"

Reese stared at him, shaking his head. It was too noisy in the room for Marty to be heard. "What?!" he called.

"Release the rope!" Marty screamed at him. It was so noisy he could hardly hear his own voice! Reese shook his head again. Marty started for the Professor himself. Foley turned the gun on him.

"Freeze!" he commanded, his mouth set in a firm line.

Marty stopped, standing right before the stool where Shemp had once been. He raised his hands, showing he didn't have anything on him. The recorder and microphone was now in his jacket pocket. He couldn't remember putting it there with all the excitement.

Marty's eyes darted over to the Professor. As he watched, the Professor's grip suddenly relaxed and the rope swung loosely in the air. Marty suddenly realized he was right in the line of the focusing lense. A bright white light shot out from it and hit him square in the chest. Marty looked down at it for a moment, a little curiously, then looked up at the people in the room. Reese and Foley stared at him, startled looks on their faces.

Suddenly the whole room turned bright, blinding white, like a million cameras flashing at once. Then, less than a second later, everything was plunged into a deep, black silence.

Chapter Four

"Professor?" Marty asked, straining his eyes in the darkness, trying to see something, anything. But everything was completely and utterly black. "Hello?" he called, listening hard for any sound.

After a moment, Marty reached into his pocket and pulled out a matchbook. He ripped a match free and struck it against the sandpaper. Marty held it up as it lit, looking around the room. It looked like he was in some kind of storeroom. Marty took a step forward, almost running into an old broken chair. He dodged it last minute and strolled slowly around the room, trying to figure out where the hell he was. Dusty furniture and crates littered the room.

The match was starting to burn Marty's fingers and he dropped it, fumbling to light another. He walked towards the door, having the nagging feeling that something was strangely out of place. *Where the hell am I?* he wondered. Marty reached for the doorknob and tried turning it. Locked.

"Damn!" he hissed, looking around for a way out. Marty spotted a window and went over to it, holding his breath as he tried to slide it open. It slid and he carefully climbed outside on to a fire escape. He scrambled down the unstable structure and dropped to the alley below.

Just as his feet scraped the pavement, Marty noticed a pair of headlights approaching him, fast. He stood there for a minute, frozen in the beams, then jumped back and pressed himself against the wall of the building. The truck sped by, missing him by inches!

Marty let out a loud sigh of relief as he watched the truck drive off, then noticed the sign on the door that he was right next to. "Wilson's Cafe, Rear Entrance," it said. Marty tried the door, expecting it to be locked. But the knob turned freely in his hand. Strange. For as long as he could remember the back door had been locked.

Marty stepped inside. "Hey, since when are you open at..." he started to say, then stopped when he got a good look around. It couldn't be Wilson's Cafe!

Everything in the room looked brand new...but at the same time, old. Dick wasn't behind the counter; a woman of maybe thirty was. Marty looked up at the menu and gasped. Since when were roast beef sandwiches 30 cents, and an ice cream sundae 15 cents? He tore his eyes off the prices long enough to notice the people. Boy, did he notice them! All the men were in double-breasted suits, with hats. And not baseball caps, either! Marty noticed all the women were in skirts -- long skirts. Not one was in any type of pants, like jeans. And the way people had their hair done.... Those styles went out *ages* ago!

A chubby five-year-old boy, dressed in pajamas, was playing on the floor with some trucks. Marty almost tripped over him as he walked slowly around, his mouth open with amazement, gazing at everything. After a moment he realized the woman behind the counter was staring at him, a suspicious look on her face. "You want something, kid?" she asked, leaning forward across the counter.

Marty hesitated for a moment, then sat down. He decided he needed to blend in as much as he could. The silver Porsche jacket alone that he had on was causing way too many stares. "Uh, yeah..." he said slowly. "Gimme a Tab."

"What?" the waitress asked, frowning.

"A Tab," Marty repeated.

The waitress rolled her eyes. "Kid, I can't give you the tab until you order something."

Marty tried to ignore the stares everyone was giving him and looked down at the counter. He saw the man beside him had a cup of coffee.

"Uh, coffee," he told the waitress. She reached over and poured him a cup.

"Did something happen to you, kid?" she wondered. "I mean, you been lost in the woods or something?"

Marty looked at her blankly. "Huh?" He noticed a bowl of sugar cubes on the counter and added, "Say, have you got any Sweet 'N Low?"

The waitress stared at him. "Sweet and what?" She suddenly lifted the cup of coffee away from him. "Maybe you'd better pay for this first."

"Sure," Marty said with a shrug. He reached for his wallet and took out a twenty dollar bill, holding it out to the waitress. Her eyes bugged out and her mouth dropped open.

"A twenty? What do you think this is, a bank? I can't break a twenty!" Her eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Say, what's a kid your age doing with all this money?"

Marty quickly stuffed the bill back in his wallet. Now *everyone* in the cafe was staring at him. "Look, maybe I'd better talk to Dick," he said to the woman. "Is he around?" <

"Dick?" the waitress asked. "Dick who?"

Now who's being stupid? "The guy who runs this place."

" / run this place!" the woman said sharply, her eyes once again narrowed. "What happened to Dick Wilson?" Marty asked, confused.

"Dick Wilson," the waitress repeated. "Dickie Wilson?" She chuckled. "Dickie Wilson runs this place? That's a laugh!"

Marty felt his face redden as everyone in the room started to laugh with the waitress. "What are you trying to do?" he asked angrily. "Freak me out, or something?"

"Freak?" the man with the coffee asked. "Are you from some circus? Is that what all that writing on your clothes means?"

Haven't you ever heard of designer labels? Marty wondered, glaring at him. He heard soft footsteps from behind the counter and saw the little five-year-old run up to the woman. "Mommy, I'm hungry," he whined.

The waitress smiled. "Just take a candy bar, then go to bed, Dickie," she cooed.

Marty did a double take. "Dickie?" he said incredulously. "That's Dick Wilson?"

The waitress nodded. "That's Dick Wilson," she confirmed.

Marty watched the kid grab a Babe Ruth of the candy counter and scamper off. He was about to turn away from the sight when he noticed a calendar behind the cash register. A calendar that had the number "1952" in big black letters.

"1952?" Marty repeated aloud, his voice rising. "This is 1952?! Holy shit! You know what this means? I've gone back in time thirty years! Thirty Goddamn years! I haven't even been *born* yet!"

The waitress took one look at him and reached for a phone. "I'm calling the cops."

Marty jumped off the stool and ran out the front door, stopping dead in the middle of the street. Everything had changed!

Monroe Avenue, once full of old, rotting buildings, was now a bustling, thriving business district! Cars from the '40's and '50's ran up and down the streets. People were everywhere, walking along the streets, stopping in the shops. Marty was so shocked to see what he was seeing he didn't notice the strange, suspicious looks the townspeople were flashing at him, or the drivers honking at him as they swerved to avoid hitting him.

He turned and noticed the Orpheum Theater. It, too, had changed! Boy, had it! The marquee was lit up with the words: "John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara -- *The Quiet Man*. In Full Color!" People streamed into it and from the looks of the place, it was a first class movie theater.

"Dammit!" Marty exclaimed, shaking his head in shock. He noticed a man walking by with a newspaper in hand. Marty ran over to him and snatched the paper away, ignoring the owner's protest as he scanned the front page for the date. March 11, 1952.

"1952!" he cried. "Dammit!" Marty threw the paper down on the sidewalk and ran down the street. He stopped beside an old car and checked out the license plate. Besides the fact it looked nothing like the plates he was used to, it also said --

"1952! Dammit," he swore again. Marty ran off again, noticing a phone booth. It was empty, so he stopped inside and grabbed the phone book. He frantically riffled through the pages, to the listings of Browns. After a minute, he located it and ran his finger down the column to: "Brown, Emmett L., 788 W. Spruce. Madison 3489." Marty pulled the Bic pen out from his pocket and circled the line. Then he reached into his pocket again and pulled out all the change he had. One nickel and three pennies.

"Dammit!" he muttered. Marty picked up the receiver anyway and dialed zero.

"Operator," a woman's voice said after a moment.

"Operator! Listen, this is an emergency!" Marty said urgently. "I have to make this call, but I don't have a dime -- all I got is a nickel -- but you gotta connect me --"

"Sir," the operator said calmly, interrupting Marty's speech. "It only costs a nickel."

"What?" he asked, not sure if he had heard correctly.

"Local calls cost five cents," the operator repeated. "What number do you want?"

Marty looked up and saw the words, "Local Calls 5 Cents" written in plain sight on the telephone. "Oh -- right!" he said, trying to sound like he had known it all along. "Uh, Madison 3489."

"Five cents, please."

Marty placed the nickel inside the coin slot and listened as the number ran several times.

"I'm sorry, there's no answer," the operator said after a minute.

"Operator, what's today's date?" Marty asked, holding his breath as he waited for the answer.

"March 11th."

"What year?"

"Nineteen fifty --"

Marty shook his head. "Dammit!" He slammed the receiver down and ripped the page out of the phone book, stuffing it in his pocket. Then he got out of the phone booth and ran down the street.

Marty didn't know how long he had been running before he found himself on a residential street. It looked vaguely familiar, but he was too exhausted by the recent events to figure out why. He leaned against a mailbox, trying to catch his breath, when he happened to look down at the numbers on it. 777. Marty spun around and stared at the house.

"My house!" he whispered. It looked like his house. It was! But there were some weird things, like the trees not being as tall, different curtains, and a old Chevy in the driveway. Marty watched as the front door opened and a woman pushed the screen door open to let out a dog. Marty gasped. The woman was his mother!

"Mom!" he cried, racing to the front door. She didn't notice him and shut the door. Marty ran up the steps and pounded on the front door. "Mom! Open up! It's me!"

After a few seconds the door opened and his mom stood in the doorway. She stared at Marty without a shred of recognition.

"Mom, thank God!" he babbled. "Thank God you're here!"

His mother stared at him blankly. "I beg your pardon, young man?"

Marty paled. "Mom! It's me! Marty! Don't you know your own son!"

Mom started to close the door, her expression uneasy. "I think you have the wrong house."

Marty shook his head frantically. "No -- no -- it's not!" he cried, having trouble breathing. "It's not!"

A man smoking a pipe approached Marty's mother from behind. "Who's there, Stella?" he asked.

"Stella!?" Marty gasped. "No! Don't tell me you're Stella! Tell me you're Eileen!" he begged. "Please tell me you're Eileen!"

In the background, Marty saw a teenage girl come down the staircase. She heard the last part of the conversation and went over to the door, pushing her way past the woman. "I'm Eileen," she said.

He stared into her hazel eyes. "How old are you?" he whispered.

Eileen smiled. "Seventeen."

Marty stared at her for a moment more, breathing hard, before his eyes rolled back in his head and he slumped to the ground in a dead faint!

Chapter Five

Marty smelled something funny. He made a face and turned his head, but the smell followed him. He slowly opened his eyes and looked up into the face of someone he knew.

"Professor? Professor Brown?" Marty asked weakly. It looked a lot like him, only he didn't look as old. Then Marty remembered -- he was in 1952!

"You know me?" the Professor wondered, removing the smelling salts from under Marty's nose now that he was awake. It was only then Marty realized he was stretched out on a couch in a living room that looked an awful lot like his own.

"Professor, your time machine works!" Marty said rapidly. "It works! It sent me back in time! I'm from 1982!"

"Ssshhhhh!" Professor Brown said, holding up his hand. His expression was both thoughtful and suspicious. Marty heard footsteps and turned his head to see his grandfather, grandmother, and mother, all looking thirty years younger, edging closer to the couch to get a look at him.

"Is he all right?" Mr. Baines asked finally.

The Professor straightened up. "He will be. Simple inebriation, is all. The young man must have a rather low tolerance for alcohol...something that runs in the family. You see, he's a second cousin of mine on my mother's side. Came quite a distance to visit me," he added. "His name's Lewis."

"Marty," Marty corrected him.

"Uh, Marty Lewis," Professor Brown said hastily. "I almost didn't recognize him -- haven't seen him in years."

Eileen stared at Marty and he looked back at her, fascinated that this young teenager was -- would be -- his mother! She looked so different...attractive, even!

"It's a good thing he had your name circled in the phone book," Mrs. Baines said to the Professor. "I would have called the police."

Professor Brown leaned over and helped Marty sit up. "Well, Mrs. Baines, Mr. Baines, thank you for your trouble," he said as Marty got to his feet. "Both Marty and I apologize for the inconvenience. We'll get him home and as good as new."

Mr. Baines looked sharply at Marty and shook his finger at him. "Son, you watch yourself," he warned.

"Yes, sir," Marty said, nodding his head.

"Oh," Eileen began, going over to a chair a few feet away and picking up the silver jacket of Marty's. Someone must've taken it off him when they brought him into the house, he realized. "Here's your jacket," she said softly, her big eyes locked on his face.

"Uh, thanks..." Marty stammered. Eileen held up the jacket and gave it a quizzical look.

"What kind of material is this?" she asked. "I've never seen anything like it."

He took it from her hand. "It's polyester," he said matter-of-factly.

Eileen frowned. "Poly-what?"

Professor Brown jumped in. "It's an experimental invention of mine. Sort of a rubberized silver-foil. I just made up a name for it. Come on, Marty," he added, walking toward the front door. "We've got a lot to talk about."

Marty followed the Professor. He was just about to step out the door when Eileen stopped him. "Marty?"

He turned. "Huh?"

"Have we ever met before?" she asked, a puzzled look on her face. Marty's eyes met hers, but before he could open his mouth, the Professor grabbed his arm and pulled him out the door.

* * *

Fifteen minutes later, the Professor's 1937 Packard was pulling into the driveway of a huge Victorian mansion on the outskirts of town.

"...and the flux capacitor is hooked into this thing that looks like a condenser with a lense on it..." Marty was saying as Professor Brown stopped the car. He looked at the house for the first time and let out a low whistle as they both got out of the car. Even in the dark, Marty was able to see how fancy it was.

"Jeez -- this is where you used to live, huh?" he said, impressed. "You must have been rich!"

"Must have been?" the Professor asked. "Used to live? I *do* live here."

"Oh, yeah," Marty realized as they started to walk up the drive to the front door. "Well, there's a mall here now -- I mean, there will be."

"A mall?"

"Yeah, a shopping mall. You know, a shopping mall?"

Professor Brown held his hands up and shook his head. "Sssshhhh -- don't tell me these things, Marty. I don't want to know about the future." He opened the front door and stepped inside the living room. Marty looked around as the Professor switched on the lights.

"Do you see it here?" he asked, in reference to the time machine.

The living room was filled with antique furniture, pieces of different mechanical devices lying everywhere. It was easy to see that the Professor's love of inventing was just beginning, since everything was still relatively neat. But there was no sign of the time machine. Marty shook his head. "No."

