



WRITE-ON - FALL SEMESTER 2020

**THE IMPROBABLE  
ADVENTURES OF MR. HH**

# The Improbable Adventures of Mr. H. H.

## Prologue

Mr. H. H. is an interesting man. When he was younger, strange things started happening to him. A strange but wonderful thing that changed his life, either for better or worse. A thing so wild, so improbable, that only a few of these adventures could be collected and told to you today. You see, Mr. H. H. began to warp between parallel universes.

He never learns why this happens to him, but he eventually notices a very loose pattern. He never knows how long he will be in the other universe. It is always random. He could be there for days, months even, or he could be there for only a few minutes. When he comes back, however, he always has a grace period of one month-- at least 30 days of blissful nothingness for him to unwind and heal his scrapes if he got any. After those 30 days, though, he could warp at any time. He could be back for a month, or he could be back for a year; but he will eventually warp.

He is rather lucky, however. When he travels to these other universes, he is in the exact same spot he was in in his home universe. The reason he is lucky is because it never happens to kill him. He may have fallen, broken a leg or something, but he never warps and gets his arm stuck in the wall. For some reason, it is always perfectly timed to not kill him.

But that's enough from me. You're probably excited to read some of his stories. I can tell you, he's excited to share them with you. His improbable adventures through parallel universes is sure to captivate you, make you laugh, or maybe even make you cry. Thank you, and enjoy.

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Mr. H.H. is a collection of stories written by Carroll's own students, mainly the creative writing class. It was an idea that came from a student for just a small assignment, that slowly grew into a project, and eventually became what it is now. We all had fun working together to bring this character and his improbable and impossible adventures to life. We hope you enjoy reading our project, and that you are inspired to write, and maybe even take the creative writing class yourself. Write on, and it's a great day to be a Patriot!

- The Carroll High School Creative Writing class and Write On Team.

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## ***1: The Shifter and Three Bitey Friends - by Audrey Kneer***

*It would be more appropriate for a mad doctor to have this power,* I thought, peeved. It hardly mattered now. The switch didn't take much. One moment I was on my bed, playing Mario Kart on my Nintendo Switch, and the next I was in a free-fall. The symptoms were the same every time. My ears popped and my hair stood on end as if I'd been shocked by an electric current. In any case, I found myself on the floor in some place that was *not* my home, fall cushioned by a pile of energy drink cans and rumpled laundry.

I groaned and rubbed my eyes. *Here we go again.*

"Bro," a voice whispered.

"Bruh," another added.

"Broseph," said a third.

"We are witnessing a most unusual event."

I took in my surroundings. I was in some variation of the bedroom, though much more cluttered. A pile of pizza boxes tottered dangerously in the corner, complemented by the same aluminum cans that were littered on the thin carpet. A television flickered and played a cheesy tune, offering the only atmosphere. It seemed to be the dead of night if the darkness was to be trusted, but the three people who had taken notice of me were very much awake.

Their skin was ashy and eyes blood-red, but they didn't appear to be ill. Each of them had an impressive amount of muscle and appeared to be around my age. I was struck by the resemblance to the gym rats I was used to. If they weren't standing right in front of me, I would've sworn up and down that they were blonde and aggressively tan instead of sickly and pale.

"Careful there, unknown bro. Falling into our room is most dangerous. How'd you manage that?"

I glanced at the speaker, the tallest of the three. At the very least, the trio wasn't outwardly malicious. As awkward as the conversation would be, I couldn't explain away a sudden appearance if I'd been caught. "I, uh, warped? It's kind of hard to explain."

"Mad confusing." The second boy frowned.

"I didn't really *do* anything, it just happened. One moment I was in my universe, and the next I'm in the same place in a different world."

"Totally whack." The third and final witness leaned back in his chair, half-drowning in an oversized basketball jersey. "So like, this is your house, but different?"

"Yes...?"

"Epic." The tall one put down his energy drink and offered a handshake. "You look pretty neat, shifter homie. What should we call you?"

"H. Just H is fine."

"Mysterious. I respect the vibe. I'm Chad."

"I'm Brad!"

"And I'm Kyle. Welcome to *mi casa*."

I nodded slowly. “Nice to meet you? And thanks.”

“Anything for a dawg from another universe. We would like, totally be friends if you lived here.”

“Agreed,” said Brad. “We’re most definitely the friendliest.”

Chad leaned closer and squinted at me carrying the smell of stale pizza and, strangely, tomatoes? “Wait a second, broskis. I have reason to believe Mister H is *alive*.”

“Alive?!” yelled Kyle. “Like, human-alive?!”

“I would hope so,” I said. “I’m still moving, so yes, I’m alive.”

“My guy, you can’t break the bro-code by insulting the boys.” Brad shook his head. “Show respect, alive or not. Unlike you, our esteemed homie, we are technically dead.”

Chad put a hand to his chest dramatically. “No heartbeat.”

Kyle hummed in agreement. “Bad sunburns.”

Brad tapped his canine tooth. “Fangs.”

“Hold on.” My head spun as I put the pieces together. “You guys are *vampires*?!”

“You’re *human*. We’re not the weird ones here, my man.”

I froze. “Are you going to drink my blood?!”

“Ew. Dude, no. That’s like, totally disgusting.” Chad gagged and shook his head. “Maybe our grandparents did, but that stuff is nasty. You don’t know where it’s been. Uh, no offense.”

“None taken.” I glanced between the three creatures. “What do you guys drink instead?”

“Tomato juice!” Kyle pumped his fist in the air, showing off a half-full energy drink can. “Got all the iron we need and doesn’t involve killing living dudes. A most awesome alternative.”

“Ah. I see.” I supposed *that* explained the strange smell from earlier, but I didn’t have much time to dwell on it. Brad had crept closer, curiously examining the controller in my hand.

“Woah, dude. Is that for a Bintendo Switch?”

“Oh. Um, close enough?” I’d forgotten I’d taken it, but Brad’s face lit up.

“No way! Do you think it’ll hook up with ours?”

I wasn’t given a chance to answer as the vampire swiped the controller and darted to the television. Chad grinned wickedly. “Three steps ahead of you, my man.” He flipped on the screen as Kyle fussed with their Switch. I took a second to blink. In the few minutes I had been in their room, the three had only bothered to ask for my name before jumping to a video game.

