

# Desperate Times

By bakasi [bakasi\_dick@hotmail.com]

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Summary: H.G. Wells is surprised as he finds Tempus in a world that finally seems to have gotten the better of him.

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"I should have known this was a trap," Wells said through gritted teeth as he looked into the eyes of the man who had called him. "I should have known that it would be you," he added angrily. "Whatever it is that you've got on your mind – forget it. I'm not going to help you." Trying his best to look more impressive, Wells folded his arms in front of his chest as he had seen Superman do it. Given that Tempus was sitting on a park bench, slumped down and obviously out at heels, his gesture had quite an effect.

Tempus looked up at him, his wry grin instantly fading as he saw the Englishman's indignant expression. "Happy Birthday, Herb," he said with a hoarse voice, raising his half-emptied beer bottle in a silent toast. "It's nice to see you."

"Come on! Don't tell me this is why you made me come all the way from 1911," Wells replied coldly. But Tempus' present state began to worry him. He was slurring his words and was far away from his usual arrogant self. Whatever had happened, this reality seemed to have gotten the better of him. Wells had a closer look at this else-world that he didn't know yet. To him it seemed pretty normal, but sometimes even the slightest changes had a vast impact.

"You're right," Tempus admitted, sending Wells an almost pleading glance, which was even more unsettling than anything else. "I wanted you to take me back into our reality. On my travels through time I stranded here; my time-machine broke and now I can't get back," he explained unhappily.

Wells looked at Tempus, not sure if he was to be taken seriously. "Do you really expect me to take you back, allowing you to endanger Utopia all over again?" he asked incredulously. "Are you insane?" In a hurry, Wells turned around, wanting to get away from Tempus as far as possible. Actually, Tempus now was right where he wanted him, caught in a place and time that he couldn't get away from. This was perfect! And now he, H.G. Wells, had offered him a way to escape! He really couldn't have acted more stupid.

"Wait, Herb," Tempus begged and clumsily got up from the bench he'd been sitting on. "I promise you I will stop trying to destroy Utopia," he added, tripping over his own feet as he followed Wells. Just in time, he managed to break his fall. "Trust me, I'd rather spend the rest of my life watching my nine-thousand channels than being stuck in this universe."

Furrowing his brow, Wells turned around. Tempus didn't sound like he was lying, but Wells had learned his lesson not to trust that man. He was rotten to the core, but his declaration made Wells pretty curious.

"What's so bad about this world?" he asked against better judgment. "No crimes? No violence? Too many channels with nothing on them?" Wells chuckled at the thought that Tempus might have landed in yet another perfect world.

"No, that's not it," Tempus said with a shrug. "At first the place was pretty okay, but after a while I realized that this world's Tempus must have really messed up." Tempus

took a deep breath, before he continued. "I mean, my whole life is about fighting against Superman and his ideals. I'm the bad guy and I like it. But in this world I'm completely and utterly useless. Lois and Clark both have just ceased to exist. And I don't even know what actually happened to them. I mean, Clark thinks he's a normal guy, calls himself Dean Cain and is happy with that. And Lois? She's become a housewife, a desperate one at that. Can you imagine? Lois Lane a housewife? And I thought I loved irony."

THE END