Professor Brown walked across the room and into another one. This one appeared to be a study. Bookshelves lined the walls, filled with old volumes. On the desk in the center of the room, Marty recognized little models of that one robot and flying car he had seen plans of in the future. The Professor watched Marty as he glanced about the room, but he had to shake his head again. No time machine.

The Professor crossed the room, over to a door at the far end of the study. He pulled out a key and unlocked it, pushing it open. He switched a light on inside and gestured for Marty to come over. Marty only had to glance at the room for a second before

recognizing the time machine. It looked a little less run down, cleaner and shinier, but it was the time machine nonetheless. "This is it!"

Professor Brown placed the key back in his pocket and looked hard at Marty. "You've convinced me that you must be who you say you are," he concluded. "No living human has ever seen this machine." The Professor paused, a frown on his face. "But why? Why even in my twilight years would I remotely consider sending someone *back* in time?"

"You didn't, Professor," Marty assured him. "It was an accident! You see, what happened --"

"No! Don't tell me!" he insisted, holding his hands up again. "I don't want to know the future! My knowledge of future events...your mere presence here...could have devastating effects on the course of history. And altering history is a responsibility that I do not wish to bear. My immediate response is to send you back to your own time."

Marty had heard the Professor say almost those exact same words when he had wanted to send Shemp back in time with the sports scores. It seemed like a million years ago even though, technically, it was thirty years in the future. But this time he agreed with the Professor. He wanted to go home. "I can dig that."

Professor Brown gave him a strange, puzzled look. "Pardon me?" *Oh*, Marty realized. The expression probably hadn't been invented yet. "I can get behind -- I agree with you," he explained.

The phone rang in the study. The Professor left the room with the time machine to answer it. Marty followed him and checked out the models on the desk while the Professor picked up the phone on the third ring. He didn't mean to listen on the conversation, but it was kind of hard not to.

"Hello?" There was a pause. "Yes Charles, yes, I looked over the offer." Another pause. "It's very generous that they want to make me a major stockholder. But I'm just not interested in a position with this little X-rox corporation....If it's pronounced 'Zerox', why don't they spell it with a Z?Look, I'm on the verge of a breakthrough on my power converter."

Marty dropped the little car he had been looking at when the Professor said that. The power converter! How could he have forgotten! It needed nuclear power and he didn't think there was any now, at least none that they could get their hands on. Did that mean he was....stuck here?

Professor Brown continued to talk on the phone, not noticing the sick expression on Marty's face. "...Well, any day now. And then I'll need people to work for Emmett Brown Industries! I've got a lot of ideas that are going to create a lot of jobs." He paused for a moment, then added, "Very well, good night, Charles."

The Professor shook his head as he hung up the phone. "The X-rox Corporation. How are they going to sell a product if you can't even pronounce the name?"

He turned back to Marty. "Now...the time machine works, that's obvious. As I've always known, it's a question of power. Where did I -- will I get enough power to send a man thirty years through time?"

Marty opened his mouth to tell him, but Professor Brown quickly held up his hands. "No - - wait -- don't tell me!" He didn't say anything for a long moment, then shook his head. "On second thought, there may be some things you'll have to tell me."

"The power converter...." Marty began.

"Of course!" the Professor burst out, interrupting him. "The power converter! It works! Of course, it works," he added to himself. He looked at Marty. "What chemicals do we use?"

Marty hesitated, slowly taking a deep breath before starting. "Well, Professor, are you sure you want me to tell you? You know, changing the course of history and all...."

Professor Brown looked torn. "Blast it -- no, I suppose you're right.... You *do* know the proper chemical formula?"

Marty nodded. "Sure, and there won't be any problem getting some --" He stopped. He had almost blurted it out. "Getting it," he finished.

The Professor walked over to a bar and pulled a glass bottle of brandy out of the cabinet. "Coke?" he asked as he started to pour the alcohol in a glass.

Marty stared at him, stunned. "How did you know?"

"Just a guess. I figured kids would still be drinking Coke in 1982," he answered.

Marty let out all the breath he had been holding. So he didn't know that was the secret formula after all.

"All right, then it's very simple," Professor Brown said, tossing Marty a bottle of Coke as he spoke. "Tomorrow, weather permitting, you'll get the chemicals, and we'll wire the power converter to the time machine, point it at the sun, and send you home."

Marty hesitated again. He had a feeling that what he was about to say would not really please the Professor. "Well, not exactly, Professor. You see, we don't point it at the sun."

"We don't...." The Professor lifted up his drink to his lips.

"No," Marty took a deep breath. He had gone this far. He might as well go all the way. "We need a nuclear reactor."

Professor Brown choked on his drink. "A nuclear reactor," he coughed. "How much energy do we need?"

Marty shrugged -- then remembered the Micro-Cassette Recorder! He still had it with him, in his pocket. He took it out and rewound it, then hit play and set it on the Professor's desk. Professor Brown looked at it strangely, but didn't ask any questions. He sat down at his desk and the two of them listened as it played back. After a couple minutes, it got to the important part.

"Release the rope!" Marty heard himself yell on the tape. "It's 4200 rads!"

The tape grew silent. It had reached the end. Professor Brown reached out and picked up the recorder, staring at the buttons for a minute before pressing the one to stop it. He didn't say anything for a moment, then: "4200 rads? Good God!"

Marty was trying to twist the top of the Coke bottle, but for some reason it wouldn't turn. The Professor continued.

"There's something I still don't understand." The Professor picked the recorder up again and rewound it. "Fascinating device," he commented as it spun back. Professor Brown stopped it and played back the gunshot sounds. "These loud bangs...could those be some sort of malfunction in the time machine? Do you know what they are?"

Marty gripped the Coke bottle so hard his knuckles turned white. He couldn't tell Professor Brown that those sounds were him being shot! "I wouldn't worry about 'em, Professor," he finally said.

A minute passed while the tape replayed. "4200 rads..." the Professor said again when the tape ended. "That certainly can't be generated under controlled conditions in this day and age."

"That's just great," Marty said sarcastically, still trying to get that Coke bottle open. It was like the cap was welded on there!

"However...there's a lot I don't know about nuclear physics. So first thing in the morning, I'll go to the University and see what I can find out. I want *you* to stay in the house," he said to Marty, pointing a finger at him. "It's very important that you don't interfere in any way with the outside world. I've got plenty of food, there's the radio, books, magazines...I've even got one of those new television sets. There's plenty to do."

Professor Brown stared at Marty as he twisted and turned that cap in every imaginable way possible. "What are you doing?"

Marty gave up and held the bottle out. "How do you open these?"

The Professor took the bottle from his hand and picked up a bottle opener lying nearby. A second later he handed it back, now without the top. Marty looked down at the Coke in his hand, then up at the Professor.

"It doesn't look good, does it, Professor?" he asked flatly.

Professor Brown shook his head. "At the moment, it looks like you're stuck here."

Chapter Six

Early the next morning, Professor Brown walked down the hall to the room he had given Marty McFly late the night before. He stopped and listened carefully, hearing no sound from the other side. After a minute he reached for the doorknob and turned it. The Professor pushed the door open a couple of inches, sticking his head around the side of the door to peer inside.

The shades were wide open, the first rays of sunlight slanting across the room over to the bed. Marty was lying on top of the queen bed on his back, one arm hanging over the side of the bed, still fully dressed in his 1982 clothes. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be asleep. The Professor studied him for a moment, then slowly stepped inside the room and crept across to the table next to the bed, where the Cathedral Radio rested and the small cassette recorder. He had come in to get a closer look at the future object.

Professor Brown carefully picked the recorder up and examined it. His finger accidentally hit the play button and a loud burst of conversation came out. The Professor swore under his breath as he fumbled for the stop button. His eyes flew to Marty as he quickly set the recorder on the table again. Marty let out a deep sigh, eyes still closed, and rolled over.

Professor Brown waited a moment, to make sure Marty wasn't going to awaken. He listened to his slow, deep breathing for a second, then quickly crossed the room to the door. The Professor eased it shut and continued down the hall. He had to get to the University and look up the information about nuclear physics. Hopefully, there would be a answer to send Marty back to the future.

Marty felt warm sunlight on his face. He threw an arm across his still-closed eyes to block it out, along with the memories. Pieces of the night before came back to him, being in 1952. *Maybe, Marty thought, it was just a dream. All I have to do is open my eyes and I will see that it was all part of some bizarre dream....*

He sighed as his eyes focused on his surroundings. It wasn't a dream. He was lying on the bed in the room that Professor Brown had given him the night before. He was still in 1952.

Marty reached over and clicked on the old radio by the bed, mostly out of habit. He waited a few seconds, expecting to hear some old song, but nothing came on. He hit it a few times, wondering if it was broken. Only a minute later did sound slowly come on, and it was horrible! Marty made a face as he rolled over and twisted the tuning dial, skimming the different stations for something better. Nothing that even remotely resembled any type of rock 'n roll came on. Marty flipped the radio off, shaking his head in disgust.

He got off the bed and left his room, wandering downstairs to the kitchen. He opened a cabinet and found a coffee pot. As he was taking it out of the cabinet, it slipped from his hands and crashed onto the hardwood floor, separating into different pieces. Marty swore and knelt down, trying to get it back together. After a minute, he gave up and set it aside.

Marty turned to the refrigerator and pulled it open. He fished out a bottle of milk and took off the little piece of foil at the top. Taking a glass off the counter, he set it on the kitchen table and lifted up the bottle to pour some milk in the glass. Nothing came out. Marty held it up and looked down the neck, noticing a cardboard plug keeping the milk in. He stuck a couple fingers down there, trying to pull it out - but he couldn't get ahold of it! With a sigh of annoyance, Marty finally just pushed his fingers through the cardboard and poured the milk in the glass.

After pulling the bottle back in the refrigerator, Marty sat down at the kitchen table to drink his milk. He noticed some magazines and newspapers spread out and lifted a couple of them up for a closer look. The issue of *Time* had a cover story titled, "The Republicans: Who Will Win in '52?" Photos of the men involved were splashed on the cover. Marty stared at it for a moment.

"Eisenhower," he said aloud before tossing it aside.

He picked up a *Newsweek*. "Will We Have War With Russia This Year?" the cover asked in big bold letters.

"No," Marty said with a bored sigh.

He took a look at the local newspaper. "Crime Rate Continues to Rise!" the headline screamed. Marty shook his head and noticed a Saturday Evening Post lying nearby. A picture of some high school students were on the cover with the words, "What's Wrong With the Younger Generation?" He laughed and flipped the magazine over. An ad for Van Heusen Shirts had Ronald Regan in it.

"Jesus," Marty muttered when he saw it, shaking his head again. The doorbell rang. Marty looked up from the periodicals, uneasy. He stayed seated, remembering the Professor's instructions from the night before. The bell rang again and Marty got up from the table and walked slowly through the dining room and living room to the front door. He stopped a few feet away from it, staring hard at the wood and feeling torn.

The doorbell rang for a third time. What if it was someone in trouble? What if someone was hurt and needed to use the phone? Would it be such a bad thing, then, if he answered the door?

Aw, what the hell, he thought. Marty stepped forward and opened the door.

"Aha!" Professor Brown exclaimed, shoving a finger at Marty's chest from the porch. "You answered the door!"

"You were ringing the doorbell!" Marty cried, taking a step back as the Professor walked inside.

"I told you not to interfere with any of the events of this time!" Professor Brown explained firmly. "Nobody's supposed to see you here! What if I was a mailman? Or a salesman?"

"What if you lost your keys?" Marty countered, still holding the door opened.

"Then I would have figured out to get back in through the events in the natural course of history! Don't you understand?" the Professor asked, noticing Marty's blank expression. "The fabric of history is very delicate. Anything you do could have serious consequences!"

"Hey, look, gimme a break!" Marty said with a shrug. "All I did was answer the door! How's that gonna change history?"

"I don't know, but I don't want to take any chances," Professor Brown said, his tone leaving no room for argument. "Now you stay here and don't do anything. Don't answer the door, don't answer the phone, don't go outside." He finished checking the items off his fingers and looked at Marty again. "Understand?"

Marty rolled his eyes, having it up to *here* with the lecturing!

"Hey, get off my case, would you? I didn't *want* to come here, and the only reason I'm here in the first place is because I was a nice guy, helping you out. So don't tell me I gotta stay cooped up in here and vege out, because none of this is my fault!" he finished, almost yelling the last couple of words out.

Professor Brown appeared unaffected by the speech. "Let me put it on a level you can understand. You don't belong here. You don't know anything about this world. You don't know the customs, you don't know how to talk, how to act -- you don't even look like you belong here. And if you walked out on the street, you wouldn't get 100 yards without being arrested. Then there would be questions, and where would we come up with the answers?"

Marty sighed. "Okay, Professor, I get where you're coming from. The way I look, the way I'm dressed..." He looked down at his silver Porsche jacket he still had on. "I'd stick out like a sore thumb."

Professor Brown nodded, looking relieved. "I'm glad we finally got that straightened out. I'll see you tonight." He left the house, slamming the door behind him.

Marty stared at the door for a moment with his eyes narrowed, then he returned to the kitchen.

* * *

Half an hour later, Marty was ready. He'd finished his breakfast and then had a shower, changing into some of the Professor's clothes instead of his own from 1982. He had slicked his hair back like he had seen the men doing so in some of those magazines and was now ready to explore the town. After all, Professor Brown had said the reason he couldn't go out was because of the way he looked, more or less. And now that he looked like a resident of 1952, Marty saw no problem in leaving the house.

He opened a window at the front of the house and climbed outside, then ran off in the direction of town.

Less than twenty minutes later, Marty was strolling down the sidewalk with the other townspeople, trying to look nonchalant, like he had always lived there. He thought he was doing a pretty good job of it, too, since no one was looking at him twice.

A cop that had been walking on the other side of the street glanced at Marty and stopped, pointing a finger at him. "Hey, you!" he shouted. "Where do you think you're going?"

Marty's eyes widened and fought the urge to run. *How did he know?* he wondered in horror. The cop walked right for him, then, just as Marty was ready to accept defeat, he passed him and grabbed the arm of a tramp several yards behind Marty. He relaxed, letting out a sigh of relief, and continued to walk down the street. After a minute he started to get excited again as he looked around at the shops and businesses up and down the main street.

There was an appliance store that advertised "Giant 8 Inch Televisions!" with "A screen as big as life itself!" Across from it was an old gas station with the price advertised at 18.9 cents a gallon. A travel agency had a poster on how to get from "L.A. to New York in a mere 12 hours!" in its window.

