

BERTHA BENZ
Episode #11 Transcript
Written by Gabrielle Mirabella
Music by Ernie Bird

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INTRO MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Hello! And welcome to a brand new season of “What *will* she do next?”

I’m your host Gabrielle Mirabella and together with composer Ernie Bird, (**ERNIE:** Hello!) we’ve created a podcast that celebrates some of our *favorite* historical women!

On today’s episode... science, progress, and technology allow one woman the adventure of a lifetime. This episode was written & performed by myself with music & production by Ernie Bird (**ERNIE:** Hello!)

GABRIELLE & ERNIE: Enjoy!

GABRIELLE: Are you feeling...stuck? Does the challenge presented before you seem pretty “unsolvable”? Or, perhaps, like many of us right now, you feel confined; with no place to go, no room to grow? Well, don’t worry, you’re not alone.

Join us, as we investigate seemingly “impossible” situations from the lives of history’s most famous women, and ask ourselves...what *will* she do next?

THEME SONG PLAYS:

*“What will she do next?
What will she do next?
Her aim is true but will she see it through?
Oh, what will she do... next?”*

GABRIELLE: Today’s historical woman: Bertha Benz. The first person in history to drive an automobile over a long distance.

Now, before she gets too “stuck”, let’s see where she’s coming from...

Bertha Benz was born Bertha Ringer on May 3rd, 1849 in Pforzheim, Germany. Born into a wealthy family, Bertha knew a comfortable life from early on. But, her financial privilege did not allow her the one thing she truly wanted, the same education as her male peers.

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A curious child taken with science and technology, Bertha's young heart was broken one day after reading a note scribbled into the family bible, written by her father.

BERTHA: "Unfortunately, only a girl again."

GABRIELLE: Bertha read her father's note.

BERTHA: I'll show him.

SFX: The slamming shut of a book.

GABRIELLE: As time passed, Bertha's resolve to prove her worth as a woman, and to follow her passions for science, grew with each day. She was not able to receive the higher education she had dreamed of, so instead she devised her own research; boldly asking questions when she did not understand how a machine worked, reading books and newspapers daily, and pursuing the chance to examine new technologies when they became available.

And, perhaps, this unquenchable thirst for knowledge was what first attracted Bertha to a young, scrappy engineer who, completely by chance, entered the stage-coach that her and her mother were occupying.

SFX: A door creaking open.

KARL: Oh! My apologies! I thought this coach was free.

GABRIELLE: Karl Benz hesitated by the stagecoach door, unsure how to proceed.

BERTHA: That's alright. There is room enough for you.

GABRIELLE: Bertha responded

BERTHA'S MOTHER: Is there?

GABRIELLE: Bertha's *mother* responded, squinting through her glasses at the disheveled young man.

BERTHA: Come in. Please. My name is Bertha, and this is my Mother.

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KARL: My name is Karl. Karl Benz. Nice to meet you.

BERTHA'S MOTHER: Pleasure.

SFX: The door shuts. The sounds of horses.

BERTHA'S MOTHER: Ugh! Young man, what is that mess by your feet?

BERTHA sniffs the air.

BERTHA: It smells of... ligroin oil? Is that correct?

KARL: Ligroin, yes! I have been using it on my newest invention.

BERTHA: Invention?

GABRIELLE: Bertha's eyes opened wide.

BERTHA'S MOTHER: Let's stop talking. Now. The smell is overwhelming.

BERTHA: What sort of invention?

GABRIELLE: Bertha insisted.

KARL: Will you promise not to laugh when I tell you?

BERTHA: Of course!

BERTHA'S MOTHER: No.

KARL: I am creating...a horseless carriage!

BERTHA: Woah!

BERTHA'S MOTHER: Hahahahahahah!!!! WHAT?

GABRIELLE: Bertha Ringer's mother was not the only person to laugh at Karl Benz's new invention.

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BERTHA'S MOTHER: Hahahahah!!! It's so weird!

GABRIELLE: But, with Bertha's constant support, Karl was encouraged to finish his work. Even before the two were married in 1872, Bertha used the entirety of her family allowance to finance Karl's new invention.

BERTHA'S MOTHER: She did WHAT??

GABRIELLE: Karl and Bertha were now ready to share their invention with the world. A machine we now know as the modern-day automobile, or simply known as, the car.

SFX: Sounds of a car running.

