

Not enough time

Scene: Control room

Two people are sitting in the shadows of an unlit control room. Some light comes in through a large window opening out to a laboratory setting with a platform containing a large coil above and below a disk platform. There is an American flag in the background. The laboratory area is well illuminated. The two people appear only as shadows on either side of the window. They are talking.

We are really going to do this?

We have to. We have no choice.

But do you realize what we are asking?

Do you realize what we are about to achieve?

I know. I know. This does not seem right.

Look. We have discovered how to make time travel work. We have retrieved artifacts from the distant past. We looked ever so quickly into the future. This is the greatest discovery in history. It is history. We must do this last test. We have spent hundred of billions of dollars. We have managed the impossible. We have even managed to keep it secret. If we can truly make it work we can prevent wars, massacres, assassinations. We can alter history for the benefit of all. We can provide the ultimate defense for the nation. Nuclear terrorism....

I know. I know. I helped write all the arguments remember. It is just that we are asking so much.

We have to find out what happens when we change history. How does it affect us? Do we really make things better or are there hidden consequences? We have to make sure that stopping even one assassination does not destroy our timeline. You have looked at every simulation. You have been through all the calculations. We must conduct this one test. This is the simplest, most precise test we can do. We must do this. We must be sure.

You have the volunteer?

Yes. He has been well trained. He understands what he must do. He knows he must create the ultimate time travel paradox. He realizes what he must sacrifice. He knows what we will gain by studying the event. He is ready to proceed. He is ready to travel back in time and kill his past self. Then there will be no one to travel back in time to kill himself so he will not be killed. Then he can travel back in time and kill himself. We will create an infinite time loop oscillation. Theory says we can stabilize this on one of several outcomes. We must verify this before we can begin altering history for the betterment of mankind.

Alright. Let's get out of the way and get this thing over with.

Scene: The laboratory platform area.

A single man appears. He is the volunteer. He is carrying a pistol. There is an ever growing whine from machinery starting up. He steps on to the platform between the huge coils. There is a background count down. A slight blue glow appears around him. The intensity grows. There is a huge explosive blasting sound. The man is gone.

Scene: A living room

There is a man sitting in a chair watching television. His back is toward us. The news is on. It is the news from 5 years earlier. The tv image goes crazy. A blue glow appears in the middle of the room. The sound of lightning crashing blasts through the room. The volunteer has arrived in the past. He raises the pistol and takes aim. The man in the chair rises and turns. They are the same man. The volunteer has traveled into the past to kill himself. He will create the ultimate time travel paradox. The gun fires. The man's chest explodes in blood. (put water-ketchup balloon under shirt and pop it with a needle). The man with the gun vanishes in a flash of blue light. The other man lays dead on the floor.

Scene: The laboratory platform

A different man steps up on to the platform. He travels back in time and shoots himself in a similar but different setting as the first man. He vanishes in a blue flash. The first man is one the platform. He vanishes, appears in the past, shoots his past self, and vanishes. The view oscillates between these two paths. Each scene change is faster than the one before. The images merge. There is an explosion.

Scene: The two people from the original scene are sitting in the darkened control room talking.

Do you know what went wrong? We think that when the volunteer died in the past it prevented him from being selected as a time traveler. A different person was selected. He too was killed and therefore not selected. An oscillation between the two was set up. The machine overloaded. A final state was achieved. We do not know how. We do not know what the original state was. Everything was different from our predictions.

Did we change history? We do not know? How can we define that? We have no reference but our records and they would have been altered if history was changed. We just don't know.

There is silence. The time travel platform is seen through the window in the background. A small Soviet hammer and sickle flag hangs behind it.