There was a dance studio with a sign, "Everybody's doing the Mambo!" on the outside. Through the window, Marty could see a class in session. A clothing store with a display of "the latest fashions" was beside the studio. They looked a lot more like the kind of stuff in old movies. A Studebaker showroom had a sign that said it was, "the most modern car ever developed in the entire history of man." Marty chuckled, then stopped when he saw the next store.

It was a music store. In the display window were posters showing America's top recording artists. Marty frowned as he studied them. Frank Sinatra, Guy Combardo, Dinah Shore, Perry Como. *Are they kidding?* He decided to go inside and find out.

On the counter was the current number one single, "Papa Loves Mambo" by Perry Como. Marty made a face as he examined it. He suddenly noticed the clerk was standing beside him.

"Can I help you, sir?" the man in the suit asked.

Marty held up the single. He had to ask. "*This* is the number one single?"

"Yes, sir!" the clerk responded enthusiastically.

"I don't get it," Marty said, shaking his head. "How come there's no rock 'n roll?"

The clerk frowned. "I beg your pardon?"

"This *is* 1952....?"

"Uh, yes, sir...." the clerk said, looking terribly confused.

"And you never heard of rock 'n roll?"

"No...."

Marty grinned as he set the single back on the counter, suddenly having a great idea. "Well, maybe it's time you did."

He quickly left the store and headed for a pawnshop he had noticed on the outskirts of town. There was a guitar in the window, for five dollars. After studying it for a moment, Marty went inside and told the Pawnbroker what he wanted. The man took the guitar down and brought it to the cash register and Marty trailed after him.

"That'll be five bucks," he said, setting the guitar on the counter. Marty reached for his wallet and pulled out the same twenty dollar bill he had tried using at the cafe the night before. The Pawnbroker started to ring the purchase up, then took a closer look at the money.

"Hey, what kinda funny money is this?" he demanded, squinting at the bill.

"Huh?" Marty didn't get it.

The Pawnbroker held the money out and pointed to something. "It says '1977' on it. What do you take me for, an idiot?" He handed the bill back to Marty.

Marty looked at it and only then realized his mistake. He had used money that hadn't even been printed yet! "Oh -- yeah," he said, his mind racing for a explanation to give the guy that didn't sound too illegal. It wouldn't do for him to get arrested as a counterfeiter. "I can't believe I did that. That's a joke. My friend had these printed up -- see that's his name there..." Marty pointed to the word. "...Blumenthal."

The Pawnbroker continued to watch him suspiciously. It didn't look like he was buying it. Marty dug around in his wallet, but of course he didn't have any thirty-year-old bills with him.

"Gee - I don't seem to have anything on me." He put his wallet away and as he did so, the watch Professor Brown was lending him caught his eye. "Hey, how about this watch?" Marty asked the man, holding up his left wrist. "It's a genuine antique!"

He slipped the watch off and handed it to the Pawnbroker. He carefully examined it. "Antique?" he scoffed. "They just came out with this watch last month. But this one looks like it's been through a war."

"Yeah, I've been doing a lotta travelling," Marty admitted.

"Okay kid," the Pawnbroker finally said. "You got a deal. The watch for the guitar."

* * *

Inside the office of the Midwest Talent Agency, Marty was concentrating hard on performing "Blue Suede Shoes" the way Elvis had -- or would. Dancing around, singing, playing the instrument -- he was really into it, hardly noticing the forty five-year-old agent that sat behind the desk and smoking a cigar, his face expressionless as he listened to the music. Covering the walls of the small office were black and white pictures of some clients that the agency sponsored.

Marty finished the song and looked at the agent with a smile, waiting for the praise that was sure to follow. Who couldn't love music like that? The agent, however, must have been one of those people.

"Well, kid," he began, setting the cigar down in an ash tray, "it's interesting, I'll say that. But it's not commercial."

"Not commercial?" Marty repeated in disbelief. Did he know what he was saying? "Mister, don't you know what you're listening to? This is rock 'n roll!"

The agent shook his head as he heaved his body out of the chair. "Call it what you want to kid, but don't call it music, 'cause it sure ain't that!"

"But you don't understand --"

"No buts, kid," the agent broke in. "I've been in this business my whole life and I know what people want. The smooth sound, that's what sells. Como, Crosby, Dinah Shore. Gimme a melody and a nice slow tempo. Now beat it!" he added, opening the door and shoving Marty into the waiting room.

Marty stood where he was, trying to figure out what had happened. A few seconds later the agent tossed his guitar case out of the room and slammed the door. He hardly noticed the black man in a silk shirt approaching him.

"That sound I just heard coming through the door," the man said to Marty as he bent over to pick up his case. "That was like nothing I ever heard before! I mean, you got something there, young man!"

Marty looked at him quizzically. At least *one* person had recognized rock'n roll for what it was! "Who are you?"

"Reginald Washington is my name," he said. "I manage some of the local bands around town and I think you've got something we can promote all the way to the top! Now, I've got a real important cat comin' in from a New York record company on Monday the 18th, and I want you to play that music for him. I think the time has come for a sound like that."

Marty grinned at his words. Reginald took a business card from his pocket and jotted down the date, time, and place on it with a pencil. "That's March 18th, Noon. Be at my office. What's your name?"

"Marty Mc - Marty Lewis," he quickly corrected himself.

Reginald nodded. "Okay, Marty Lewis. See you on the 18th." He handed him the card and shook his hand.

Marty looked at the card, not believing his luck. This was great! "Right on, brother!" he cried.

Reginald gave him a strange look. "I think you're a little mixed up. There is absolutely no way that I could be your brother." He turned and walked away. Marty glanced at the card again and smiled.

* * *

That evening, Marty stood before the mirror in the bedroom Professor Brown was letting him use. He had changed back into his 1982 clothes and was practicing the guitar, making sure he looked good. He had been doing it for close to fifteen minutes when he heard the front door open and slam shut.

Stopping in mid-note, Marty hastily placed the guitar in a corner of the room. He ran his fingers through his hair, mussing it up and adding to the illusion that he had spent the whole day lying around the house. On his way out the door, he grabbed the business card off the bed that Reginald had given him earlier that day and stuffed it in his Porsche jacket, draped over a chair.

Marty ran down the stairs and saw Professor Brown pouring himself a drink. He looked up as Marty came in the room, a scowl on his face. For a split second, Marty worried that he might have found out about his trip into town. "Well," he began slowly, "I found an energy source that can generate the 4200 rads that we need...."

Marty looked at him expectantly, waiting for the answer.

"An atomic bomb."

Marty snorted. "Professor, be serious, would you?"

"I am serious," Professor Brown insisted. "If we could get you, the time machine, and the power converter in the vicinity of an atomic blast, we could send you back to the future."

"You're talking crazy!" Marty cried. "An atomic blast would melt me and the time machine in a matter of seconds!"

The Professor shook his head. "You forget -- time travel is instantaneous. The time machine would melt, but you would have already travelled through time. Of course, it's a moot point regardless. The only place atomic bombs are detonated is at the Army's Nevada Test Site, and those tests are kept absolutely top secret."

Marty suddenly recalled sitting in class on the day he had left, the lecture Mr. Arky had given him. He remembered ripping a particular page out of the textbook for Suzy, and pocketing it in his jacket. He whirled around and pounded up the stairs to his room.

Marty grabbed the jacket and checked the first pocket. Yeah, there was the textbook page. He quickly unfolded it, the business card from Reginald falling out as he did so. Marty's eyes flew to the caption of the picture: "Last above ground atomic test, 15 megatons, March 18, 1952, Atkins, Nevada."

The date seemed familiar.... Marty picked the business card off the floor and checked the date on it beside the page. They were the same.

Marty looked between the two objects in his hands for a long moment, trying to figure out what to do. Maybe get home -- or get nuked -- or stay in the fifties and maybe become famous -- and alive at least. He crumpled up the page and tossed it in the garbage just before Professor Brown entered the room.

"Marty, what's wrong?" he asked, looking around.

He slipped the card back in the jacket and shrugged, trying to seem nonchalant. "Oh -- nothin'. I thought I left the water running."

The Professor's eyes zeroed in on the guitar in the corner of the room. He stepped over for a closer look before Marty could stop him.

"Say, where did this guitar come from?"

"Oh -- that -- I found it in the closet," Marty said quickly.

"I don't recall ever seeing it before," Professor Brown said, giving Marty a strange look.

"Well, it was there."

"Curious," the Professor mused. "Very curious...."

Chapter Seven

Late the next morning, Marty stirred and opened his eyes. It was another bright, sunny day outside. He smiled slowly, thinking of his audition a few days away, and crawled out of bed. The house was quiet, with the Professor at work.

Marty went downstairs and into the kitchen. Professor Brown had left the coffee pot on and he cheerfully poured himself a cup, then opened the refrigerator and pulled out the new bottle of milk. He got the stopper out in a matter of seconds, without breaking it, too. As Marty added the milk to the black coffee, he started to sing.

"So you wanna be a rock 'n roll star..." he began. The doorbell rang before he could get any further with the song. Marty rolled his eyes and set the milk down. He was going to have to go through this again? Marty left the kitchen and headed for the front door. He shook his head as he reached for the knob.

"Look, Professor," he started to say, opening the door, "I'm not -- oh."

The words died in his throat. Marty stared at Eileen, standing on the doorstep, hugging books to her chest. She smiled at him and Marty smiled back, weakly.

"Hi, Marty," she said.

"Uh, hi...."

"Eileen," his mother jumped in.

Marty gave another weak smile. It was hard for him to say her name. "Right. Eileen."
What is she doing here?

The smile faded from Eileen's face. "You remember me...?" she asked, an uncertain tone to her voice.

How could I forget? "Oh, sure, I remember you."

"Well, I was on my way to school, and I just wanted to stop by and see if you were feeling okay," she explained. "You seemed like you were in pretty bad shape the other night."

"Oh, I'm feeling much better now," Marty said.

The smile returned to Eileen's face. "How long are you planning on staying?"

Marty shrugged. "Actually, it looks like I'm gonna be stuck here for awhile," he admitted.

Eileen's smile grew wider. "Then you'll be going to school here....?"

"School?" Marty repeated, mostly to himself. "I never thought of school! If I went to school I could blend in with everybody else, couldn't I?"

Eileen blinked, puzzled.

"What time does school start around here?" Marty asked her.

"Nine o' clock," she said, glancing at her watch. Her eyes grew wide. "Oh, I'm late! Maybe I'll see you later."

"Yeah," Marty said thoughtfully. "Maybe so."

Eileen flashed another smile at him, then turned and hurried down the walk. Marty shut the door and headed for the upstairs.

* * *

Not much later, Marty walked up the steps of his future high school, amazed at the change. The graffiti was gone from the building, as were the broken windows and overall run-down worn-in look the place had held before -- or would later. All the tall trees on campus were much smaller, maybe half the size they were in 1982. The bell rang as he reached the door, a notebook in hand, and students streamed into the hallways.

Marty stared openly at his classmates. They all looked like people from an old movie, with the hair and clothes, the way they acted.... He walked through the hall and passed an open door. The classroom looked familiar and he stopped, looking inside.

After a moment of hesitation, Marty walked inside. Yeah, he *had* been in it before! But everything looked a lot different -- newer. And the chalkboards were black, not green. He went over to the desk that would be his in thirty years and ran a hand across the smooth, shiny surface, devoid of any marks or carvings.

"You there!" he heard someone yell. Someone familiar.... "What are you doing in this class?"

Marty lifted his head up and found himself looking at Mr. Arky -- thirty years younger! His mouth dropped open and his eyes widened as he stared at the science teacher. He looked so different, age aside. There was an energetic spark in his eyes that hadn't been there when Marty would have him for a teacher.

"Mr. Arky?" Marty asked, blinking a few times to make sure he wasn't seeing things. He wasn't. "Mr. Arky!"

"Yes, that's my name," the teacher said, unamused. "Who are you, young man? Are you supposed to be here?"

"Uh -- yeah," Marty said slowly. "I'm new here, and I'm supposed to be in this class."

Mr. Arky nodded. "You have a name?"

"Marty. Marty Lewis."

* * *

Marty watched the girl in the seat next to him, his eyes focused on the old fountain pen she was filling with ink. He couldn't believe it. Where were the pens he was used to?

In the background, Mr. Arky continued with the day's lecture. Marty listened to him with half an ear, not paying much attention.

"...and it is, of course, due to science that we Americans enjoy the highest standard of living in the history of the world. When we think of the technological advances made in just the past thirty years, it boggles the mind to imagine what the world will be like in another thirty years. I think I can safely say that we can all look forward to a world of plenty, a world free of disease and starvation. There'll be entire cities built under the sea, cars that can go two or three hundred miles an hour."

Marty stared at Mr. Arky in disbelief. Could he be serious? Marty glanced around and noticed the rest of the class looked bored, as if they had heard the lecture before.
Goddammit, he is serious!

"You girls will be able to cook an entire meal, clean the entire house, and do all of your laundry and ironing by push button," the science teacher went on. "You may even have a robot to assist you in all your duties as a wife."

"I hope those robots won't be assisting in *all* my wife's duties!" someone yelled from the back. The class laughed, but Marty was distracted by something. Where had he heard that voice before? It sounded vaguely familiar, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it....

"Well, Biff, since you seem so eager to get into this discussion, perhaps you'd like to tell us what you think you'll be doing in thirty years?" Mr. Arky said.

Marty turned around and saw Biff Tannen -- thirty years younger, of course -- slouched in the back desk with a bored expression on his face. Surrounding him were three other guys who were obviously friends of his. One was missing two front teeth, one chewed on a wooden match, and the other had a crewcut that made him look nearly bald. Marty stared at Biff, who appeared just as obnoxious as he was later in life.

"I know what I *won't* be doin'," he said with a smirk on his face. "Goin' to school!"

His three cronies broke out laughing. "Hey, Biff, good one!" the guy missing his teeth called out.

"Ataway, Biff!" the baldy added.

Biff suddenly noticed Marty's stare. He scowled at him. "What are you lookin' at, A-hole?" he demanded.

Marty met Biff's glare, then turned away. Mr. Arky continued with his class, the confrontation unnoticed.

"Anybody else have any ideas about what life might be like in thirty years?" the teacher asked the class, eyes roaming the class for volunteers. No one did, as usual.

At least this hasn't changed, Marty thought with a chuckle.

"Mr. Cusimano? Miss Voyles? Miss Kaner?" Mr. Arky looked around the silent class. "So am I to understand that no one has anything at all to say about the future?"

The teacher shifted his gaze to Marty. "How about you, Mr. McFly?"

Marty felt his face drain of color. He had been caught! "Oh shit...!" he muttered under his breath.

A few kids turned their heads to stare at him, shocked at his words, including Biff. Marty hardly had a chance to notice that when the student in front of him started to speak.

"Well, I, uh....well...."