I didn’t have a chance to question their overly chill attitude. Brad shoved the controller back into my face with pure glee. “It works! Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Probably not.”

“Boo,” he pouted. “Luigi Kart tournament! I want to see how well you hold up against professionals like ourselves.”

“I was thinking more along the lines of ‘ask mysterious shifter guy what he’s doing.’”

“Nah.” Kyle pulled up the menu for the game and selected a racetrack. “Luigi Kart is more important.”

“I hate to break it to you, Mister H, but you’re not all that mysterious either. Minus the human thing.”

“Ow.” I collected my bruised ego as the race started. To my surprise, the game wasn’t all that different from what he was used to. I found myself keeping up with the other three, much to their annoyance. One game led to another until we found ourselves playing on until the first rays of sunlight peeked over the horizon.

Chad winced and pulled the blinds shut. “Dang, we played through the whole night?! You’re some racer.”

“Right back at you.” I tentatively offered a fistbump.

Chad returned it, overjoyed. “Epic, dude! We’ll have to play again sometime.”

As soon as the vampire patted him on the back, My vision began to swim. “Oh, no-”

“Chad! What’s wrong! Is he leaving?!”

I nodded. My body was already feeling tingly and slipping. I doubted I could even speak, but soon there wasn’t a need to. The trio tackled me to the ground, carmine eyes watery with tears. “Mister H! You can’t leave us yet!”

Kyle nodded, sobbing. “We’re going to miss you, dude!”

Brad wiped at his eyes. “Don’t forget about us, man. You’re an honorary bro.”

I didn’t have a chance to say goodbye. I returned in the same way I had left: in one instant I was gone. The only proof of my journey was a borrowed Nintendo Switch controller and a crushed can of tomato juice.

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## **2: *Family Connections* by Ellie Erich**

As I’m walking around the bend of the sidewalk to my local grocery store, I feel it. That cold, tight sensation in my chest. I quickly check to ensure I have my essential items before I am wrenched from reality. My vision blacks out and the transportation begins.

I squint open my eyes and brush the pesky fly away from my forehead. It takes a moment to adjust my eyes to the night sky, but with the help of the full moon, it doesn’t take too terribly long. The faint melody of a saxophone fills my ears, and as I turn my head to the side, I spot a small building where the grocery store usually stands. The slow tune emanates into the night; I hate jazz. Finally picking myself off the cold pavement, I stagger towards the building, hoping to find someone to tell me where the heck I am.

Tip-toeing towards the rickety door, my ears are now assailed by the horrendous music. I literally cannot emphasize enough how much I hate jazz. I slam open the door, eager to find the source of the music. The room is super musty, the smell of moldy cheese triggering my gag reflex. Looking around, there doesn’t seem to be any sign of a human presence, which is confusing because there is no source for ugly “music.” There is a set of window panes to my left, and the moonlight shines through them, illuminating a record player in the corner. Suspicious, but not too noteworthy. I quickly walk over to the contraption and remove the needle to stop the agonizing sound. At last there is silence. Seeing there is a small door on the opposite side of the room, my curiosity overthrows my judgment, and I walk over to see what is behind it. The

opening for the door is small enough that I have to get down on my hands and knees to peer in. As I stick my head into the dark crevice, I barely have time to register the sharp intake of a breath before I am grabbed by an unknown assailant and tossed headfirst into the dark. The door slams shut behind me.

Disorienting lights shine directly into my corneas and I hear a gruff voice say, "Take him back to Malcolm, he'll know what to do," before I am plunged back into darkness. I must have passed out along the way, because when I awake, thick ropes are holding me down on a small, wooden chair. The light is so dim that it is hard to make out anything in this damp room.

"Do you know why you're here?" a voice barks from a dark corner of the room.

Caught off guard, I peer into the darkness, hoping to make out who had spoken. "No sir, I was just hoping to find out where I am, before I was so rudely abducted."

"Better watch your mouth boy, Malcolm won't take too kindly to that sort of attitude."

"Who's that?" disrespect rang clear in my voice, but I couldn't care less.

The face of the voice leans forward, his disfigured features illuminated by a streak of light piercing through a teeny window on the ceiling. "Someone who has been looking for you for a long time, and he wants you dead. You're lucky you've made it this far; don't spoil it," he says, before marching out the door and bolting the cell.

Alone, cold, and hungry, it definitely wasn't an ideal situation. Thinking that I probably don't want to meet Malcolm, I start to make an escape plan. The door is bolted shut, but the window in the top corner might be promising. The only remaining issue is that I'm literally bound to a wooden chair with knots that probably aren't easy to untie. After a little bit of struggling, I am able to loosen my confinements. Now, sweaty with the effort, my hands slip through the makeshift cuffs, and I set to work untying my feet. Completely consumed by the task at hand, I fail to notice a set of eyes watching me through the slit in the door. "Need a hand?" a snarky voice calls from the abyss. You've got to be joking; after all that hard work, I'm discovered.

"Yeah, that'd be nice actually," I replied.

"Hm, if it weren't for the fact that Malcolm would have my head if I did, I would do it."

The voice was clearly female, and seemed to belong to someone around my age.

"Who is Malcolm anyway?" I said, "And why does he get to decide what goes on around here? I don't even know where I am, and he wants me dead!"

"You see, we know who you are, and that's all that matters. It's not everyday the disruptor of universes comes stumbling on our doorstep."

"What do you mean by disruptor? I have zero control over my warping anomaly."

"Well H.H., some things are better left unsaid."

With that, the source of the voice left, her footsteps fading down the hallway. Well great, if this mysterious person had anything helpful to offer, my chance was gone. Exhausted from the day's efforts, I dozed off in the chair.

When I awake from my catnap, I set to work again. By now I've already broken about three nails trying to untie my feet. At least I break free, and I stretch out my sore muscles, I

direct my gaze to the window opening some twenty feet above. Reaching into my fanny pack, I pull out my compact flashlight and shine the beam at the wall, hoping to find some footholds to assist my climb. There aren't any. I'm beginning to become frustrated when the same voice from earlier that day pierces my ears.

"Well, well, well, Mr. H.H., took you long enough," she teased.

"If you're not going to report me to ~*Malcolm*~ then why don't you help me get outta here?" I sighed.

