

ROUNDABOUT

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ROUNDAABOUT

CHARACTERS:

BETTE Female. Early 30's. A Chrono-naut from the Future.

ALVA Female. Early 30's. Her mother; A scientist from the present.

SYNOPSIS:

An assassin from the future arrives suddenly in the living room of the woman who will invent a time machine. But what happens when a would-be-assassin of time travel comes up against the inventor of it?

*A contemporary apartment, living room.
Late at night: Dim. A coffee table, a laptop.
A bottle of wine and a glass.
A cage with a mouse.*

*On the sofa: ALVA, in a bathrobe with a
dicataphone.*

ALVA:

Jerry came back to me today. Travel has done him well.
He shows no signs of tumors and displays more energy, you—
I was going to say younger. He seems younger, but... I don't know. Doesn't make
sense.

(she pours herself a glass of wine).

Anyway, progress. Teleportation is possible. I just haven't figured out where he
went or how he got back. We'll have to play some more, won't we Jerry?
Oh. In other news. Preggers. This'll be the last bottle of wine I enjoy for a while.
Apologies in advance.

ALVA exits.

*The physics of the room change: space
warps, and BETTE appears.
Her clothes are...not contemporary.
Neither is her Space-gun.*

*BETTE prowls the apartment, particularly
fascinated by the Mouse.*

BETTE:

You must be Jerry.

ALVA re-enters. She sees BETTE, shrieks.

BETTE:

Hush. Shh. SHUT UP!!!!
(all is still).

ALVA:

Don't hurt me.
I have money, cash a lot of cash, I have jewelry, I have –

BETTE:

Quiet.

ALVA:

Take my – my – take anything. Anything you want. Except the laptop. Or the mouse. They're important. This – this glass – it's real crystal – take –

BETTE:

SHUT the DAMN Hell UP.

ALVA:

I'm sorry, nothing like this ever happened before – I don't know what I'm supposed to do –

BETTE:

Dear Lord.

(for the first time she points and cocks the gun. Oooh shit just got real.)

I'm not robbing you.

ALVA:

Oh.

Is this a rape?

BETTE:

Shh. No. No, this isn't a rape, it's not a robbery, it's not, like, it's n—

ALVA:

Is it a Mormon thing?

BETTE:

Shut it or I will end you.

(cracks the gun)

Which is fine. It's why I'm here.

This isn't a robbery. This is a murder. An assassination.

ALVA:

Oh my goodness.

Why are you dressed like that?

BETTE:

I'm a Chrono-naut. I'm from the future.

(a long stare-down, then:)

BOTH:

Prove it.

How did you do that?

Holy –

You ARE from the future.

Have we done this before? *YOU'VE* done this before!

ALVA:
How are you doing that?

BETTE:
This isn't my first time doing this.

ALVA:
Holy shit – a time traveler!
But what do you mean “assassin.” Who would you –

BETTE:
You.
You invented it.
Or you will. Tomorrow.

ALVA:
Invent what?

BETTE:
Time Travel.
(ALVA sneezes. BETTE cocks her gun).

ALVA:
Wait – this makes no sense – there's so much I have to ask –

BETTE:
Good bye. Mother.
*(she shoots ALVA who falls dead.
BETTE prowls the room again. She opens the laptop on the coffee table.
An important thought occurs to her.)*
Wait. If I travelled back in time... and killed the woman who invented time travel BEFORE she actually invents it...It would no longer be possible for me to be here. I'd be sucked out of the universe. Which means –

ALVA:
(standing up, now with a frying pan)

Which means I'm not dead.
*(she whacks BETTE who collapses.
ALVA opens her robe to reveal a bullet proof vest.*
Not my first time either. I invented it. Bitch.
Minor detail.

*Lights Change BUT NOT A BLACK OUT.
A different version of the same night.
ALVA at couch with Dictaphone.*

ALVA:

Jerry came back today. Travel has done him well.
He seems — I was going to say younger. Doesn't make sense.

(she drinks from a bottle of wine).

Anyway, progress. We'll have to play some more, won't we Jerry?

Oh. In other news. I'm knocked up. We'll see how that goes.

*(a timer goes off. She puts the Dictaphone.
She opens a new bottle: Prosecco.*

*The physics of the room change: space
warps, and BETTE appears.)*

ALVA:

Hey Chrono-gal, what's shaking?

BETTE:

What are you doing?