Marty glanced at him, and did a double take. That person stuttering was none other than a younger version of George McFly -- his father! Marty couldn't believe it! First his mother, now this! George was a mess, shoulders slumped, hair uncombed, and an overall nerdy, wimpy look about him.

"Jesus Christ!" Marty gasped. "Dad!"

The entire class now stared at Marty. Mr. Arky ignored it as best he could. "Continue, Mr. McFly," he said.

Marty's father stood up slowly, as if he were getting called to his execution. Marty sighed and buried his face in his hands, shaking his head. "Well, I -- uh -- could you repeat the question?" George asked meekly.

"Sit down, McFly, you stupid moron!" Biff shouted from the back. "I can't see!" A second later, a spitball hit George in the back of the head. His face red, George sat down.

Marty whipped his head around, furious, and glared at Biff. "Hey, lay off!" he ordered.

Biff glared back at him, his eyes narrowed in slits of hatred.

"Did you say something, Mr. Lewis?" Mr. Arky asked.

Marty didn't hear him, continuing to give Biff the worst look he could. "Mr. Lewis, I'm talking to you," Mr. Arky said, his voice rising.

Marty snapped out of it, remembering who he was supposed to be. "Who, me?"

"You're the only Mr. Lewis in this class," Mr. Arky said with a note of sarcasm in his voice, gesturing around. "If you have something to say, say it so the whole class can hear."

Marty nodded. If that's what he wanted. "Well, yeah, I was thinking," he began, "if cars are gonna be going two or three hundred miles an hour, they're gonna be using an awful lot of gas. Like, what if we run out?"

Mr. Arky stared at him. "Run out of gas?" he repeated in disbelief. The class started laughing. Marty looked around, baffled. Was what he said *that* funny? "Well, class, it seems we have a doomsayer in our midst. I must say, Mr. Lewis, that's a mighty pessimistic attitude for a young man like yourself," Mr. Arky added.

"First of all, with all the studies we have indicating the vast supplies of petroleum in the earth, plus the massive reserves that have yet to be discovered, the likelihood of any such shortage is highly remote. And even if the most improbable, catastrophic circumstances were to occur and we did have a shortage of petroleum, I'm sure that American technology and ingenuity would overcome the problem in no time at all. All in all," Mr. Arky concluded, "I'd say your time would be better spent worrying about the *real* problems that face our world, instead of a shortage of gasoline."

At the back of the class, Biff and his group started to make farting noises. "Hey, we got plenty of gas back here!" Biff cried, causing the class to erupt into laughter once again.

Marty just shook his head.

Chapter Eight

Not much later, the bell rang, ending the science class. Everyone made a mad dash for the door, including Marty. He'd had enough humiliation for the day with Mr. Arky.

George waited until most of the other students had left before gathering up his books and heading for the door. Marty separated himself from the mob in the hall and stood outside the door, waiting for him. A minute later, George finally walked into the corridor. Marty waited a moment, then followed him, keeping his distance.

When they reached a hall intersection, Marty noticed Eileen headed for the two of them, her friend Madge with her. She didn't seem to see Marty, but her eyes locked on George and she smiled at him. "Hi, George," she cooed.

Marty watched as George looked over at her and became so flustered that he walked straight into another student in the hall. Eileen and her friend giggled and walked away. George's eyes followed her until she was out of sight, then he walked over to a drinking fountain.

As he leaned over and turned the fountain on, he misjudged the distance and the stream of water hit him right in the face. Marty shook his head from a few feet away, as George wiped the water from his eyes. From the fountain, George headed over to his locker. Marty watched him dial the combination and, as he opened the locker door, a pile of books fell out, nearly knocking him over. Marty looked away, sighing.

After George picked up his books, he started moving in the direction of the cafeteria. As Marty got in the lunch line behind him, he noticed a large poster tacked on the wall. Something about the "Springtime in Paris Dance" on Saturday, March 16th. Not too far off.

Marty turned his attention to his father, watching the bored cafeteria ladies shovel out a overcooked pork chop, wilted salad, and green stewed tomatoes. *Looks like the food isn't much better now then in 1982*, Marty thought, amused. George didn't seem to notice. Leaning forward a little, Marty could hear him muttering to himself.

"Eileen, if you're free Saturday night.... No.... Eileen, would you like to go to the dance...no...."

Something suddenly clicked and Marty looked at the poster again. Yeah, now he remembered! That was the dance his parents fell in love at!

The lunch line moved slowly, but eventually both he and George got through it. George looked around the crowded lunch room, searching for someone. Marty tried to follow where his eyes were roaming and after a moment, he realized George was staring at the table where Eileen, Madge, and a few other friends of theirs were sitting. George took a deep breath, then started walking over to the table. Marty followed, not too far behind.

As George approached the table, his hands started shaking, causing everything on his lunch tray to wobble around. "Uh, Eileen?" he began when he was at the table.

Eileen turned around and gave him a warm smile. "Hi, George."

Marty watched his future father, a bundle of nerves. "Eileen, could I ask you something?" he said quickly. The creamed corn on his tray suddenly tipped over and spilled. "Ooops --!"

Eileen smiled again, obviously not put off by it.

George took another deep breath. "Uh, well, the thing is, that is, what I wanted to ask you...."

Marty decided this was too important to miss and crept closer so he could hear better. Unfortunately, Eileen spotted him.

"Marty!" she exclaimed, raising an arm to wave at him. "Hi, Marty! Over here!"

George spun around before Marty had a chance to do anything. The sudden movement causing George's entire tray to slip from his hands and spill all over his shirt. "Oh God!" he cried, horrified. "Excuse me, please!"

He started to run off, but Marty grabbed his arm. "Wait a minute -- aren't you gonna ask her to the dance?" That was what was supposed to have happened, wasn't it?

George stared at him. "Huh? How did you know?"

Marty pushed him towards Eileen. "Go ahead, George. Ask her."

George shoved his arms away. "Leave me alone!"

The gesture shocked Marty, but he shook his head. "You've gotta ask her to the dance!"

"Not now...." George muttered, looking around the cafeteria. People were beginning to stare.

Eileen had been watching the whole ordeal with interest. Now she spoke up. "Is that what you were going to ask me, George? To go to the dance?"

"No!" George shouted, running away, out of the cafeteria.

"George!" Marty yelled, taking a few steps in his direction. "Wait! Get back here! You're not supposed to run off! It doesn't happen that way!"

George didn't look back. Marty threw his hands up in the air helplessly. "Oh, God, this is all wrong!" he moaned.

Eileen stared at him with concern. "What's all wrong?"

Marty ran a hand through his hair, agitated. "George! He's supposed to ask you to the dance!"

"But he didn't ask me."

"But he does!" Marty insisted. "Don't you see?"

By the blank expression on Eileen's face, it was obvious that she didn't. Marty quickly explained: "He comes out of the cafeteria line, he's nervous, he spills his corn, and he asks you to the dance!"

"Marty, you haven't been listening. Nobody's asked me to the dance...yet," she added, giving him a flirtatious smile before picking up her empty lunch tray and walking away.

Oh, no she couldn't be.... Marty sat down in a chair, quick, as his legs threatened to give out on him. Eileen, his mother, she -- she....

"I know," he whispered.

* * *

"You did what?!?" Professor Brown yelled as Marty finished telling him what had gone on that morning. It was later in the afternoon, they were in his study. Marty had gone to the Professor right away, since he had no idea what to do and needed some advice. His friend was taking the news better than Marty had expected.

"I didn't mean to do it -- it was an accident!" he insisted.

Professor Brown shook his head. "Do you realize what that means? Do you have any idea what that means?" he cried.

Marty shrugged. "Look, it's not a big deal! I can fix it! All I gotta do is get 'em together and make sure my old man asks her out!"

"You *better* make sure your old man asks her out," Professor Brown countered, "because if he doesn't, they may never *have* a first date. And if they don't have a first date, they won't have a second date. If they don't have a second date, they won't fall in love. If they don't fall in love, they won't get married, and if they don't get married, you'll never be born!"

Marty swallowed hard. *Well, maybe everything is a little worse than I first thought*, he realized.

Chapter Nine

The next day, Marty brought George to the malt shop. It was after classes and all the high school students were in there, including Eileen.

"I don't know if I can go through with this!" George moaned as they drew closer to the building. Marty dodged two kids on homemade scooters as they sped by them on the sidewalk. His eyes followed them for a moment, the vehicles reminding him of skateboards.

"George, she's beautiful, right?" Marty said to him. "She's nice, she's decent, she's the kind of girl you'd like to marry, right? And there's nothing in the world you'd like more than to take her to that dance, right?"

"Well...yeah...." George admitted.

"Okay, then!" Marty said brightly.

Suddenly, George stopped, turned and faced him, his eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Wait a minute -- who are you, anyway? What are you doing this for?" he asked, his hands on his hips.

Marty hesitated. "Let's just say I have a vested interest in you and Eileen going to this dance, all right? Look," he added, pointing through the window of the malt shop. "There she is...."

Eileen was sitting at a table with Madge and some other girl, each having ice cream sodas and talking.

"Go in there and invite her," Marty told George, nudging him in the direction of the doors.

But George stayed put. "What do I say?" he worried.

"Say what you were supposed to say in the cafeteria," Marty prompted him.

George shook his head quickly. "Oh, no! That was for the cafeteria! This is different!"

"Christ, it's a miracle I was even born!" Marty muttered under his breath, rolling his eyes.

"Huh?"

"Nothing," he said quickly. "Look, I'll write it down for you, okay?" Marty took the notebook George had in his hands and ripped a page out. He pulled his pen out and started jotting down some helpful lines. George stared at the pen as he wrote.

"What is that? A pencil that writes in ink?" he wondered.

It was Marty's turn to be confused. "Huh?"

"Lemme see that." George plucked the pen from his hand and looked at it carefully. "'Bike fine point?' "

"Bic," Marty corrected. "It's a Bic pen."

George frowned. "How do you fill it with ink?"

"Fill it with ink?" Marty repeated. "You don't fill it -- oh come on, George!" He pushed him into the malt shop, tired of the procrastination. As soon as they entered, Marty steered him in the direction of Eileen's table and handed him the paper he had written on.

"There she is," he said in a low voice. "Just go and ask her. I'll be sitting right here," Marty added, taking an empty seat at the counter.

George looked at him, and then over at Eileen. He took a deep breath and stepped forward, then suddenly veered back to the counter. "Gimme a strawberry malted," he told the soda jerk. Marty shook his head, wondering if he would ever get to Eileen.

While he waited for the drink, George examined the paper Marty gave him and mouthed the dialog to himself, apparently trying to memorize it. A moment later, the malt came and he took a swig of it, the drink leaving an unnoticed pink moustache on his face. He turned around and started to approach Eileen.

Finally, Marty thought.

George was still several feet away when Eileen looked up and spotted him. "Hi, George," she said brightly.

He took a step back, startled. "Uh, hi, Eileen," he mumbled.

"How are you?" Eileen asked.

"Oh -- I'm all right. Say, listen, about this dance Saturday night --"

The door to the malt shop was suddenly thrown open. "Hey, McFly, I thought I told you never to come in here!" Biff Tannen yelled, standing in the doorway with his gang behind him. George took one look at him and shuddered. Marty let his head fall in his hands with a sigh. They had been so goddamn close!

"Well, it's gonna cost you, McFly," Biff continued, stepping onto the tiled floor. "How much money you got on you?"

George pulled out his wallet and opened it. "How much do you want, Biff?" he asked meekly.

Biff crossed the room, on his way to George. As he passed, Marty stretched his leg out and tripped the bully. Biff crashed to the floor, taking a chair down with him. People started to laugh, but Biff scowled. He didn't think it was too funny. He got to his feet and stepped over to where Marty sat, his back to him.

"Listen, A-hole," he growled, "it's about time I taught you a lesson." Biff put a hand on his arm and at his touch, Marty spun around on the stool and threw his fist into Biff's face! Unprepared, Biff fell back onto a table. Marty jumped off the stool. The cafe was deathly silent and Biff's three henchmen started to approach him. Marty decided it was time for him to leave the building and he pushed his way out of the crowded teen hangout and onto Main Street.

Marty ran down the street, hearing the pounding footsteps of Biff and his gang behind him. He cast a quick look over his shoulder and saw them closing the gap that separated them. He was going to be dead meat! One of the kids on the homemade scooters sailed by, and Marty suddenly had an idea. He grabbed the scooter and pulled it away from the kid, kicking the orange crate off the board with the skates on it and leaving a crude skateboard!

Marty jumped on it and sped down the street. Biff and his gang stopped in their tracks and stared at him, amazed. Likewise with the crowd that had moved out of the malt shop.

"In the car!" Biff yelled to his buddies. They raced to the black convertible, Biff getting behind the wheel. He gunned the engine, heading straight for Marty. Marty glanced over his shoulder and saw the convertible quickly gaining on him. He cut a sharp turn in the middle of the street and crossed before Biff's car, then started to retrace his steps back to the malt shop. A car passed him, and Marty grabbed onto the back of it, ignoring the stunned looks of everyone around, including Biff and his gang.

Biff executed a quick U-turn and continued his pursuit of Marty. As he passed the malt shop, the spectators cheered. "Did you see that?" Madge asked Eileen, awed.

Eileen nodded, her mouth open, impressed.

Biff's convertible raced past the cafe, hot on the trail of Marty. Marty risked another look back. His eyes widened in panic as he saw Biff's convertible closing in on the distance, quick. Was there no end to his maniacal determination? Marty turned his attention back to the front. He saw Hill Street intersecting up ahead. Instinctively, he released his hold on the car and leaned into the board, turning it onto the street. Biff once again overshot the street and had to do another U-turn to get on it.

Hill Street was not named by accident -- it was incredibly steep. At the bottom of the hill was an intersection with traffic lights. Marty felt the board pick up speed. Behind him, Biff was putting the pedal to the metal, the tires actually leaving the ground as he leapt onto Hill Street! Once again, he quickly closed in on the distance between the convertible and the skateboard. Marty crouched down, cutting the wind resistance down, and the skateboard picked up speed. He was approaching the intersection, fast! The light turned yellow.

Closing his eyes and mouthing a silent prayer, Marty flew through the traffic, cars skidding to a stop and swerving to avoid hitting him. Miraculously, he made it to the other side unscathed.

Such could not be said for Biff. His breaks locked up as he tried to avoid a red car ahead, and the convertible's tires skidded across the road. Marty winced in anticipation as Biff headed straight for a red car. At the last minute, the car pulled away and Biff slammed into a cop car in the next lane of traffic! Two big cops immediately got out and headed straight for Biff, not looking too happy.

Biff let out an angry sigh. "I'm gonna get that son of a bitch," he growled.