_____ *BERTHA SINGS.*

BERTHA:
IT'S READY!
IT'S RUNNING!
WITH A BANG THE ENGINE COMES TO LIFE!
FEEL ITS POWER!
SEE ITS BEAUTY!
HEAR THE WHEELS OF PROGRESS CHURNING NOW!
EVERYTHING'S ABOUT TO CHANGE-
EVERYTHING!
WHAT A SCARY, BUT EXCITING PLACE TO BE.
OH, KARL WE'RE STEERING TOWARDS THE FUTURE,
WITH THE GREAT WIDE WORLD IN THE PASSENGER SEAT!
LET US GO!
LET US GO, MY LOVE!
LET US GO!
WE ARE READY FOR THE ROAD!

KARL: I'm never leaving the house again!

BERTHA: What?

KARL: I can't show my face in public! I am a failure!

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BERTHA: But, the machine is a success! It's a scientific triumph!

KARL: Then why will no one buy it??

BERTHA: Sometimes, when something is new, people need time to understand it, understand how it works and why they need it! I'm sure if we show them...

KARL: Nope! I am hiding forever! I have wasted ten years of my life. I have spent *all of your money!* The automobile *is dead.*

SFX: Door slams.

BERTHA: Karl!

BUT, I'M READY.
TO START RUNNING.
THERE IS NO WAY I CAN WALK AWAY.
EVERYTHING'S ABOUT TO CHANGE-
CAN'T YOU SEE?
IF YOU'RE FRIGHTENED,
THEN I GUESS IT'S UP TO ME.

BERTHA: *(spoken)* Dear Karl, by the time you read this note I will have driven 65 miles to Pforzheim. That's right, driven. I know your invention works. We just have to show them how.

GABRIELLE: Bertha placed her note on the dining room table, tiptoed into the garage, and took a seat behind the wheel of Karl's automobile.

SFX: Car engine turning over.

BERTHA:
TIME DOESN'T STOP, DOESN'T TURN AWAY TO HIDE IN THE DARK!
OH, OH.
IT MOVES, EVER BOLDLY MARCHING ON!
YEAH.

WE'RE ON A ROLL, HERE WE GO-O BOUND FOR MAKIN' A MARK!

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OH, OH.
BUT, WE CANNOT GET THERE IF WE DON'T START MOVING!

YOUR GENIUS PUT US IN THIS CAR!
NOW, MY MUSCLE FUELS THE WILL TO GO FAR, SO FAR!
I WON'T STOP UNTIL THE WORLD KNOWS WHO WE ARE!

I WILL GO
SHOW WHAT PROGRESS CAN DO!
SHOW THEM ME AND YOU,
AND THE FUTURE.

OH-OH.
I'LL GO-OH.
OH.

TOWNSPEOPLE point and yell as Bertha rides by.

TOWNSMAN: Look at that woman!

TOWNSWOMAN #1: Is she flying?

TOWNSWOMAN #2: She must be a witch!

BERTHA:
FEAR KEEPS 'EM BACK, KEEPS 'EM CLINGIN' TO THEIR WORRY AND DOUBT!
OH-OH.
THAT FEAR BREEDS ANGER, EVERY TIME.
YEAH.

LAUGH ALL THEY WANT, I WON'T WAIT UNTIL THEY FIGURE IT OUT!
OH NO-OH.
THEIR WORDS FLOAT INTO THE AIR AS I KEEP ON MOVING!

FULL POWER, SHIFT THE GEARS INSIDE!
EXPLOSIONS FUEL IT NOW AS I DRIVE, AS I DRIVE!
I CAN'T STOP UNTIL I KNOW THAT WE'VE ARRIVED!

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I WILL GO
SHOW WHAT SCIENCE CAN DO!
MADE BY ME AND YOU,
AND THE FUTURE.

OH-OH.
HERE I GO-OH.
OH.

THERE WAS A TIME I FELT LEFT BEHIND,
STUCK IN PLACE WITH NOWHERE LEFT TO GO.
OH-OH-OH-OH-OH.

HERE ON THE ROAD, I'VE GOT ONLY TIME,
ONLY SPACE, CLEAR N' FINE.

NOW THE KEYS ARE IN MY HAND,
NOW THE FUTURE'S WHAT I PLAN.
NO MAN SENT ME HERE.
THE DISTANCE GONE, THIS ROAD I'M ON,
IT'S MINE!

HERE I GO,
KNOWING WHAT I CAN DO!
TOGETHER, NOW WITH YOU,
AND THE FUTURE.

OH-OH.
I'LL GO-OH.
LET'S GO!