ALVA:

Listen, we've been thru this... how many times now? I keep winning, you keep coming back. We'll be stuck in a time loop forever if we don't sit down and talk things out.
Prosecco?

BETTE:

My favorite.

ALVA:

I know.

(A long moment of silence.)

BETTE:

You look younger than I expect. Every time.

ALVA:

Funny. You look older.
So why me? I invented time travel –

BETTE:

Will invent.

ALVA:

Relative.
Why kill me? You'll be sucked out of the universe.

That's what I want.

BETTE:

What happened – happens... to you?

ALVA:

I'm an addict.
I started with big things, things we'd all do. I saw the Beatles at Shea Stadium, watched the 04 Red Sox, I heard every great speech ever given, read live, for the first time. I didn't – I never wanted to change anything. Just experience it.

BETTE:

How long have you been –

ALVA:

Two hundred and seventy two years.

BETTE:

Impossible. Unless –

ALVA:

Einstein was right.

BOTH:

The twin paradox.

ALVA:

Time travel moves you beyond the speed of light which means –

BETTE:

You age more slowly.
Jerry.

ALVA:

Yep. That's him, huh? The infamous Jerry?

BETTE:

Infamous? That little shit?
272 years – that's a lot of time.

ALVA:

After a while it became... it became a problem. I kept going back to tweak things, little things at first. Trying to reshuffle the deck. Give myself a perfect life.

BETTE:

ALVA:

What happened?

BETTE:

Every small change had... effects, consequences I couldn't see or guess. Every time I fixed one mistake, a thousand more blossomed, like a tree of knives. I just kept making more wrong. I can't –

ALVA:

Why don't you just kill yourself.
If you don't mind my asking. Why me?

BETTE:

Because it's not just me.
Time travel is like... when I'm from it's just the latest app, something people play with all the time. We've become this...horror.
(pointing the gun again)
It has to end. It has to be taken out for good.
If you die tonight, you won't ever invent it. No one will ever know. And all that pain will just suck right out of me, out of the whole world.

ALVA:

You kill me, and you'll be sucked out too.

BETTE:

Yes.

ALVA:

What's it like? Apart from all the.... How is it?

BETTE:

It's breathtaking.

ALVA:

And your mother? Did you enjoy the extra time with her?
(a long stare; ALVA puts her hand to her belly).
Well then. Do what you've come for.

BETTE:

I love you, mom.
(She pulls the trigger. Nothing. She tries again. Oh shit, this is embarrassing.)

ALVA:

It's interesting, isn't it? Just like any complications that comes about in life, it's really quite simple.

ALVA: (cont'd)

For you to exist, for you to be here, you had to come back in time. Which means I have to have invented it already.
Your being here is proof that I win. That I'll always win. I'll always be one time-step ahead of you. Which isn't much, but is enough to say, put on a bullet proof vest, or unload your space gun.

*(BETTE, furious, throws the gun down.
ALVA removes her robe, revealing an athletic outfit not unlike a Chrononauts).*

And yet you keep coming back for more.

They launch into an all out attack, fighting to the death. They've had this fight a dozen times before.

And over time (get it) each has tried to outwit the other.

So maybe BETTE brought a knife the first 10 times but now has brass knuckles, so that when ALVA goes to block a knife, she's caught off guard with a metal punch.

They have new surprises as well.

Every aspect of the fight is brand new and incredibly old. Each takes the upper hand at different times but right when one is about to finish the other, the underdog has a new surprise.

Finally they are utterly exhausted, panting on the floor.

BETTE:

Stop! Dammit mom why are we always fighting?

ALVA:

Truce?

BETTE:

For a hot second.

ALVA:

Yeah, just to catch my breath.

BETTE:

I'll take that Prosecco now.

(ALVA pours. They both sit on the couch, breathing heavily, quiet.
Slowly BETTE starts to notice something.)

ALVA:

What's wrong?

BETTE:

You're not drinking?

(ALVA shakes her head.)

ALVA:

I'm pregnant. Why?

BETTE:

God dammit.

I came back this morning to poison the wine.

ALVA:

I know.

BETTE:

I thought if there's any way to get to you it's through a bottle.

ALVA:

You know me so well. But I gave up drinking for you. If I drink while I'm pregnant it might affect you long term and where would that leave us?

BETTE:

I know you only want the best for me.

I always wanted to get to know you better, mom.

ALVA:

That's so nice, baby.

Me too.

Don't worry. We've got plenty of time.

Bette Dies.

End of Play.