Marty left the site, a satisfied smile on his face. Biff had gotten what he deserved. He turned onto a residential street, his mind wandering as he leisurely skateboarded. About ten minutes later, he reached an intersection next to his future home, and saw Eileen approaching the house...with George! Marty skidded to a stop, grabbed the board, and ducked behind some bushes to watch.

George, carrying Eileen's books, was walking her to the door. They were talking, but Marty couldn't catch any of the conversation. After a moment, George gave Eileen her books and they shook hands very formal-like.

He must've finally asked her to the dance! Marty sighed, glad to have that mission finally accomplished and dropped his board on the ground, skateboarding away from Eileen's house to the Professor's place to tell him the news. He never saw George, after Eileen had closed the door, throw his jacket down in the street and slump down in the gutter, dropping his head in his hands, dejected instead of exuberant.

That evening, Marty lay on his bed, staring at the ceiling in deep thought. Eventually, he reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out the business card from Reginald. Marty looked at it for a long time...then shredded it into tiny scraps. He pushed himself off the bed and let the papers fall into the trash can. Then he pulled out the crumpled textbook page and went downstairs with it, heading for the study.

Professor Brown was seated at the desk, his back to the door, hunched over something. As Marty entered, he made a quick movement, as if he was trying to hide the fact he had been listening to the micro-cassette recorder again, the gunshot portion. Marty didn't notice, too caught up in his own problems.

"Professor, you were right about everything," he said. "I don't belong here. I almost screwed up my existence again today while I was trying to put it back together, and I've had enough. I want to go back to the future."

Marty handed him the textbook page, pointing at the caption under the photograph. The frown on the Professor's face changed to a smile and his eyes lit up. "Where did you get this?" he demanded.

"I brought it with me from 1982," Marty explained. "It's from my science book."

Professor Brown looked at it more closely. "The test is this Monday! 15 megatons," he mused. "Let's see, we need 4200 rads..." The Professor did some calculations on a slide rule, lying on the desk. "You'd have to be...exactly 800 yards from ground zero," he concluded.

Professor Brown turned to Marty with a serious look. "You realize that what we're going to do could be extremely dangerous."

"Believe me, Professor, running around on a nuclear test site can't be any more dangerous than what I've been doing," Marty assured him, thinking of that afternoon's chase.

The Professor stared at him a moment, then nodded. "All right, here's what we'll do: we'll get an Army Surplus Truck, mount the time machine and power converter on it, and drive it to Nevada. If we leave by Saturday night, we can make it to the test site in plenty of time. And just to be on the safe side, I'd better build a lead-lined time chamber for your added protection. I don't know if I trust these atomic bombs," he added.

The telephone rang before Professor Brown could say anything else. He reached over and picked it up. "Hello?" A pause, during which the Professor looked sharply at Marty. "Uh, no, Eileen, he can't come to the phone right now." Marty stared at him, his heart starting to pound with alarm.

"All right," Professor Brown was saying. "Yes, I'll tell him.... Good-bye." He hung up and turned to Marty with a grave expression. Marty had a sinking feeling that he was not going to like what he had to say. He was right.

"Your 'mother' wanted me to tell you that she was very impressed by what you did this afternoon, and that if you were interested in going to the dance Saturday, she's available."

"But that's impossible!!" Marty cried. "George asked her out! He had to! I saw him walk her home! Oh, God!" he moaned.

"My guess is that she turned him down," Professor Brown said calmly.

"But why?" Marty asked. "Why would she do that? She's supposed to marry the guy!"

Professor Brown shrugged. "Apparently, what has happened is that the maternal instinct has transcended the gap of time and this has caused an alteration in your mother's emotional behavior."

Marty swallowed hard. "Are you trying to tell me that my mother's got the hots for me?" he demanded.

The Professor thought about that for a moment. "In a manner of speaking, yes," he decided. "And because of that, she's no longer interested in your father."

"Jesus!" Marty sat down in a nearby chair. "What are we gonna do?"

Chapter Ten

Marty stepped into the malt shop the next day, his eyes on Eileen and Madge, both sitting at the same table as they were the day before, once again talking and drinking ice cream sodas. He crossed the room and sat down with them, to Eileen's delight.

"How ya doing, Eileen?" he greeted her.

Eileen smiled. She and her friend exchanged a glance. "Hi, Marty!"

"Listen," Marty began, his hands under the table top, "Professor Brown told me you called last night and gave me your message...." He carefully taped the micro-cassette recorder to the bottom of the table and pressed the record button. Neither girl seemed to notice anything. "...and if you're still available, I'd like to take you to the dance Saturday night, so I'll pick you up around 8:30, okay?"

Eileen smiled and nodded as Marty stood up to leave. "Okay. See you later, Marty."

Marty gave her a cheerful wave as he left the malt shop. He pretended to walk away, then ducked behind a nearby building. A few minutes later, Eileen and Madge came out. He waited until they were out of sight before running in the shop and prying the recorder loose.

Later that night, in the Professor's garage, Marty played it back for the both of them. Professor Brown had been welding sheet lead metal into a large Philco Refrigerator. The time machine was now resting in the bed of an Army truck. The Professor had also modified the top of the refrigerator to hold the beam focusing unit so the time beam would shine directly into the fridge.

"...so I'll pick you up around 8:30, okay?" Marty heard himself say on the tape.

"Okay. See you later, Marty."

He heard the sounds of him walking away and leaving the shop. Almost as soon as the door shut behind him, the girls started talking about him. "Isn't he a dream?" Eileen asked with a giddy sigh.

"Boy, I've never seen you fall for anybody like that before," Madge said.

Eileen sighed again. "I know. I've never felt like this about anybody before. I really don't understand it, but I just feel like -- like mothering him."

Marty and the Professor exchanged a look.

"But what about George?" Madge asked Eileen. "I thought you wanted him to ask you."

"He did ask me....but I turned him down."

"Why?" Madge asked, sounding surprised. "You always thought George was cute because he was so shy."

"Well, that's what I thought. But he really isn't shy. He's just chicken."

The Professor suddenly grabbed the recorder from Marty's hands and rewound the last sentence.

"He's just chicken," Eileen said again.

* * *

"Come on, George," Marty said Saturday morning, facing off with him in his backyard. "Don't be such a chicken. Hit me in the stomach. Right here, go ahead." He held his arms away from his body, making himself an easy target. Behind him, a duffel bag packed with clothes swung from a tree, as a homemade body bag.

George didn't make a move. "I don't want to hit you in the stomach," he said meekly.

"You're not gonna hurt me," Marty insisted. "Just hit me in the stomach."

"Look, Marty, I'm just not a fighter," George said, shaking his head.

Marty rolled his eyes. "How many times do I have to explain it to you?" he said patiently. "We know you're not a fighter. You know it, I know it...but she doesn't know it. That's why we gotta make you look like a fighter, somebody who'll stand up for her, somebody who isn't chicken. And you're not gonna look like a fighter if you can't hit me in the stomach."

"But I've never picked a fight in my entire life!"

"You're not picking a fight, you're coming to her rescue," Marty corrected. "Maybe we'd better go over the plan again. Where are you gonna be at 8:55?"

"At the dance," George replied.

"And where am I gonna be?"

"In the parking lot, with her."

Marty nodded, glad to see that he had been paying attention. "Okay. So right around 9:00 she's gonna get very angry with me -"

"Why?" George interrupted.

"Why what?"

"Why is she gonna get angry with you?"

Marty hesitated. "Well...because...." He had a hard time getting the words out. "Well, nice girls get angry at guys who...who try to take advantage of 'em."

George looked at him in disbelief. "You mean, you're gonna --"

"George; it's not your concern. Don't worry about it. Just remember that at 9:00, you'll be strolling through the parking lot and you'll see us" -- Marty gulped -- "struggling in the car, you'll run over, open the door and say....?"

Marty waited for George, but he didn't say anything. "Your line, George," Marty reminded him.

"Oh. Uh... 'Hey, you! Get your damn hands off her!' " George paused. "You really think I should swear?"

"Yes, definitely, George, swear." Marty continued with the plan. "Then you hit me in the stomach, I go down for the count, and you and Eileen live happily ever after. Now," he added, coming back to the original purpose, "hit me in the stomach."

George took a deep breath and tentatively threw his fist into Marty's stomach. Marty shook his head.

"No, George, put a little emotion into it. A little hostility, a little anger."

He tried it again, this time making faces. The second punch wasn't much better than the one before it.

"Anger, George," Marty reminded him. "Anger."

George hesitated. "Maybe if I used my left...."

"No, George, just concentrate on the anger. Anger."

The third punch George tried was a little bit better. But still not what Marty was looking for. He sighed. "Well, I think you're starting to get the hang of it. Just keep practicing. I'll see you tonight. Remember, anger, George. Anger." He walked away, leaving George alone in the yard.

George stared at the body bag, trying to think of something that would make him really angry. "Anger...anger...." he muttered.

He hit it, the punches coming harder and harder each time. George smiled, finally getting the hang of it. He pulled his fist back, ready to sock it to the bag. Unfortunately, he misjudged the distance and his fist slammed into the tree trunk.

"Yeeeeowww!" he shouted in pain. "Goddammit!"

With his left fist, George attacked the bag with everything he had -- and knocked it completely off the tree! He stared at it for a long time, shocked.

Chapter Eleven

It was the night of the dance. The time machine and refrigerator -- now successfully lead-lined -- was completely assembled in the back of the truck. Beside it sat the power converter and a motorcycle with sidecar. As Professor Brown pulled a tarp over the back, Marty placed his 1982 clothes in a laundry bag, with some bottles of Coke.

"Everything's ready to go," the Professor said, securing the tarp carefully. He looked up. "What about the chemicals for the power converter....whatever they are?"

Marty opened the door and stashed the laundry bag at the floor of the passenger seat. "That's all taken care of."

"Good." Professor Brown tested the tarp, noting in satisfaction that it was secure. "I'll pick you up in front of the school at midnight. Don't be late -- we're cutting it close as it is. We've got a long drive ahead of us."

Marty nodded. He twisted his tie around his fingers, almost absentmindedly. He wasn't feeling too hot about the next few hours. "Look. I'm a little worried about this -- this whole thing with my mother," he admitted to the Professor. "I mean, I don't know if I can do it -- I mean, hitting on my own mother, that's pretty heavy."

"Nobody said anything about hitting her," Professor Brown said. "You're just going to take a few liberties with her."

"That's exactly what I said!" Marty insisted. "I mean, a guy and his mother -- that's illegal, isn't it?"

"Look, Marty, she's not your mother yet," the Professor explained carefully. "And if you don't go through with this, she may never be. I know it's hard, but there are some things we must do in life that are unpleasant. Some choices must be made that are difficult. Nonetheless, we must make them. Besides, this may be more than a simple question of your own existence," he added. "The fate of the entire space-time continuum may rest on your shoulders."

Marty tried to smile at him. "That's just what I needed to hear."

"It'll be fine, Marty," Professor Brown assured him, patting him on the shoulder. "You'll be fine. Good luck." He stuck his hand out and Marty shook it. But there was still a question that was nagging at him....

"Professor," he began hesitantly, "if something does go wrong tonight....if I don't get my parents back together....when do you think I'd cease to exist?"

The Professor shrugged. "There's no way of knowing."

Perfect, Marty thought.

"It could happen at the moment you arrive back in the future," Professor Brown continued, "theoretically, it could happen at the moment of your birth...or conception. Actually, it could happen at any time. It's a question to which I hope we'll never learn the answer."

Marty nodded vigorously. "Amen."

* * *

Not too much later, Marty pulled into the high school parking lot with Eileen at his side in the Professor's Packard. He carefully parked the car. It was hard for him to look at his mother, Eileen, in the dress she was wearing. It was a light pink color, low cut, showing off her cleavage. He stared at the clock in the dashboard instead.

"Uh....let's just sit here for a few minutes," Marty suggested, his voice cracking.

Eileen looked at him with motherly concern. "Are you all right, Marty? You seem a little...nervous."

"Oh, no, I'm fine...fine," he said quickly, trying to smile at her. It came out pretty shaky. But Eileen smiled back a moment later.

"I'm usually nervous myself on first dates...but not tonight. It's funny, but somehow, I feel like....like I know you," she confessed.

"Uh, yeah, well, believe me, I sure feel like I know you!" Marty said honestly. He wondered how George was doing, and wished he'd hurry up and get his ass out here!

* * *

The dance was in full swing. The band, Lester Moon and the Midnighters, were on stage, playing "The Blue Tango." In the middle of the dance floor was a big paper-mache Eiffel Tower, around which students were doing the Tango. George looked up at the clock in the gym. 8:59. He quickly looked at his watch. It read 8:55. Which one was right?

He ran over to a student nearby. "What time do you have?" he asked frantically.

The guy looked at his watch. "Five after nine."

George let out a moan and ran as fast as he could from the gym!

* * *

Marty shifted uncomfortably in the seat and glanced at the clock again. "Why are you so nervous?" Eileen asked with a frown, watching him carefully.

Marty took a deep breath, trying to steady himself. He had to get a grip! "Well, Eileen...jeez, that's hard for me to say," he muttered. "Have you ever been in a situation where -- well -- you know you have to act a certain way, but when you get there, you don't know if you can go through with it?"

"You mean like how you're supposed to act with someone on a first date?"

Marty tilted his head to the side. "Well, sort of...."

Eileen nodded, interrupting him. "I think I know exactly what you mean."

"You do?"

Eileen nodded again, slower. "And you know what I do in those situations?"

Marty finally looked at her, waiting for the answer.

"I don't worry about it!" she exclaimed.

The words had barely left her lips when she lunged at Marty, nearly knocking him over, starting to kiss him passionately.

Eileen climbed all over him, her skirts everywhere. She reached out and took Marty's hand, lying limp at his side, and placed it on the top of her bare breasts. Marty couldn't move, paralysed in shock that this promiscuous teenager was his mother!

* * *

George stood at a pay phone, quickly dialing the number for the time. The phone rang two long times before a woman answered.

"At the tone, the time will be 9:00 exactly."

Before the tone could go off, George dropped the phone and raced down the hall. He had to get to the parking lot!

* * *

Eileen had been attacking Marty for about a minute -- a very long minute in Marty's opinion -- before she suddenly stopped and pushed him away. The buttons at the top of her dress were undone and her bra was exposed.

"This isn't right," she said slowly.

* * *

George reached the front of the school doors and threw them open. Suddenly, he was jerked to a stop. He looked behind him and saw his jacket had caught on the door jamb. He tried frantically to get it loose, all the while aware of the seconds ticking by.

* * *

Eileen continued to speak.

"I don't know what it is, but...when I kiss you...something's wrong," she said hesitantly. "It almost feels like...like I was kissing my brother...or my father.... I don't understand it, but I just know it's wrong." She looked at Marty, her eyes wide. "I guess that doesn't make any sense, does it?"