"Watch your attitude man, and maybe I'll give you some advice."

"If I'm not mistaken this leader of yours wants to kill me, so I have every right to be annoyed. Besides, won't you suffer if you help me out?"

"Malcolm would never suspect me. He might be the lord of the universe travelers or whatever, but I've twisted him around my finger for years now. You're not the first kid I've saved."

"Fine. Sorry for being snarky. Now how do I get out of here?"

Taking on a more serious tone, she said, "I'll unlock this door when the time is right, and you'll just have to trust me to lead you out."

"And why should I? You just said you're Malcolm's right hand lackey; sounds like cap to me."

"Cap?"

"Oh nevermind, all I'm saying is no, I don't trust you. For all I know, you could be leading me into another trap!"

"H.H.," her voice lowered into a whisper as she leaned close to the door, "I'm your only shot at survival. Please, just give me a chance. Here, take this as a token of my word."

With this, she slides a small ring under the door. It's a slim, golden signet with an imprint of a marigold on its face. With a shock, I realize this is the exact same ring my mother used to wear. "Where did you get this?" I said.

"It's mine, and in another universe it's your mother's," she replied.

"Well then who are you?"

"Honestly, not really sure, parallel universes are tricky. But none of the matters now, we have to get you out of here now, or else you're never leaving alive."

The woman unlocks the door and beckons me out into the hallway. Her face is still mostly concealed by the shadows. She takes off in a slight jog, and I follow right behind. I try to keep track of where I am, but after about twenty turns, I lose track. After what seems like an eternity, she abruptly stops in front of a small, stone door.

"This is it, leave now and you'll probably make it," she whispered.

"Probably?" I laughed.

Dead serious, she responds, "I'm not kidding mister, you're always going to have to watch your back."

"Ok, ok, I believe you. Now, where does this door lead?"

“Out into the woods. Stay off the path and you should be undetected, but always be aware of your surroundings.”

“But what about Malcolm? What about you? What will happen when he discovers I’m missing?”

Her grey eyes, now visible in the dim light, are visibly strained. “There’s no time to explain, you’ve got to go now.”

I hesitate, not wanting to leave her here to an undetermined fate. I’m about to offer her to come with me when alarm sirens begin to blare. Her eyes widen in fear. Grabbing my arm, she opens the door and yelled, “Go. Now!” I’m thrown out, and for the second time that day, the door slams shut behind me. Realizing I probably don’t have much time until the guards track me down, I take off running into the woods. Once, I’m at a safe distance, I look back at the shack, now knowing the labyrinth it houses below. I have so many questions, but no one to answer them.

I want to go back. I want to help her, but on the inside, I know it’s useless. Then, there’s that feeling again. My chest tightens and the air closes in around me. I squeeze back my hopeless tears and prepare for the journey home.

I wake up on the sidewalk feeling broken and alone. Now knowing that there are other universe travelers out there, I wonder if I’ll ever be safe again. Picking myself up off the ground, I try to shake the guilt of the woman’s predicament. There must have been something I could’ve done. I walk home slowly and sink into my bed. As I stare at my ceiling, I wonder if this world is an alternate reality to another traveler. Eventually I doze off and finally get some sleep; hopefully tomorrow will be better.

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### ***3: Flight Attendants and Jail Breaks by Tony Gabriele***

“Now boarding group B for Delta flight 328.” I had always been indifferent about flying, but today I was excited. After weeks of seemingly unending planning, I had reserved my hotel, created my itinerary, and booked this flight just for it to be delayed for three long hours. After getting eyed by the restless four-year-old, I was so ready to just be in New York. After taking a deep breath, I stood up, clumsily grabbed my bags, and headed towards the flight desk. After shifting from side to side in the line, it was finally my turn to scan my ticket and for the attendant to check my passport.

“Hi,” I stammered slightly, still very intimidated by the stone-faced ticket attendant. She let out a slight grunt, which I suppose was her greeting, and forcefully grabbed my well-kept passport. With a slight glance at my information page, she tossed the passport back at me and with a half-hearted gesture directed me into the unsteady tunnel that led out to the plane. I had an unsettling feeling the ticket attendant would be one of many unsavory people during this trip, a



notion that was quickly disproved by the grinning flight attendant that greeted me at the door of the plane.

“Can I aid you in finding your seat?” asked the flight attendant who wore a perfectly placed name tag bearing the name “Camila.”

“I think I can find it, but thank you so much for that Camila!” I responded, refreshed by her general amiability.

“Sure thing, just let me know if I can help you with anything!”

I smiled back at her and then realized that there was a growing line of impatient passengers behind me, waiting to sit down as I awkwardly admired Camila’s silky smooth hair. The person behind me cleared their throat and, startled, I headed for my seat. “1A, 2A, 3A,” I counted in my head as I walked down the aisle, almost trying to escape the person behind me. “8A, 9A, and me...” I continued. I plopped down in my seat, still half-expecting there to be someone to glare at me for taking so long. I readjusted my bags around me, tucking one under the seat in front of me, and when no one was coming, standing to put another in the overhead bin. I always find it funny to see people trying to squeeze their horse-sized bags into the tiny containers, but it’s so much less entertaining when you’re the person and you can feel the glares of everyone around you.

“Can you please hurry up?” hissed a slovenly looking lady wearing large sunglasses with breath that reeked of alcohol.

“Yes, sorry ma’am,” I mumbled with one last shove of my bag. I dropped down to my seat and took a deep breath. After collecting myself, I realized that I had said “I’m sorry” again. I have been reading loads of self-help books and the number one thing that is repeated in all of them is “don’t apologize for other people’s problems.”

The flight attendants came to the front of the plane and began the safety demonstration. As they began buckling the weirdly detached seat belt, I slowly began to drift off to sleep. That plane ride was the soundest I think I’ve ever slept in my entire life. The only reason I woke up was that Camila, with her perfectly sculpted hands smacking me. I woke up with a jolt and groggily looked around momentarily. There were no other passengers on the plane.

“Sir, we landed a half-hour ago, please go so we can get on with the next flight,” said Camila with an unfortunate curttness that I realized meant I had no chance of getting dinner with her at the McDonald’s that was inevitably twenty feet from our landing gate. I grabbed my bags, struggling more than I’m willing to admit with the one in the overhead compartment, and took the walk of shame past all of the crew members that were cleaning the plane. I took a deep breath and walked out of the plane and into the gate.