GABRIELLE: Bertha set out to prove Karl's automobile worked. The long-distance drive of 65 miles, or 104 kilometers, was the first of its kind. No one had done it before, no one had even attempted. But with a strong will and an encyclopedic knowledge of the machine, Bertha was undeterred. That is, until...

SFX: Car sputtering.

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BERTHA: That doesn't sound good.

TOWNSMAN: There's the witch!

TOWNSWOMAN #1: Her monster is slowing down!

BERTHA: Neither does that...

SPX: Car backfire.

TOWNSWOMAN #2: She's stopped moving!

GABRIELLE: Bertha Benz was stuck, quite literally, on the side of a country road. Karl's invention, the first automobile, came to a screeching halt.

TOWNSWOMAN #2: Say something, witch!

TOWNSMAN: Have you come to eat us?

BERTHA: I know what's wrong with the machine, I just need oil to fuel the tank. But, if I speak up, this crowd might get even more angry! What will I do?

UPBEAT MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Good question Bertha. What *will* you do? Before we find out, let's first take a look at her options. Will Bertha choose option 1?:

BERTHA: This was a terrible idea. I'll leave the car here and *run!*

GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 2?:

BERTHA: Maybe I can sell this hunk of junk and buy a new horse.

GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 3?:

BERTHA: I won't live in fear like they do. I trust myself and I trust science.

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GABRIELLE: Now that we can clearly see Bertha's options, which one do YOU think she will choose? Take a moment to think it over...

THINKING MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Alright, got your answer? Now, let's find out which option Bertha will choose...

TOWNSWOMAN #2: Alright, Witch! Time's up!

TOWNSWOMAN #1: Leave here at once!

TOWNSMAN: Please don't eat me!!

BERTHA: Quiet! Thank you. Now, where is your pharmacist?

PHARMACIST: Right here! I'm the pharmacist.

BERTHA: I need Ligroin oil. 10 liters, please.

PHARMACIST: Ligroin Oil? But, you'll only need one litre to get those stains out of your dress.

TOWNSPEOPLE LAUGH.

BERTHA: I need the oil for my automobile. I have money.

TOWNSWOMAN #1: Don't help her!!

TOWNSWOMAN #2: Or her monster!

TOWNSMAN: Mommy!!

BERTHA: It is not a monster! Look!

SFX: Banging of steel.

BERTHA: It is made of steel and wood. This here is a cylinder, this is where fuel is burned and converted into energy. That energy is what powers the machine, what makes it move. And the

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fuel it needs is in the form of your ligroin oil. So, if you'll hand it to me, I will fuel my car, show you how the vehicle works and I will be on my way.

PHARMACIST: Uh....Okay. Here's your oil.

She nervously sings as she works.

BERTHA:
KEEP STEADY, FILL THE TANK INSIDE.
SOON ALL THEIR FEAR N' DOUBT WILL SUBSIDE, ALL FLY BY!
JUST DON'T STOP UNTIL THE ENGINE COMES ALIVE...

SFX: Sputtering, car engine running!!

TOWNSMAN: She was right!

TOWNSWOMAN #1: I don't believe it!

BERTHA:
NOW I WILL GO,
SHOW WHAT WOMEN CAN DO!
TOGETHER, ME AND YOU,
AND THE FUTURE.

OH-OH.
HERE WE GO-OH.
WE GO!
WE GO!
INTO THE FUTURE!
THE FUTURE!

GABRIELLE: Bertha Benz was faced with a seemingly impossible situation. But, with knowledge, science and a bit of bravery Bertha proved that her husband's wild new invention worked. And, because of her daring trip, the Karl Benz automobile became a worldwide success. So, the next time you're feeling stuck, I wonder...what will *you* do next?

KID'S CORNER MUSIC.

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GABRIELLE: At the end of every episode we will be featuring a very special guest star...*you!*
Today we have Dermot from Cambridge, MA.

GABRIELLE & ERNIE: Hi, Dermot!

GABRIELLE: Tell us all about your favorite historical woman!

DERMOT: My favorite historical woman is Rosa Parks. She was born on February 4th, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. She is most remembered for not moving to the back of the bus when a white passenger wanted her seat. She was arrested and asked to pay a fee, but she refused. She said she was not guilty and that segregation laws were wrong. Because of her efforts, other Black Americans decided to boycott busses to show their support. Rosa Parks inspires me because she had the bravery to stand up for herself and take action.

End of Episode.