Marty stared at her, finally finding his voice. "Believe me, it makes perfect sense."

Sudden footsteps crunched on gravel, approaching the car. Eileen glanced outside. "Sounds like somebody's coming."

The steps grew closer. Marty looked at the clock. Nine on the dot. "Not now, George," he murmured. "Not now...."

The driver's door was suddenly thrown open. Marty had hardly turned toward it when he was yanked out of the car roughly. Instead of George, he saw someone he had not expected in the least. It was Biff!

"I been lookin' for you, A-hole," the bully growled in a low voice. He shoved Marty over to Skinhead, standing nearby. Marty fought to get free, but he was no match for Biff's gang. Three against one was never good odds.

"Let go of him!" Eileen demanded, watching the spectacle from inside the car. "Leave him alone!"

A smile spread across Biff's face when he noticed Eileen. "Look at what we have here!" he cried to his friends. His eyes traveled across her body and he saw her bra half exposed. "Eileen -- I didn't know you were that kinda girl!"

"I'm not!" Eileen started to climb out of the car.

"Oh no, you don't!" Before she could get anywhere, Biff grabbed her and pushed her back inside, then climbed in after her. He looked at his gang as he pulled a struggling Eileen towards him. "Take him around back. I'll join you in a minute."

When his gang made no move to leave, he added, "Go on! This ain't no peepshow!"

Marty tried to get free and help his mom -- do *something* -- but he was helpless! As he was dragged away, he saw Biff slam the door and lunge toward Eileen to kiss her. She fought and a moment later, all Marty saw were her skirts and flailing arms and legs. Eileen was trying to scream, but Biff -- in some way or another -- kept cutting her off.

Marty was dragged around a corner, the car vanishing from his view. A man stood at the side door, smoking something. Marty twisted his head around and saw him about the same time the black man saw them. It was Reginald Washington, the same guy who had liked his music.

"Hey!" he demanded. "What's going on there?"

Marty tried to answer, but one of the bullies conveniently had their hand over his mouth. "Beat it, black boy!" Gums answered.

Reginald took a step forward. "Hey, now, you'd better --"

"Listen, spook," Skinhead interrupted, "you lookin' for trouble?" "No, sir, I don't want no trouble." Reginald backed away and went back into the school. Marty was left alone, at the mercy of Biff's gang.

* * *

George finally managed to get his jacket free and ran down the front steps across to the parking lot. He hurried through the lot, his eyes skimming the rows of car for the cream colored Packard. Finally, he zeroed in on it. His eyes widened as he saw that Eileen and Marty were struggling inside, Eileen screaming. George steadied himself, hiked up his pants, and rushed to the side of the car. He opened the driver's side door.

"Hey, you!" he said forcefully. "Get your damn hands -- uh oh!"

It wasn't Marty inside with Eileen. When the guy inside turned around, he saw with horror that it was Biff Tannen instead! An icy stab of fear hit George in the chest.

"I think you got the wrong car, McFly," Biff said slowly, his voice low.

Eileen struggled to sit up. "George! Help me!" she begged.

George looked at her, feeling strangely detached from the situation. He didn't know what to do! A part of him wanted to run as fast and far away as possible, but at the same time he knew he couldn't leave Eileen alone with Biff.

"Just close the door, McFly, and walk away," Biff continued in the same deadly serious voice.

"George! Please! Help me!" Eileen moaned from inside the car.

George stood rooted to where he was, unable to make up his mind. His eyes darted between Biff's mask of anger, and Eileen's tear streaked face. What should he do?

* * *

Marty was shoved back against the school wall. His head slammed against the concrete wall and he winced. Gums and Match kept a firm hold on him, so he couldn't get away. Across from him, Skinhead pulled his fist back, ready to slam Marty in the face. Marty closed his eyes, tensing up, waiting for the blow.

But it never came. Instead he heard footsteps and cries of surprise from Biff's gang. He opened his eyes and saw that Reginald had brought some friends. It was the band that was playing at the dance.

"Who you callin' 'spook', peckerwood?" one of them said.

Skinhead tried to throw a punch at him -- but the guy got him instead! Then the rest of the men went after Gums and Match -- who saw them approaching and tried to make a run for it, releasing Marty.

Marty darted away to the parking lot, not letting the chance to escape pass by. He had to get back to Eileen!

* * *

George stared at Biff, who stared back angrily. "All right, McFly, I asked you politely to leave," he warned. "Now I'm gonna have to teach you a lesson!"

Biff stepped out of the car and before George could move, he grabbed his right arm and twisted it back. George let out a moan of pain. Biff started laughing, as if it was some kind of great joke. The laugh taunted George, made him angrier and angrier.

Without thinking about it, his left hand clenched into a fist and he spun around. His fist connected solidly with Biff's face, and the smile dropped from the bully's face a second before he dropped to the ground, out cold!

George looked at his hand, stunned, as if he couldn't believe that it had done such a thing.

Marty reached the site just then, skidding to a stop. Eileen climbed out of the car and gave George a hug. He hugged her back tentatively. Marty ducked back into the shadows, not wanting to be spotted by either one of them and ruin the moment.

A few other kids from the dance were migrating toward the site now. "Did you see that?" a girl asked.

"Kid's got the greatest left hook since Jo Louis!" another guy declared. "Laid 'im out cold with one punch!"

"Somebody better call an ambulance."

Marty shook his head, amazed that they were talking about his father! He watched George and Eileen walk slowly toward the school, arm in arm. Right before they entered, Eileen turned around and caught sight of Marty staring at them. She gave him a shy smile and he grinned at her in return. Once they entered the building, he turned and ran back to the side of the school, where he had left Biff's gang.

The band members were running off Biff's gang. As Marty approached them, one of them got one last kick at Skinhead in the ass before they spilt. "Hey, thanks a lot, you guys," he told the band as they watched the three hoods scatter into the night.

"It's okay," the guy who had saved Marty said.

"Well, you guys go back in there and play the best version of 'Turn Back the Hands of Time' that you can," Marty said, glancing towards the door.

The band members shook their heads. "Sorry, my friend, we're through for tonight."

Marty looked at them, stunned. "What do you mean?"

"Look at Lester's hand," the drummer pointed out. "He smashed it on top of old Baldy. We can't play without Lester."

Marty glanced at Lester, who was wrapping a handkerchief around his bruised and bleeding hand. "But you guys have to play!" he insisted. "The dance isn't over yet! You gotta play 'Turn Back the Hands of Time'. My parents gotta -- George, Eileen gotta dance the last dance and kiss!"

"Hey, man, the dance is over...unless you can find somebody who can play the guitar."

Marty turned to look at Reginald.

Marty stood on stage with the band, playing "Turn Back the Hands of Time" with them. He could see his parents dancing cheek to cheek in the middle of the dance floor. Marty watched them carefully as the song ended, holding his breath. They leaned forward slowly, hesitantly....then their lips met in a kiss! He smiled in relief, then checked the time. A few minutes before midnight.

Marty stepped forward to the microphone set up. "Well, folks, that about wraps it up for this evening...." he began.

The students moaned in disappointment. "Aww, one more! Just one more!" they pleaded.

"You want one more, huh?" Marty looked at the clock again, then turned to the band. None of them appeared to have any objections. He looked at the crowd, considering, then finally decided to go for it. "Well, I probably shouldn't do this, but what the hell, you're gonna be hearing a lot of this in the future anyway...." He turned around. "Follow me, fellas," he told the band members.

Marty walked over to his amp and twisted the volume to the maximum amount it would go. He placed his guitar against it and shattered the expectant silence of the gym with a loud riff from the instrument. The audience looked both shocked and horrified, and the band exchanged looks of confusion. Marty started in on a Chuck Berry song, "Johnny B. Goode," expressions in the gym changing to astonishment. It took a moment, but the band finally figured out what was going on and joined in. Marty grinned as the first -- very first -- sound of rock 'n roll was heard.

Kids started dancing, only a few at first, then more joined in. Marty started moving on stage, like the rockers did at heavy metal concerts. The crowd roared, total pandemonium breaking out on the dance floor. No one had ever heard this kind of music before! The band got more and more enthusiastic as the chaperones clasped their hands tightly to their ears, horrified expressions on their faces.

Marty shifted the music to "Rock Around the Clock," noting in satisfaction that the entire gym was dancing to the music. He loosened the tie around his neck, sweating from those hot stage lights, then decided to just take his jacket off. He yanked it off his body and tossed it into the crowd.

Meanwhile, out in the hall, an old teacher who had been chaperoning the dance was on the phone. "That's right, officer," she cried into the phone, over the music, "there's a riot in the school gym!"

In the gym, on the stage, the man with the sax stepped forward and improvised an impressive solo. Then it was Marty's turn. He reached up and tore open his shirt, making all the girls shriek. Finally, with a nervous look at the clock, he wrapped the music up with a final riff. The walls of the gym shook with the applause. Marty took a bow and smiled at the crowd. Behind him, the Midnighters were breathless with all the excitement.

"Good night, everybody!" Marty shouted into the mike. He stepped back, heading for the door, but the band members crowded around him.

"Man, that stuff cooks! That's the hottest sound I ever heard!" "You gotta play that Monday for that record company cat from New York!"

Marty lost the smile on his face, suddenly serious. "I won't be there Monday." The band members looked stunned. Marty continued to talk before they could ask any questions.

"And don't you guys play it either," he cautioned. "It's time hasn't come yet. If you play it, you might screw things up. It'll happen on it's own."

"What are you talking about?" Lester wondered.

"Rock'n roll!" Marty said with a nod. He turned and ran off stage, darting through the halls to the front of the building. Outside, he could see Professor Brown's truck in front of the school, engine idling, waiting to go.

Marty burst out of the school and jumped into the cab, slamming the door behind him. He noticed that the Professor was in an Army uniform. "Everything's cool," he reported breathlessly. "They danced, they kissed, they're in love! Let's go!"

Professor Brown put his foot on the gas and they tore out of the parking lot.

* * *

Several hours later, Marty was still talking about the evening's events to the Professor. "I sure wish I could have seen the punch," he said wistfully as they drove along a dark highway. It was almost three in the morning. "I mean, he decked him -- laid him out cold -- one punch. It must have been beautiful! I didn't know he had it in him!"

Professor Brown took his eyes off the road a moment to look at Marty, something about what he was saying making him uneasy. "You didn't?"

"Nope. My father's never clenched a fist in his entire life!"

"Curious," the Professor muttered, concerned. "Very curious."

Marty shook his head, unaware of the Professor's worries. "I just wish I could have seen it..." He let his voice trail off, staring out the dark window, at the highway unwinding before them. Professor Brown turned his attention back to driving.

For the first time all evening, Marty lapsed into silence. When the Professor next looked at him, ten minutes later, he was slumped back in his seat, his forehead resting against the window, eyes closed and snoring softly. Professor Brown didn't disturb him. Marty'd had a long and busy night and deserved some rest. Especially considering how much work had to be done in the next day.

The light of dawn had hardly begun to shine in the east when they crossed the state line into Nevada. The Professor pulled into a gas station and stopped the car. The tank was running low and they still had a ways to go. Not to mention that, according to a sign next to the station, there would be no more chances to fill up for 150 miles.

Professor Brown turned to Marty and shook him awake, then handed him his bag and told him to go change. As Marty headed for the bathroom, the Professor got out of the truck and headed for the small building where the grizzled gas attendant was waiting.

* * *

Inside the bathroom, Marty quickly changed out of the suit he had worn to the dance and into his 1982 clothes, pulling some Army fatigues and a jacket over them. The Army clothes were a little loose, but it didn't matter. Once he had the clothes on, Marty took the bottles of Coke he had brought with him in his bag and stuffed them deep into the jacket's pockets. He looked in the dusty mirror, checking his appearance to make sure he looked okay and the Coke bottles weren't visible. They weren't. Marty quickly gathered up his things and left the stuffy restroom, joining up with the Professor just as the gas had finished.

"Twenty six gallons," the bearded attendant said, checking the readouts. "That'll be \$3.75."

Marty almost choked. Since when was gas so cheap? Before he had much time to reflect on that, Professor Brown paid the man and climbed into the truck. Marty had no choice but to follow and they continued towards the test site.

Chapter Thirteen

Hours later, Professor Brown was driving the truck down a dirt road. At the end of it was a huge barbed wire fence, padlocked, with a huge sign. "U.S. Army. Restricted Area. Authorized Personal Only." Their goal. The test site.

The Professor nudged a dozing Marty as they approached the gate and pulled to a stop. He had previously told Marty to leave the talking to him, and Marty had no problem with that. He certainly did not want to get them arrested. Almost as soon as they had stopped, an M.P. stepped up to the truck, a rifle in hand.

"Where do you jokers think you're going?" he asked, peering into the cab.

The Professor picked up some papers -- their "orders" -- off the dashboard and handed them to the guy. "We're here to deliver that refrigerator." He pointed to the back.

The M.P. glanced at it and shook his head. "Do you know where you are?"

"This is where they're gonna drop the bomb, right? Well, Philco wants to find out what it does to their refrigerator," Professor Brown explained smoothly.

The M.P. strolled over to the back and used his gun to lift up a corner of the tarp and look under it. "What's with the motorcycle?"

Marty watched the Professor carefully, wondering how he would answer this one. As before, he had a logical answer. "General Motors wants to find out what it does to their truck. The motorcycle is because we *don't* want to find out what it does to us."

The man glanced at the papers. "Well, you better shake a leg. That bomb goes off in fifty five minutes!"

Professor Brown and Marty glanced at each other, relieved, then drove through the now-open gate. They had passed the first obstacle.

* * *

Colonel Nordell peered through binoculars at the barren desert from the artillery bunker. The bunker had a full communicational base in it, with 105mm Howitzers, ready for any last minute attacks. The desert appeared to be peaceful and deserted...then the Colonel saw the army truck speeding toward the test sight. He turned toward Lieutenant Glass, standing beside him.

"Lieutenant, what's that vehicle doing down there?" Colonel Nordell demanded.

The lieutenant glanced up, looking unconcerned. "Two guys delivering a refrigerator from Philco, sir."

"From Philco?" The Colonel shook his head. "Jesus Christ! How many refrigerators do we have to blow up in this test?"

* * *

Marty and the Professor reached the tract houses a few minutes after being allowed inside. This suburban site was 1.5 miles from the blast site, according to a large sign nearby.

Professor Brown backed the truck into a driveway of a house where two mannequins were positioned on the front lawn. The man was set up with a lawn mower and the

woman was in a chaise lounge. Marty looked at the bizzare spectacle for a moment, then jumped out of the truck to open the garage door for the Professor. He finished backing the truck inside and switched off the ignition.