Hoping to regain the dignity I had lost by snoozing in front of Camila, I swiftly made my way through the airport and out to a taxi. With a slight wave, a bright yellow car pulled over. The roof was adorned with an obnoxious sign advertising for some plastic surgery that will “solve every one of your problems.” Wanting to just get to my hotel, I purposefully made as little eye contact with the driver as humanly possible. I mumbled the address of the hotel and he zoomed away.

After riding and bumping up and down in the back seat for close to a half-hour, the driver took a hairpin turn and dropped me off in front of the hotel. The bellhop offered to take my bags so I gave him a slight smile and handed him my smallest bag. He let out a slight sigh and stood behind me as I checked into the hotel. The desk worker handed me a key card and pointed me towards the elevator. The bellhop, following me like a small duck, walked into the elevator behind me and we rode up in silence. When we got to the eighth floor the doors opened with a slight creak. I turned left out of the elevator and walked to my room. 819 was a spacious room. The lights had a yellow tinge to them that made everything look just a little older than it was. The bellhop set down my bags and I slipped him a twenty before he glumly retreated back down the hall. After looking around for a bit, I flopped onto the bed.

“Uh oh,” I let out with a slight gasp. Before I knew it, it was happening. The all too tedious situation that I would be put in, risking my life, just to get sent back to the normal world. I knew exactly what was happening, so I closed my eyes and just let it happen. While I was waiting for the switch to happen, I realized that I had forgotten to leave food out for my cat. But it was too late. This was happening.

“Thump.”

I landed in the same weirdly lit room. No weird noises, no one else in the room. Just me. I began having the weird feeling that nothing changed. Just to check, I opened the door and walked out of my room. 819. Same room. I walked down the hall to the elevator. Same creak when the doors opened. I stepped in and pressed the button marked “lobby.” Same person working at the desk. I walked outside. Same bellhop with the same depressed look on his face. I began to wander around the city. New York is a beautiful city, but it becomes so much less beautiful when you are anxiously waiting for something weird and chaotic to happen. Maybe a giant bee that wants to take over the world or some highly contagious virus that will give you a bad cough... and more. But there was nothing. After what felt like hours, I decided to stop into a coffee shop and grab a quick drink and then find my way back to the hotel. I looked around me and saw a store with a large sign that said “The Queen Bee’s Coffees.”

“Promising,” I whispered to myself. Looking both ways and seeing that there were no cars coming, I walked across the street. Just as I was reaching for the handle of the door, I felt a firm hand on my shoulder.

“Excuse me, sir,” barked a loud and gruff voice, “you are under arrest for the high crime of jaywalking. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have a right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.”

“Are you serious?” I stammered, trying to turn around and look the person grabbing me in the eyes.

“Please stop resisting arrest, sir.”

“What?” I said with one final jerk of my arms. I spun around just to meet a face full of a tactical flashlight. And then everything went black.

“I hereby charge him guilty of jaywalking!” Shouted a loud voice. I woke with a jolt. In my current groggy state, I looked around to see that I was in a courtroom. “Ahhhhh, he’s awake. Thank you Mr. HH for finally joining us. You came just in time, my favorite part. The part where I decide what your punishment is and we all get to watch as you leave to do whatever I tell you.”

“Huh?” I said in my raspy morning voice.

“You just got charged with jaywalking, the most criminal action to this date,” shrieked the judge. I finally got a good look at him, and by the proportions of his body, I would have to guess that he was about three foot two inches and wore a long white wig. “I say eighty years in prison without the opportunity for parole and a fine of whatever the price of a Panera mac and cheese is because I’m hungry.”

“You heard ‘im, c’mon,” shouted a large guard who lifted me up and practically dragged me down a surprisingly well-lit hallway and to a cell that I had apparently inhabited during my time unconscious.

“I take it the judge said ‘guilty’.” I spun around quickly to see where the voice was coming from. A large shadow began to emerge from the wall, but there was no one to be seen. I looked around in a panic to see a very moderately small woman walk out from behind the bunk beds.

“I’m Jill. I met you, but you never really met me. You were asleep or something.” Her voice was delicate but stern. I enjoyed listening to every word, but I knew what she said, she meant.

“Hi, you can call me HH,” I lightly stammered, still in shock from all of the events that unfolded in the past ten minutes. As I was talking, she began pacing back and forth across the cell. In her walking, I realized that I had never looked at her face. It was beautiful. More beautiful than her voice. With perfectly smooth skin, spotted with small clumps of freckles, she glowed. “If you don’t mind me asking, why are you, ya know, in jail?” I asked with a nervous trembling voice.

“I killed a man!” she shouted at the tops of her lungs. Seeing my obviously startled face, she began laughing and, in her normal voice, said: “I’m just kidding. Tax evasion. I was trying to pull an Oceans 8 with some of my friends and I was the only one who got caught. They couldn’t make a case off of the theft, but they found the escape house which was under my name. That was the escape house that I kind of forgot about when I was doing my taxes and ‘slam,’ I’m in here for the next forty-six years. What are you in here for?”

“I honestly don’t know,” I whispered. “The officer said something about jaywalking, but surely that can’t get me eighty years in prison.”

“I don’t know what hick town you’re from bud, but jaywalking is the highest felony,” said Jill, with not an ounce of sympathy in her voice.

“I don’t know, just where I come from, jaywalking is a joke law that everyone breaks,” I cautiously explain, trying not to sound insane.

“And where is that?” asked Jill skeptically.

“Um... Vermont,” Vermont? Why was Vermont the first place that I could think of for a place where ‘criminals’ cross the street freely? There was silence for what felt like hours.

“Let’s escape.”

“What?” I asked with utter disbelief. Prison breaks were always something you would read about in some adventure story, but not real life.

“No, let’s do this. I can slip through the vent and we’ll find a way to get you out,” she said with enough confidence that she probably could have convinced me to just walk off a cliff.

“What do we have to lose?” I asked.

“Nothing. Nothing at all.”

