

Case in Point

By Bill Wolfe

I'd been a cop for eleven years when the first time travelers started showing up. So I remember things like lotteries, casinos and numbers rackets. It was March, right after I got my gold shield, when some geek kid at M.I.T. 'cracks' the time barrier and starts all this. They can't go back to any time before she does her little experiment, or we'd have been tripping over these bastards throughout all of recorded history.

My story is the same as most cops my age. Divorced, no kids, no close family, just The Job. These, and the fact that I was booked on a flight that crashed made me a perfect candidate for the Time Cops. One way or another, my old life was over, I was out of the timeline. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

I ain't bitchin', though.

I'm still kickin', I'm still on The Job, and the medical coverage in the 30th Century is outstanding. Only problem I have is the time travelers, themselves. I hate those guys. And now here I am one. Go figure.

The 21st Century is as primitive a time as crooks can get to, so they think the pickings are pretty easy. They keep tellin' me that I can't change history. I mean I really can't. Nothin' any time traveler does has any effect on the timeline. There's a lot of fun to be had, if you have the right attitude. And hey, any time I screw-up, I can just go back and fix it. Problem is, so can the perp, or sometimes, his family.

Last Tuesday, for instance. I went back to my time—when I was still a real cop—to pick-up some 25th who got himself nabbed by the locals trying to steal a bunch of comic books. The collector lived in a trailer park and kept his stash under his bed. Don't know how the perp found out about 'em, but he decided to help himself to a few of the choice bits. He has to leave a few of the good ones, of course. If he stole 'em all, he wouldn't have been able to find out that the Collector used to keep these things under his bed. Get it?

The perp had all kinds of 25th—Century burglary gear, none of which impressed the neighbor's Doberman. Guy's lucky he still has a crotch.

So I show up at the Station with my ID out, and ready to lead the perp—and ALL his futuristic gear—off to his time to face charges. When I see myself, already leading him out. Only I'm bulked-up, I look like Schwarzenegger, all of a sudden.

“Oh Crap,” is all I got to say. The Sh@t is about to hit the fan.

Been there, done that, got the scars to prove it. “Schwarzenegger” equals body armor. A future me had come in twenty minutes early to start this little dance. In this job, I’ve run into myself way too many times to let it bother me.

I didn’t notice the lady across the street until she opened-up with the plasma pistol. By the 25th, those things are pretty small. I’ve shot ‘em, and they are mean, loud, and have a kick like a mule. I have to tell you she’s a better shot than I will ever be. I—body armor me—went down like I’d been forced to watch C-SPAN.

“Mom?” The perp yells. “No!” People are running and screaming in all directions, and the little stunner I carry is barely clear of the holster, when another future me in body armor steps out of the alley behind her and raises his. . .uh. . . my stunner and says something that I can’t hear. The perp, cuffs and all, is running across the street towards us. . . them and it’s clear he ain’t gonna make it. The UPS driver locked the brakes, but it wasn’t going to be enough.

Out of nowhere, an older version of the mom—prison tattoos and all—comes barreling-in like a linebacker and knocks the perp out of the way. The truck swats her like a fly. From the way she skitters down the pavement, it looks like she’s wearing some kind of kinetic shock memory fabric. It’s why there ain’t no bullets outside of museums, after the late 23rd. She’ll hurt, but she’ll live.

Just for safety, I stun the perp before he can stand up and then hear my own voice calling for help. Mom-one has him--me—pinned up against a wall and is punching him in the head. She is one tough broad, that one. She’s going at him like Muhammad Ali just heard somebody disrespect his hairdo. I try the stunner but she’s wearing something that disperses the field. I must forget that when I go back to take her after she shoots the other me with the plasma pistol.

Now I’m the one dodging traffic as I run across the road to pull my own ass out of the fire.

Before I get there, another—much older—version of the son runs up and tackles her.

‘Ma, you’re just making it worse,’ I hear him say as I run up and stun them both with close range head shots.

By now, the local cops are piling out of the building. Don’t forget, this whole mess happened right in front of a police station. Only they got real guns drawn.

I show my ID and have them start lining up the bodies on the sidewalk.

Perp one and mom one go with me. Perp two and mom two haven’t committed any crimes that I know of, so I’ll let body armor me—the one without the bloody face—deal with them.

I look at bloody face me and he just grins like an idiot. Good thing they can fix teeth in the 30th.

Neither one of us is gonna want to write this FUBAR up.

The End