It was hot outside already so Marty took off his jacket and tossed it inside the cab of the truck. He helped the Professor take the tarp off the back and start to hook the time machine up.

* * *

The clock read 11:30AM inside the detonation control room. The room bustled with activity as the time drew near for the blast.

"Coming up on exactly 30 minutes to detonation," the timekeeper announced. "Lock all timing circuits...now."

"Mark," the first technician said. He flipped a switch, starting four clocks counting down in sync.

"Check arming circuits," the second technician said.

The third technician looked at the board. "Arming circuits are green."

"Final evacuation check," Major Lanza ordered.

"Roger," Lieutenant Jones said.

* * *

"There it is -- Ground Zero," Professor Brown said as he and Marty peered through binoculars at the side of the house. "And your target is 800 yards."

Behind them the time machine was ready for action, the power converter set up on the roof of the truck with the solar cell panel pointed toward the front of the vehicle.

"It was sure nice of Uncle Sam to put those yardage markers up for us," Marty remarked, noticing the markers at every 200 yards from the tower with the atomic bomb on it.

"We're at one and a half miles, so you're just a little over a mile from where you want to be," Professor Brown explained, lowering his binoculars. "Wait until minus 3 minutes before you go -- that should give you plenty of time, and it should be close enough to zero hour that they can't do anything to stop you. Park the truck at 800 and get in the refri-- the time chamber. Just be sure the nose of the truck is pointed at the bomb....the power converter will do the rest."

Professor Brown headed into the garage again and Marty followed. The motorcycle was on the ground, with the mannequin who had been mowing the lawn in the side car passenger seat. "Here's a walkie-talkie," the Professor said, handing Marty the object from inside the truck. He pointed to the channel selector knob. "I'll be on this frequency." Professor Brown moved it up a few numbers. "This one's the Army."

A voice from the control room came on, mixed with static. "T minus 28 minutes, and counting."

The Professor checked the time. "I better go." He held his hand out towards the teenager. "Good luck, Marty."

Marty shook his hand. "Thanks for everything," he said.

Professor Brown grinned. "I guess I'll see you in....30 years."

Marty swallowed hard, remembering the Professor being gunned down in the future. This was the last time he would see him alive. "Uh...yeah...." he murmured.

The Professor gave him an intense look. "Is something wrong?"

Marty shook his head, biting his lower lip as he tried to fight back the threat of tears. "It's just always so hard for me to say goodbye," he whispered.

Marty turned suddenly and stepped outside, unable to stand looking at the Professor any longer. After a moment, Professor Brown spoke.

"Marty," he began, sounding hesitant, "I know I've repeatedly asked you not to tell me anything about the future, but....well, those loud bangs on the tape recorder....are they...."

"Professor -- there are some doors that shouldn't be opened," Marty said softly, without turning around.

The Professor nodded slowly. In the background, the walkie-talkie spoke. "T minus 27 minutes."

Marty raised his binoculars again and looked at Ground Zero.

The Professor watched him for a moment, then went over to the motorcycle. He stared at the mannequin, realizing that something was amiss. Professor Brown reached into the truck cab and pulled out Marty's Army jacket and placed it on the mannequin. Then he got on, started the engine, and drove away.

Marty continued to look through the binoculars, hardly aware of the Professor's departure.

* * *

Lieutenant Glass watched the desert from the artillery bunker through his own set of binoculars. He saw the motorcycle from the truck with the refrigerator speed away with the two men who had come with it inside. The Lieutenant turned to Colonel Nordell beside him.

"There go those two lovers who brought the refrigerator," he said.

Colonel Nordell nodded. "All right." He picked up a phone nearby. "Evacuation is complete. This area is secure," he said into it.

* * *

When the Professor vanished from view as he sped away, Marty lowered his binoculars and checked the time. He had about 25 minutes left before the bomb would detonate and over 20 minutes to go before he had to start driving towards the site.

Marty decided now would be a good time to look around. He walked around to the front of the house, taking a moment to check out the yard and home's exterior. Except for the mannequins in the front, it looked pretty typical for a 1950's home. Marty walked across the grass and tried the door. It was unlocked. He stepped inside.

Marty was expecting the place to be empty. To his amazement, the inside was completely furnished. It looked like a model home, awaiting display. Current issues of popular -- in the 1950's, anyway -- magazines were on the tables. There was a radio,

even a TV in the room. Marty looked in the dining room and saw another group of mannequins seated at the table, with place settings arranged before them. Marty shook his head, chuckling at the lengths that the government went with these experiments.

He went into the kitchen and looked around this room. It was completely furnished like the other rooms, down to the last detail. In one corner a Frigidaire refrigerator sat. Marty walked over to it and opened it up. It was well stocked with food. He saw meat, cheese, milk eggs, Coke, fruit, and vegetables. Marty plucked an apple from inside, took a bite from it, then set it back inside. He shut the fridge and retraced his steps back to the living room to check out the TV.

The TV was full of static and snow when he first switched it on. Marty twisted the channel knob, finally tuning into a somewhat muddy image of the "Howdy Doody Show." Since it was the only thing he could get a reception on, Marty watched Clarabell dancing around and slowly shook his head.

"The 'fabulous fifties,' " he quipped, grateful that he wouldn't be stuck in that decade forever.

* * *

"T-minus fourteen minutes," the timekeeper read off in the detonation control.

The first technician nodded. "Lock all arming circuits."

The task was completed quickly. "Preliminary arming circuits locked," the second technician reported. The other two quickly followed.

"Main arming circuits locked."

"Auxiliary arming circuits locked."

Inside the artillery bunker, Captain Teague began to pass out sunglasses to his troops and to the privileged civilian spectators.

"You are here to witness one of the most spectacular sights in the history of man," he said. "It is really quite beautiful. There will be an intense white fireball that will recede into a bright yellow glow, accompanied by an intense shock wave...."

* * *

Professor Brown headed towards the gate on his motorcycle as the M.P. listened to the countdown on their radios. "T-minus 7 minutes," the monotonous voice from the detonation control. "7 minutes until detonation."

As the Professor got closer to the gate, one of the M.P.'s opened it and waved him through. Professor Brown waved back over his shoulder, not slowing the vehicle down in the least.

* * *

Marty started to take off his army fatigues as he watched the TV. Under the clothes was the outfit he had come with from 1982. As soon as he had shed the clothes from the Army, he switched the walkie-talkie on to check the time before the bomb would go off.

"T-minus 6 minutes and counting...." the voice from the control room stated.

* * *

Professor Brown continued the high speed on his motorcycle down a dirt road, then up a hill and into the mountains. Finally, when the ground leveled off, he cut the engine and stopped the motorcycle. The Professor reached for the binoculars around his neck as he got off the bike and walked to the edge of a cliff. He peered at the test sight with it's tract homes and the tower where the nuclear bomb sat.

Professor Brown grabbed his walkie-talkie and listened to the control voice. "...5 minutes and counting..."

He switched channels to the one Marty was on. "Calling Marty," the Professor said into the walkie-talkie. "Do you read me?"

There was a long pause, during which static played with the radio. Then: "I read you, Professor," Marty said, his voice coming through loud and clear.

"Is everything set? Have you put the formula in the power converter?"

"I'm on my way to do that right now," Marty answered.

* * *

Marty brought the walkie-talkie with him as he went into the garage and opened the door into the cab to get his jacket with the bottles of Coke in it. But it wasn't there!

Marty blinked, shocked, and checked the floor and behind the seats. Nothing. He started to panic. Marty climbed into the back of the truck and checked there, even though the chances were very slim that it could have gotten there. It wasn't.

Marty snatched the walkie-talkie off the front seat where he had set it. "Professor!" he cried, panic and fear filling his chest. "I can't find the formula! I left it in my jacket, and my jacket's gone!"

* * *

Professor Brown heard Marty's news and turned to look at the motorcycle behind him. There was Marty's jacket, still on the mannequin where he had inadvertently set it earlier. "Oh my God!" he gasped in horror.

Chapter Fourteen

Detonation Control was getting busier and busier as the time for the bomb to go off drew closer and closer. "T-minutes 3 minutes, 30 seconds," the timekeeper said.

"Released safety switches," the first technician ordered. "First Safety."

The second technician flipped the switch before him. "First safety released."

"First safety released," the third technician echoed as he flicked his switch.

* * *

Professor Brown was horrified at the turn of events that had suddenly sprouted. He frantically called out instructions to Marty over the walkie-talkie. "Marty, it's over. Do you understand? It's over. Now I want you to get in the refrig-- the time chamber, and we'll just pray that the lead lining --"

"The refrigerator!" Marty interrupted. "Hang on, Professor!"

Professor Brown stared at the walkie-talkie, wondering what was going on.

* * *

Marty ran into the house and straight to the kitchen. He yanked open the refrigerator and his eyes fell on those bottles of Coke he had seen earlier. Marty let out a deep sigh of relief, though he knew the ordeal was far from over. He'd had serious visions of his tombstone there for a few minutes.

"Don't worry about a thing!" Marty called into the walkie-talkie. "There's plenty of formula in the refrigerator!"

* * *

On the hill the Professor was confused. "The refrigerator?" he said to himself. His eyes slid over to Marty's jacket in the motorcycle, considering.... After a moment, Professor Brown switched the frequency on the walkie-talkie to get an update on the time.

"T-minutes 2 minutes, 50 seconds."

* * *

Marty pulled himself up on top of the truck's cab to get to the power converter, juggling the two bottles of Coke he had brought with him from the refrigerator. Without thinking, Marty tried to twist the cap off the bottle, but it wouldn't budge! He didn't have a bottle opener with him either.

Aware of the time ticking down, Marty finally smashed the neck of the bottle against the roof of the cab and poured the Coke -- along with a few pieces of broken glass -- into the power converter.

* * *

"T minus 2 minutes, 40 seconds," the timekeeper recited.

"Release second safely," technician one ordered.

The switch was flipped. "Second safety released."

"Second safety released," the third technician repeated.

* * *

Marty climbed down from the roof off the truck and got inside the cab. It started without his hitch and he slammed his foot against the accelerator, heading in the direction of Ground Zero.

* * *

Colonel Nordell watched the bomb site with his binoculars from the artillery bunker. It was deserted as it should be. He was about to turn away, when a flash of movement caught his eye. He couldn't believe it when he saw the truck racing towards the site of the bomb.

"Jesus!" Colonel Nordell cried. "What's that truck doing out there?"

Captain Teague and Lieutenant Glass turned to look through their binoculars. "He's heading straight for the bomb!" Captain Teague realized.

"He's gotta be a Commie spy -- trying to sabotage the test!" Lieutenant Glass added.

"Captain!" Colonel Nordell shouted. "Get your men on this artillery and blow that truck to Kingdom Come!"

Captain Teague nodded curtly and turned to his crew. "Men, get on this artillery and blow that truck to Kingdom Come!" he relayed. "Fire mission! Let's move!"

The military men made a dash for the 105mm Howitzer.

Marty drove the truck past mile marker 1.3, unaware of the eminent danger. Gun breeches were opened with 105mm shells being loaded inside the artillery bunker. The weapons were slammed shut and cranked around towards the outside and the truck.

"Captain!" Sargent Gunther yelled. "Give us some coordinates!"

Captain Teague shook his head. "I don't have any! We'll have to fire direct!"

Marty drove by the 1 mile mark as the three Howitzers were pointed in his vague direction. "Fire!" the Captain ordered.

* * *

Something suddenly exploded a hundred feet to Marty's side, dirt raining down everywhere. Marty gripped the wheel tightly in his hands, his nerves strung out.

"Jesus!" he gasped, wondering what the hell was going on.

* * *

Meanwhile, Captain Teague was shouting more instructions at his men. Having seen the first blast with his binoculars, he now had a better idea where to fire. "Drop 5 elevation, add 8 deflection," he barked. Another weapon was adjusted to the position and fired.

* * *

Marty had managed to calm himself down after the first explosion. He'd hardly begun to breathe normally again when something else exploded, this one a lot closer in front of the truck, but still off to the side. Marty twisted the wheel to the side, terrified of being blow up, hardly noticing the 1400 yards marker as he drove by it.

On the hill, Professor Brown could see the whole thing through his binoculars. "Oh my God!" he cried, feeling helpless to do anything.

* * *

"One minute, fifteen seconds!" the timekeeper announced from detonation control.

"Release final safety."

"Final safety released," technician number two said.

The third technician flipped the switch. "Final safety released."

In the artillery bunker, Sergeant Gunther realigned the Howitzer, to a new position. "Drop 2 elevation, minus 3 deflection."

* * *

The new shell hit the ground several yards before the truck, sending a heavy rain of dirt on the windshield. Marty drove around the hole and looked behind him, shuddering as he realized how close that one had come. Up ahead was his goal, the 800 yard maker. Marty slammed the truck to a stop and turned to the Army channel on the walkie-talkie.

"Exactly one minute till detonation!" the voice said. "59....58...."

* * *

\Colonel Nordell lowered his binoculars and turned to Captain Teague. "He's stopped, Captain! Right at the 800 yard marker!"

Captain Teague smiled tightly. "We'll get him for sure this time! Add 1 and a half elevation!" he added to his men.

* * *

Inside the truck, Marty listened to the countdown, his heart pounding with exhilaration and fear. "...53...52...."

"Hurry up!" he hissed, grabbing the radio, then throwing open the door of the truck to the outside.

* * *

Professor Brown continued to watch the truck with Marty in it, his walkie-talkie in the other hand. "Move the truck!" he shouted into the radio. "They're gonna draw a bead on you!"

The truck did not move.

* * *

Sergeant Gunther finished the adjustments on his weapon. "I've got a bead on him!" he announced.

* * *

Marty was about to climb in the back of the truck, the countdown still on his walkie-talkie. "...47...46...." the announced said flatly.

Marty let out an impatient sigh and decided to report in to the Professor. He flipped the channel, but before he could say anything, he heard Professor Brown was yelling at him over the airwaves.

"Back up! Back up!" the Professor yelled, sounding frantic. "They're drawing a bead on you! Back up!"

Marty froze for a moment, then took off for the cab of the truck as fast as he could, expecting to be hit by some weapon any second.

* * *

"FIRE!" Captain Teague screamed.

Sergeant Gunther pulled the trigger and the cannon let out a noise that shook the ground.

* * *

Marty turned the key in the ignition of the truck, threw the stick shift into reverse, and hit the gas pedal as hard as he could.

A second later, a huge explosion wiped out the 800 yard marker where he had been parked. The truck trembled from the shock wave. Marty stopped the truck several hundred feet away and watched the smoke clear. A huge crater in the ground was all that remained of yard marker 800, where he had been seconds before. He swallowed hard.