We began planning. After many sleepless nights and shady conversations with other inmates, we formed a plan. It was seamless. We had figured out every detail possible and we had accounted for every guard, visitor, camera, and weapon that could be used against us. It was perfect. But while we were planning, one thing went wrong. I hadn’t accounted for my hopelessly romantic. There was something about Jill that made prison better. That made my life better. I had fallen for her, and knowing that my time in this dimension isn’t endless, I slowly began to lose my mind about her.

“Are you ready for this?” she asked in her perfect voice. Tonight was the night. We were going to be free. We were going to break out and finally see the light of day and interact with non-criminal people.

“What do we have to lose?” I asked, repeating the words she had asked just a few days earlier.

“Thank you for this,” she whispered into my ear. She grabbed my hand for a moment and looked into my eyes. I could tell that she was staring into my soul. Then she turned on her heel and vanished into the vent. I took a deep breath and began to feel a familiar tingle.

“No. Not now. Any other time, just not now,” I cried out in a hopeless voice, knowing that I could do nothing about it. I took one last breath and closed my eyes.

I knew deep down that Jill failed her mission. She couldn’t have made it out without me there to distract the guard on duty. I knew that she would be looking for me, ready to kill me. I was the reason she had lost her only chance to escape.

“Thump” I landed back on my hotel bed.

“I need to cheer up, I can’t change that situation,” I told myself, trying to live in the moment and dimension I was in. I decided to go for a walk. I’d take a short walk around the block and then take a nap. I walked down the hall to the elevator. Same creak when the doors opened. I stepped in and pressed the button marked “lobby.” Same person working at the desk. I walked outside. Same bellhop with the same depressed look on his face. As I rounded the corner of the street I saw her.

“Do I know you?” I yelled, waving to her. Her features were weirdly familiar, but I couldn’t put my finger on why.

“Who are you weirdo?” she asked, turning her back to me and walking away.

“I’m HH,” I whispered to myself, knowing that I had lost it all.

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#### **4: *Haunting of the Titanic* by Tinley Browning**

I sip the dark roast coffee wincing at the bubbling pain of the hot liquid against my tongue. The weather is cold, about mid winter just after Christmas. I decided to come back to New York City for the holidays. New York is different, filled with unordinary people living a somewhat normal life. It's comforting to think I am not the only thing different.

I toss the cup in the nearest trash can and pocket my hands in my trench coat. It's cold, but tolerable. There's a light snow covering the surface of the earth. I've somehow made my way to Central Park.

I take a step onto the pavement feeling numb. I panic, looking around quickly at the children screaming and housewife moms talking about their morning brunches. I shake like an earthquake making everything blurry.

"Daddy, what's wrong with that man?" I turn around at the little girl's voice. Her father covers her eyes and takes her hand pulling her away from the sight of me.

"C'mon, sweetie. It's one of those druggies that roam in Central Park." He turns back to look at me and gives me a snarky glare. I feel offended considering I'm dressed in a nice, red Calvin Klein scarf and leather shoes. I double over with a sharp pain in my stomach as if I was stabbed.

You'd think for warping all your life you would be able to deal with the little side effects that come along with it. The worst, warping sickness, which seems like I'm experiencing now. I take another step, great, both of my legs seem to be numb. I fall to my knees as the tingling and sharp pains increase. The world shakes and begins to fade in and out. The ground drops and I begin to fall. The feeling is like when you fall off a building in a dream and you get that airy feeling in your stomach. Earth fades in and out with a tie dye effect. I close my eyes feeling sick.

I catch myself against a cold wall, falling on a brown, marble floor. The impact of my knees crushing against the hard surface increases my pain. I lie flat on the floor facing the ceiling with my eyes sealed shut. I rub them vigorously trying to reduce the pain in my head. I open my eyes slowly and blink to clear my vision.

Small crystal balls hang from the ceiling- possibly from a chandelier. I sit up and cock my head to the side to vomit up the coffee I just ingested. I observe the room: a small cream colored bed, next to it is an old wooden chest, and a small window just above the bed. Across the room is a small armoire occupied by a small desk with papers scattered across. I push myself up to my feet feeling the ground slightly sway underneath. I glance over a few papers that seem to be some sort of legal documents. An English birth certificate lined in royal blue stands out from the cream papers. Charlotte Dupont February 1, 1894.

"Where am I?" I whisper to myself. Perhaps I've time travelled to the past but the real question is where. What I've learned from going into these different universes is to figure out what kind of possible danger I could be in. I decide to check the chest next to the bed.

The inside seems to be filled with shoes, more papers, feathered hats, and jewels. I pull out a picture of a young girl in the arms of a boy who looked much older than her, but not by

much. A loud thud shakes the flower wallpaper while voices come from the other side of the door.

“Charlotte, change into something more elegant. And, run a brush through your hair it looks like birds are living in it.” a woman’s voice scolds. I look around the room with panic as the footsteps are getting louder. I open the door to the armoire and bury myself behind the clothes.

The door opens and shuts quietly. A feminine sigh is distinctive. The floor creaks underneath soft footsteps. The armoire door opens, I hold my breath to refrain from any sort of movement. The girl stands there for a moment before slowly reaching for a dress. I wait patiently for the door to close before exhaling and stepping out of the armoire. I have to get out of here and figure out where I-

A hard blow to my face knocks me onto the ground.

“You better start talking before I decide to knock you again.” A girl with bright orange hair, an umbrella as if a baseball bat, and a british accent glares deep into my eyes pacing around my fallen body. I have to admit, she hits hard. I blink a couple of times while the shock doesn’t leave my body just yet. She is very skinny, has fair skin, is fitted with a long cream dress stopping just above her ankles. Her lashes are long, her hands are covered in light, white lace gloves, and she looks... beautiful. “Well?” she grips the umbrella harder.

“My name is HH.” I push myself up on my elbows. Her face falls from a fierce animal to a curious looking girl.

“You’re American.” She talks to herself.

“Yes, you are correct. Do you mind telling me where I am?” I rub my aching head.

“Why, you’re on the Titanic. First Class floor.” she tosses the umbrella onto the bed. She picks up an elegant looking dress of emerald green and gold. “So, you’re from the Americas! But wait.. I don’t remember you from before.” she whispers the last part to herself.

“Before?” I raise a brow. She smiles devilishly before picking up an emerald, silk scarf to drape over her shoulders. “Well you see, I live on the Titanic, yes. It’s going to sink in approximately one hour or so”

“Wait! You know it’s going to sink?”