* * *

"T-minus 30 seconds!" the voice from detonation control said.

Colonel Nordell turned away from the window before the smoke cleared on the last explosion. "Everybody into the bunker!" he yelled. "Take cover! Now!"

There was a mad dash as the men all left their posts and headed for the stairs that lead to the underground bomb shelter. The truck was forgotten.

* * *

Marty could hear the voice start counting down the remaining thirty seconds before the bomb would go off. He turned the key in the ignition, but the engine wouldn't start! His face grew even paler then it was already as he tried it again. Still, nothing happened!

"...24....23....22..." the voice said over the walkie-talkie, incredibly calm.

* * *

Up on the hill, Professor Brown kept his binoculars trained on Marty's truck. "Come on, Marty!" he whispered, unaware that the teenager was having any problems. "Come on!"

"...20...19....18..."

* * *

Marty swallowed hard, gripping the key as hard as he could and turning it for the third time. The engine groaned....but then it caught! He sighed in relief and aimed at the crater, over a hundred yards away.

"...14...13...12..."

Marty grabbed the walkie-talkie and leaned over it, wedging it against the accelerator. The truck started moving and he threw open the door, jumping to the ground. The truck picked up speed as Marty ran to the back, grabbing hold of the sides of the vehicle and pulling himself inside. He threw the switches on the time machine, turning it on and preparing it for the trip back....he hoped.

It could have been his imagination, but Marty swore he could still hear the timekeeper over the roar of everything.

"....9....8...7..."

The truck pitched forward into the gaping hole left from the Howitzer shell. Marty lost his balance, unprepared for the jolt, and fell into the bed of the truck. His head struck the metal floor, which left him slightly dazed for a second. He realized that the truck had gotten slightly off center with where the solar cell that was positioned just so as it had fallen and quickly climbed to his feet to jerk the cells back where they belonged.

"...5...4...3..."

Marty threw open the door of the refrigerator -- or time chamber -- and stepped inside.

"...2...1..."

He slammed the door shut.

* * *

"Detonate!" the timekeeper cried in the control room. Three technicians, turned their keys at the same time, setting off an incredible white fireball that made the surroundings invisible with light for a moment before dimming to a glow of softer yellow.

* * *

The bright white light hit the power converter. Marty glanced up inside his cramped quarters to see a thin beam of the same color hit him from the focusing lense suspended above his head. He closed his eyes as a strange feeling swept over his body....

* * *

The yellow glow from the bomb lasted a few moments, turning everything yellow. The tower which housed the bomb was vaporized and the truck of Marty and the Professor's began to melt from the intense heat. Inside the command bunker, the Army officers with their men and the chosen civilians gaped at the site before them as the mushroom cloud formed, it's radioactive smoke reaching thousands of feet into the atmosphere.

Safely on the hill, Professor Brown turned his back on the site and over to the mannequin in the sidecar. A medium sized bulge rested in one of the pockets of the Army jacket. The Professor looked at it a long moment, long after the light of the bomb faded and the shock wave had passed. He remembered Marty's words from earlier and wondered:
Should I look....?

Chapter Fifteen

Marty saw completely and utter darkness around him. The air around him had grow hot and stuffy. He resisted the urge to cough and felt for the handle of the refrigerator door. His hand came into contact with it after a moment's search and he pushed forward.

A crack of sunlight split the darkness. Marty pushed the door harder and a shower of sand rained on him. He climbed to the outside world. The sun was shining brightly in a clear blue sky. Marty looked down at the refrigerator and saw that it was half rotted and worn away with age. Next to it, he recognized the remains of the Army truck, twisted and almost unrecognizable, half buried in the sand.

Marty took a step away from the refrigerator and looked around him. It was barren out here. He saw nothing but an ocean of hot sand all around. Marty glanced at his watch. It was noon exactly. He squinted up at the merciless glare of the sun.

"Shit," he said.

Marty decided the best thing for him to do would be to start walking. He set off in the direction of the sun, not sure which way to head. A few minutes after he started the hike, Marty started to hear a low hum off in the distance. It sounded like a helicopter.

The sound grew closer and he looked up at the sky, his eyes searching for the source. He saw something in the sky, but it looked strange. The craft started to lower itself toward

the ground, grains of sand flying everywhere. Marty squinted his eyes and put a hand over them, turning his head away. Between the glare of the sun on the thing, and all the flying sand, it was almost impossible to tell anything about it.

After a moment, the noise faded away and Marty turned around. Right in front of him was a strange sight. It looked like a car from the 1950's....but it had three whitewalls, propellers, and funny fins on the side. At the back of the car was something that resembled the Professor's power converter. As Marty stared at the contraption, he noticed Professor Brown in the driver's seat.

Marty opened his mouth to say something, but nothing came out. The Professor opened the door and jumped out, heading towards Marty. He looked older than he had in 1952, but not as much as he had in 1982. Professor Brown seemed different to Marty, his posture straighter with more of a spark in his eyes.

"Marty!" the Professor cried. "You're here! Right on time! How are you? Feeling okay?"

Marty tried to speak again. "What year is this?" he asked hesitantly, not sure if he wanted to hear the answer.

Professor Brown beamed. "1982! March 18, just like we planned! My calculations were absolutely correct! Thirty years! God, I cannot believe it's been thirty years!" he added, mostly to himself. "Sure, it was a long time ago -- longest I've ever had to wait for the results of an experiment!"

Marty was confused. "And you're alive, Professor?" he asked, remembering what had happened right before he had left 1982. "You weren't shot?"

Professor Brown looked at him blankly. "Shot? Who'd want to shoot me? I've never felt better in my life!"

Marty didn't know what to say about that. He continued to stare at the flying vehicle and at the Professor. "Hop in, Marty," Professor Brown said, turning and heading for the vehicle. "We've got a long drive ahead of us."

"What do you call this?" Marty wondered as he cautiously started towards the contraption.

"A car," the Professor answered matter-of-factly. Marty watched as Professor Brown opened the door and got inside. He slowly followed suit.

Inside the car, Marty noticed the controls and the dashboard were streamlined in a kind of old-fashioned futuristic style. He was distracted from his examination of the car's interior by the Professor leaning over and pulling out a 16 ounce bottle of Coke. He grabbed a bottle opener that was on the dashboard and opened it up, then pulled open the dashboard in front of Marty and hooked the bottle to a funnel labeled "fuel" inside. Marty remembered leaving the "formula" in his jacket. Somehow, Professor Brown must have found it.

"Professor...." Marty said, shaking his head. "You peaked, didn't you?"

Professor Brown shrugged, looking a little sheepish. "Yeah. I figured, what the hell!"

A moment later he lifted the car up from the sand and flew them away from the old nuclear test site.

* * *

Professor Brown waited a few minutes before starting to answer some of the questions Marty had begun to throw at him. Marty wanted to know everything that had happened over the past thirty years to the Professor. Things seemed so different from when he had left.

"You see," Professor Brown said some time later, "I never rebuilt the time machine after it was destroyed in 1952. I decided that experimenting with time and possibly changing history was too risky. Anyway, experiments in time travel were banned in all 87 states after the governor of Cuba caught Dr. Felstien fooling around in the Bermuda Triangle -- that was back in '64."

87 states? Time travel bans? What the hell?

Marty didn't understand anything. He tried not to think about that part of the conversation. There were some other, more important things to wonder about. "But if you didn't rebuild the time machine, how did I go back in time in the first place?"

"According to your girl friend, Suzy Parker, you and she were at the movies. You went to the restroom and you never came out. Obviously, you stepped through an inter-dimensional time warp, created by the original operation of the time machine," Professor Brown explained.

Most of this was still going over Marty's head. "Obviously," he said, trying to appear that he had understood.

"But I told everyone your disappearance was due to a teleportation experiment you were helping me with. So don't mention anything about time travel to anyone."

Marty nodded. "What theater was I at?"

"The Orpheum," the Professor answered.

Marty smiled, some of this finally clicking into place. He looked out the window and saw, far below, a clean and more of that old-fashioned modern look on a city. It had streamlined skyscrapers and even some flying cars. Marty couldn't believe it.

"Wow! Look at that city!"

Professor Brown glanced out the window. "Pretty, isn't it?"

"It's the most beautiful city I've ever seen!" Marty cried. "What is it?"

The Professor smiled at him. "Cleveland."

* * *

It was night when they reached Marty's house. It was the same one he had left, but it looked different. On closer inspection, Marty noticed the corners were more rounded, almost streamlined, and a large power converter sat on the roof next to the chimney. The Professor landed his car next to another one in the driveway that had all the elaborate propellers and stuff on it too. Marty guessed that this was considered the norm here.

"Go on in," Professor Brown told him when he noticed Marty's hesitation. "I'll be with you as soon as I adjust this blasted flow capacitor."

As Marty got out of the car, he noticed more flying cars, busses, even trucks in the air above his home. He shook his head and turned his attention back to his house. He stared at it a long moment and took a deep breath before walking to the front door. Marty rang

the doorbell, unsure if he should just barge in. With all the changes he had seen so far, he wasn't sure if it would be a good idea.

The door was answered a minute later, but not by who he had expected. A robot, looking vaguely like the one Marty had seen on Professor Brown's blueprints that one night, pulled the door open. It was only about three or four feet high, with a little bow tie on.

"Greetings, Master Martin," the robot said in an electronic monotone of a voice. Let me take your coat."

Marty stared at the thing for a moment. "Right...." he said, slowly taking off his silver Porsche jacket and handing it to the robot. Finally, he stepped into his house.

Marty was surprised. Things actually didn't look that different from when he had left. His mother, sitting in the living room, jumped to her feet and rushed towards him.

"Marty!" she cried excitedly. "You're back! I'm so glad to see you!" Eileen McFly gave her son a hug, then seemed to notice his clothes. She looked at Marty, a faint smile on her face. "Where did you get these silly clothes?" she asked. Without waiting for an answer, she turned to the robot. "Sparky, get Marty some clean clothes," she instructed it.

"Yes, Madam," the robot answered, turning and heading out of the room. Marty watched him go as his mother spoke again.

"Your father's in the study. Say hello to him."

He nodded and walked down the hall. Marty stopped halfway to the study, suddenly noticing several display cases hanging on the hallway wall. In one there was a pair of boxing gloves with a plaque: "McFly-Liston Fight, Madison Square Garden, 1966." In the case next to that was a silver boxing champion's belt with "George M. McFly, World Middleweight Champion, 1963." In the last one was a framed magazine ad with a picture of George McFly holding a weird device with the words: "The Champ gives tooth decay the One-Two Punch with Son-O-Dent ultra sonic tooth care system, by E. Brown Enterprises," under the photo.

Marty was surprised and a little shocked on all that had happened since he had left.

George McFly looked up from his desk as Marty entered his study. "Welcome home, son!" he said, his voice sounding a little different to Marty's ears. More confident and forceful, not nearly as meek, like it had been before. "The Professor told us what happened with the experiment -- that there might be some side effects...lapses of memory."

Marty edged closer to the desk to get a better look at this new George McFly. He, like the Professor, seemed different -- for the better, but still different. Dad didn't seem to notice his scrutiny. He continued talking.

"Your mom's got one heckuva dinner planned tonight! She's been pushing buttons all day!"

Marty nodded as if he understood, and as he did so, he noticed a familiar looking figure outside the window. His eyes narrowed and Marty realized it was Biff, wearing a security guard uniform and in a chaise lounge, appearing to be asleep. Marty's father followed his gaze and opened the window.

"Hey, Biff! What are you doing, sleeping on the job? A security guard's supposed to be alert!"

Biff smiled and sat up. "Yes, sir, Mr. McFly," he said.

"What am I paying you fifty cents an hour for?" Dad asked, his head out the window.

"I'm sorry, Champ," Biff replied, getting to his feet. "It won't happen again, sir." He began to walk around the yard.

George closed the window and sat back down at his desk. Marty watched as he attached a suction cup that was connected by wire to something that looked like a pen on his forehead. He waved the "pen" over a blank check and with a few electronic beeps, handwriting appeared on the paper, spelling out, "Pay to the order of the Coca Cola Company."

"What are you doing, Dad?" Marty asked, his eyes wide in amazement.

His father glanced up, puzzled. "What's it look like I'm doing, son? I'm paying the fuel bill. It's over \$2.00 this month -- we really oughta try to cut down." Marty continued to watch his father. George looked a little concerned. "What's wrong, son? You act like you've never seen a Write-O-Matic before."

Marty pulled out his Bic pen from his pocket and looked at it, shaking his head.

"Say, what have you got there?" his father asked, noticing the pen for the first time. "An antique pen? Let me see that!" He took it from Marty and examined it carefully. "I haven't seen one of these in....well, this is strange. How do you fill it with ink?"

Marty's father flashed him a strange look, which made Marty feel slightly uneasy. He looked like he wanted to say something, but before he did, someone knocked on the door. A second later, Eileen came into the room.

"Marty, there's someone here to see you," she said.

Suzy Parker came into the room. She was wearing some strange clothes, with her hair styled in a different, unusual way, but Marty didn't care. "Suzy!" he cried.

"Hi, Marty!" she answered brightly.

"What did you do to your hair?" he asked.

"What did you do to yours?"

Marty and Suzy both laughed as Professor Brown slipped into the room. "Hey, how's my favorite girl?" George asked Suzy.

She smiled. "Fine, Mr. McFly."

"Why don't you two get out of here -- I'm sure you can find something better to do than watch me pay bills!" Marty's father said to the two of them.

Suzy looked at her boyfriend critically. "Marty, you'd better change your clothes. You can't go to Mambo Class looking like that."

Marty stared at her blankly. "Mambo class? You mean people still do the Mambo?"

Suzy shrugged. "Sure. Everybody does the Mambo!"

Marty thought about that for a moment, wondering something important. "Don't tell me you've never heard of rock'n roll...." he asked, half joking.

Suzy now directed a blank look at him. "Rock and what?"

"I've never heard of it either," Professor Brown spoke up.

Marty gave a big grin. "Well maybe it's time you did!"

He took Suzy's hand and the two of them left the room, Eileen and Professor Brown following.

* * *

George McFly was left alone in his study, sitting at his desk. Something about the conversation earlier with his son was gnawing at him. He opened his desk drawer and pulled out his hydraulic scrapbook. After he plugged it in, the pneumatic cylinders began to turn the pages automatically. It stopped at a certain page and George looked at the newspaper clipping he had saved in there, way back thirty years ago.

"Police Quell Near Riot At School Dance," the headlined said. It was that old "Springtime in Paris" dance the article was talking about. Beneath the headline was a somewhat grainy photograph of the young man on stage who had played that strange music. As George looked closer, he saw that the young man in the picture bore a striking resemblance to his son.

George shook his head slowly. "Nah. Couldn't be...."



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