“Why, of course! Everyone here knows it’s going to sink. After all, we’re all dead.” she chuckles.

“W-What exactly do you mean.. Dead?” Is there a chance that I’ve died? After all these short years I’ve passed away? I scramble to my feet and run to the small window above the bed. There’s light fog before it fades into a black abyss.

“Sit down! My! You’re going to have a heart attack!” she grabs my arm with cold hands, pulling down onto the bed. “You look ghostly, no joke intended.” She leaves and comes back with a cup of tea. She sips a cup herself. The girl paces around the room making her way to the chest, pulling out the picture I was looking at before. “My name is Charlotte Dupont. My family originates from a Duchess in the early 1800’s. After she was beheaded, her children moved to England. I grew up in England and a few months after my eighteenth birthday my parents had made arrangements for me to marry the owner of a factory who lives in America. My family is- was wealthy, yes. They got my family first class tickets on the S.S. Titanic! Little did we know that it would hit an iceberg and kill us all... All but my brother James.” Charlotte fidgets while speaking, her voice shaking. Her body language stutters before moving ghost-like to the chest next to the bed. She lays the photo I was looking at earlier on the bed next to me.

She sits at the desk looking at a small hand mirror. Her face is sad, hopeless, I want to comfort her but instead I watch in silence. The hand mirror is a rich silver with flowers inscripted on the side. She combs her hair with a small pick comb.

“My brother James was the only one that supported me. He told my parents that I should marry someone I love. But, my parents did not agree. When the Titanic began to sink people were pushing everywhere. My brother was in a lifeboat holding out for me to jump but the holster to the boat released and they emerged into the water. I never saw him after that since well... I died.” She pushes herself up from the desk and smiles. “How do I look?”

Her deep red hair is curled with a feather hairpiece, she lined her lips with a soft pink, her pale skin has light rose blush to make her skin pink. I realize she’s much shorter than I, probably around 5’3.

“You look, uh, b-beautiful.” I curse myself for stuttering.

“Why thank you, sir. I have to ask, if you recently died does that mean you rode the Titanic? Maybe! Maybe you know my brother!”

“Uh, about that. I’m not actually dead.” I awkwardly scratch my head.

“What do you mean? We’re all dead, how could you not?” she squints her eyes, taking a few steps closer.

“I can jump the universe and somehow I ended up here.”

“So you’re magic?”

“Sure.” Not precisely how I would define myself but to her; it’s only 1919. She begins to pace around the room. She finally starts with a devilish smile.

“So you can jump into the living world, grab my brother, and bring him here so I can see him!” she runs up to me grabbing my hands and smiling. “Brilliant idea, isn’t it! You would do that for me HH, wouldn’t you?” her face is flirtatious and begging. I want to help her but there are many things wrong with this situation.

I explain to Charlotte how my warping works. How I can’t take anyone with me and I warp unwillingly. I tell her where I am from; it’s 2020. A tear falls down her cheek and my heart breaks for her.

“I’m sorry.” she wipes it away, “I just miss my brother.” she sadly walks over to her hand bag and picks up a pocket watch. “My! Look at the time! I should get going. But, you have to come with. Just... not in those clothes.”

“Where are we going?” She ignores me and starts going through the armoire throwing some clothing out.

“Do you smell that? Something smells horrid.”

“I might have thrown up over there after landing.” I nod my head in the direction of her bed.

“That’s disgusting. Anyways, go put these on! We’re going to be late for dinner.”

I change into a red, velvet tuxedo. It seems to be made for a short, muscular man but my thin, tallness makes up for the awkward extra space. Charlotte has been surprisingly quiet since we left her ship room. Though, I haven’t been able to pay attention to anything besides the beautiful architecture. The ship is beautiful. Everything is expensive, crystal, and gold. She’s moving quickly, dragging me next to her by her holding my arm. She opens a door revealing a dining hall with fancy people standing and chatting. The men are dressed in tuxedos and the few women are dressed elegantly in dresses. If I remember correctly from my history books, they saved mainly children and women. That explains the out of ratio numbers.

“What is all of this?” I ask, staring back at the people staring at us.

“Well, every four days we go through the cycle. This is the fourth day, so see that big rock? That’s the iceberg that killed all of us. We’re about to hit it in eight minutes and sink in thirty. So this was the dinner the first class floor was at when it all happened.”

A jolt of fear runs through my body. Does that mean I am about to die on the Titanic? I have to stop it.

“Why doesn’t anyone recourse the ship?”

“I, I never thought of that!” She looks at me with happiness. “C’mon, I’ll show you where it is!”

She takes me upstairs to the captain’s room where the Captain is still steering the ship. He’s about my height, 6’1, older with white hair.

“Get out of here kids!” he shouts.

“You’ve been steering us into the same iceberg for over a hundred years!” Charlotte clenches her fists. She charges the Captain but two sailors come out to get her off of him. They throw her into a computer system.

“Charlotte!” I yell before punching one of the sailor’s in the face. He falls to the ground unconscious, okay HH! His friend hits the back of my neck with the back of a pistol. He holds the gun up to shoot but Charlotte jumps in front taking the bullet. She falls to the ground, bleeding on the floor.

“HH, I’ll be okay. I’m already dead and will reincarnate when the cycle repeats. You can’t die!” she weakly shouts.

“Did she just say alive?” the sailor asks, caught off guard. I reach for a paddle near me and throw at him, knocking him out.

“Sorry!” I shout. The Captain lifts me up by my collar and throws me into the wall. I fall on the ground as my whole body aches. I reach for the sailor’s gun, it’s the only thing I have left to do. I pick up the gun and shoot the Captain. He falls to the ground groaning. I bring myself to my feet and begin to turn the steering wheel. As I turn it into the opposite direction the sky begins to turn different colors and the ship begins to shake.

“You’re changing the future!” The Captain weakly says underneath me. “I never wanted to keep killing these innocent people over and over again, but we have to keep the future the same! You will change the whole world!” I look at Charlotte’s dead body remembering how all she wanted to do was see her brother. A tear slips down my cheek as I whisper an apology to her. I turn the wheel into the iceberg and prepare myself for impact. The world begins to shake, fading in and out. The iceberg is right in my face before I fall into a vortex. My body feels like jelly as I fall out of the sky. I land on my feet and there is silence.

I open my eyes to nothing. A door opens, “Sir, I’m going to have to ask you to return to the tour or leave. You can’t be back here.”

“Of course.” I respond very confused. I follow him to what seems to be a storage closet.

“All right, and next up on our tour is a first class room. It is room 4AA where the Ester, William, James, and Charlotte Dupont stayed. The brother, James, survived the wreckage and wrote a letter about his dear sister Charlotte that you can see here to your left.” I join the tour guide to see the exact replica of Charlotte’s room. The check, desk, comb, everything. I read the letter he wrote for Charlotte.

I exit the Titanic Museum in Tennessee. I need to go home.

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## ***5: Off to Neverland.. by Grace Clark***

*I was asleep. I swear to you I was asleep. I was in my bed. Now, well I don't know where I am... Where am I? I guess my free month has passed. UGH... okay, let's see where I am.*

I began roaming around. As I was roaming, I saw a group of men seemingly surrounding something.

*What are they doing?*

Walking closer I noticed that they're surrounding a kid? *Oh my God, it's a child!*

"Hey! What are you doing? Leave the poor kid alone!" I was rummaging through my fanny pack trying to find something to fend off these guys.

The group of men whipped around and drew their swords to me instead of the kid.

*I guess this is better.* I was able to find my sword and started to fight back. *I'm not a swordsman.*

Shouts of "Where did you come from?" were thrown my way and I can't wrap my head around the last thing I heard.

"Why are you helping him?"

*Why am I helping him?* I was able to shout out "That's a child! Why would you be attacking him?" Then it went black.

I was in a hut. *Who lives in huts anymore?* Looking around was difficult, and that's when I realized the feeling of tenderness in my neck. You know the feeling of sleeping on your neck wrong? That's how I felt. Struggling to move my neck-- I noticed that I'm in a bed without anything I came with.

"Oh good you're awake!" The door type fixture flew up against the wall as the words echoed through the hut-like building.

"Wh-who are you?" I stuttered out as a feeling of unease began to fall on top of me.

"Who am I? Well, I'm Pan, obviously."

*Obviously? Should I know him?*

"And you are a new lost boy yes? I mean, you must be, but I don't remember gathering you?"

So many questions began quickly filling my head that I didn't know which one to address first. "What do you mean lost boy?"

"You honestly never heard of where you are, have you?" The way he spoke that one sentence sent chills down my spine and I became frozen. Reluctantly I shook my head -- fearing I may set him off again. "Well this is Neverland ... and no one ever leaves Neverland ."

I was getting tired of being knocked out. This time, there didn't seem to be anyone around me in the hut but what I feared was that Pan or one of the "lost boys" was outside waiting for me to try and escape. I'd been here for two or three days now and am truly regretting not letting those guys kill the kid. I tried to ignore my fear and started to look for my stuff. That kid was smart enough to know he should take all my things off my person before locking me in here but hopefully, he wasn't smart enough to put my stuff somewhere I can't find.

I found my things; now how do I get out of here? Shockingly, my things were nearby, but due to this neck injury, it was almost impossible to find them. Scrambling through my fanny pack to try and find something, anything to help me prepare for the battle that might be waiting for me outside this door, I fumbled to get a grip on something that seems sharp. Finally, I get a grasp of what it was and pull out a... sword? *When did I put this in here?* Shaking my head I sneaked out of the hut with the sword drawn out in front of me. Sneaking out, I looked around me and, despite the pain that courses through my neck, I saw a shadow. The shadow seemed to be growing, *wait is it... flying? It's FLYING! How do you fight a flying shadow?*

The shadow started to fly to me and even though it seemed like a shadow, it hit me. Since I wasn't prepared to be HIT by a shadow, and I fell straight on my back. The shadow started to fight me in ways that I didn't prepare for, but I was able to throw him off. Getting back up, I was able to grab my sword and slice this shadow into half, but it formed back together quickly after. My eyes widened as I watched him grow before my eyes. I began to stumble back as he leaned before me to try and whisper something in my ear, but I quickly ran beside him and could finally leave the area with him following close behind.

As I was running to get away from this giant shadow thing, I noticed that it began to shrink. *Why is it shrinking?* As I began to have thoughts of how to defeat it, it seemed to be coming right atop of me. As soon as it tried to step on me, the shadow disappeared. *That was close but what was that?*

I had a feeling that the shadow monster works with Pan. Ever since it left me alone, I hadn't seen anything or anyone but I heard noises of what seemed to be a party. I didn't understand this place and I wanted out of here asap, but I didn't know if that would come soon enough. I still had many questions. What are lost boys? Do they work with Pan? Is Pan forcing them to be here? What is Pan? He seems to be a child, but there's no way that's possible. Why does this seem like *Lord of the Flies*? Am I in *Lord of the Flies*? *Oh, I hope not. I didn't pay enough attention in school to be living in that.* Wait why does Pan seem familiar? Pan...pan... PETER PAN! Oh my how did I get involved with Peter Pan and how am I just now realizing this? Growing up he wasn't evil. Was he?

I continued roaming the forest area as I contemplated what my next move of action should be because I still don't feel safe in Neverland. While I'm roaming, I hear a cry for help and it sounds like it's coming from a child. *Oh, not this again. Should I help? Last time it didn't end well for me.* "Help me, please someone help me" *Ugh.*

"Where are you kid?"

"I'm in a tree"

*That has no usefulness what so ever... we're in a forest.*

"Okay, kid gotta be more specific than that for me."

"I'm up above in a tree, does...does that help?" *This is going to be hard.*

I found him. It took hours but I found him. He wasn't even in a tree, but I digress. *Now he's my little buddy.* His name was Bobby and he was about twelve years old and --- His dad was Captain Hook! I know I don't know if I believed him either but apparently, Pan kidnapped him

and that's why the group of guys was attacking Pan in the beginning. I had to help Bobby get back to his dad, but neither of us knew how and neither of us knew where we were specifically. Bobby knew this area more than me obviously but apparently, we weren't in Neverland anymore; technically we were in Foreverland. Foreverland was right next to Neverland which explains why I could hear things happening-- but couldn't see anything. But what wasn't clear was how in the world I got here.

Bobby was a good little companion. He knew a lot about not only this island, but also Pan and his intentions. Pan kept knocking me out with fairy dust, Pan got said fairy dust from Tinkerbell, but she hadn't been giving it freely as she used to because he began using it to his advantage. Pan kidnapped Bobby, intending to kill him as leverage with Hook because ever since Bobby was born, Hook stopped coming to Neverland to battle. Ever since Hook stopped coming to Neverland, Pan had turned to a more evil light. Hearing about how awful Pan had become, I started to fear for the lives of the lost boys. Bobby said that Pan had lured him in by promising him a spot as a lost boy and honestly any boy or girl would love to have the opportunity to become a lost boy, so I didn't blame Bobby for going with him. I asked Bobby about how Hook is as a father. I don't want to be helping him go back to a father that isn't a good one ya know? But Bobby gave me back nothing but praise about his dad. It was really sweet but extremely shocking. Hook and Bobby's mother were together for years before having Bobby, and Bobby's mother didn't stay very long after having him, so it's always just been him and Hook. Well besides the army of pirates his father bossed around --but that's beside the point.

"Hey, kid are you sure we ain't lost?"

"Yes, I'm sure we ain't lost"

"I'm just saying I've seen this coconut about six times now.."

"What coconut?" *What coconut? How does he not see it?* I picked up the coconut and threw it at him so he could see what I was talking about. Bobby's eyes widened "H, come with me for a second" *Where else would I go kid...*

"Why? Where are you oof" He dragged me extremely far from the coconut before he practically screamed at me in a whisper? "That wasn't a coconut"

"What do you mean it wasn't a coconut? That was one"

"NO IT WASN'T" he screamed before realizing what he's doing. Bobby took a deep breath before calming-- explaining that coconuts don't grow on the island " There aren't any coconut trees here man; the coconut had a device inside of it and I wouldn't be surprised if Pan didn't plant that here to keep track of either one of us"

"Why would he care what we were doing?"

"Really? BECAUSE I'm pretty sure he threw us here so we can just starve to death."

"Oh...right okay, let's try and get off of here."

Bobby had the idea of starting a fire to get someone's attention; I just hoped it's the right person's attention. " Go get more wood for the fire." I began to wander through the forest to get some good logs when I heard a scream. Assuming it was Bobby, I started to run back to where I had left him. Preparing for a fight I jumped from the tree lines to see... Captain Hook?

“My boy! I finally found ya!”

“Hi, papa! Before we leave we have to go find HH.”

“And whom may that be?”

“Ugh, that would be I, Captain.”

“ Well, my boy has this HH been keeping you safe?”

“Yes papa, and we must save him too. Pan is after him”

“Pan? What did you possibly do to him?”

“ I honestly haven't a clue Captain.”

“Well- come aboard mister HH” *Well I don't think I should tell him no.*

Now that we were on the ship I'm starting to realize how exhausted I actually am. I turned to a crew member and asked them “Hey is there somewhere I can lay down?” They just shrugged me off, so now I was off to find Hook. “Captain is there anywhere I could try and rest for a bit?”

“Yes mister HH come with me, sonny.” Following him, I saw that Bobby was actually already asleep in the top bunk. “Take the bottom bunk and please don't disrupt him”

“Thank you captain” As soon as I hit the pillow I was fast asleep.

*I swear I was asleep. Now where am I? Looking around I saw all my things. Oh, I must be home.*

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## **6: HH and Grandma Joan by Isabel Ramby**

I crept into this world like a beam of sunlight creeping across your face in the morning. I felt sick, disoriented and confused as I wondered where this ludicrous power would take me this time. I closed my eyes to add a calming effect to the state I was being put through. Squeezing my eyes shut so hard now, I was not focused on the sick feeling anymore. No, instead I was focused on the pain of my soft headache that had turned into a stronger, more painful ache. I think I passed out. I woke up a while later, knowing exactly what had happened.

I sat on the old white and blue bathroom floor tiles leaning my forehead against the cold feeling of the ceramic sink. My eyes were strained, the white flickering light kept going on and off, on and off at a constant irksome speed, “I really need to fix that” I said to myself, wondering when I do eventually get around to it, I would be glad I did. I looked behind me through the bathroom door, a picture hanging crooked on the living room wall drew my attention. My eyes focused on a photo frame covered with dust. My mother and grandmother stood politely and lady-like, smiling into the camera with their arms warmed around each other.

My grandmother was always a fragile lady, growing up during a hard time could cause this. Grandma June passed away mid July eight summers ago, it was a tragic story for the rest of the family, no one likes to talk about her memory, no one except me. While she was alive she told me of her experiences growing up in the 30's, how scary and traumatizing those times really were never dawned on me until I personally experienced the same kind of trauma, wanting

nothing more than to escape where I was for somewhere better and more beautiful. She had told me she sat for weeks and months at a time waiting and wishing that all the bombing and gunfire would be silenced and instead replaced with a dream, a new America, filled with hope and happiness for all. She wished, but was never promised. and had an extremely difficult time with life back then. She dreamt of a better life to go away to, she thought of escaping and going to someplace better.

I was lying down on a hard concrete floor covered with a thin rug, my back hurts. I am confused but this had not been the first time I didn't know where on *earth* I was. I kept my eyes closed, there was still a beating ache in my head. I inhaled a big breath, hoping that the singular inhale would give me a break. It didn't. Instead I got a stubborn mouthful of perfume, rose lavender perfume, as if someone had just sprayed it right into my mouth, but had not realized. I slowly sat up and looked around until I came across a small shadow creeping on a dirty tan carpet with worn patches, signifying something was once sitting there. I wished to stand up, hoping my legs will follow through this time, praying they won't give out underneath my body. I got up and my legs were steady, thankfully. As I walked around the small square room, I wondered what's going to happen. I am in awe, yet unsure of everything.

I looked at the aged cream walls covered in a layer of dust, and a faint smell of cigarette smoke slapped me in the face as I walked around. It smelt close, as if it were coming from just the other room. I walked towards it, being careful, because when I switch sometimes it ends up being a sticky situation. I turned the corner and opened the door as slowly as possible, hoping not to disturb anyone who was present, I didn't want them to think I was breaking in.

My eyes went wide. My grandmother sitting in a wooden rocking chair with a quilt pulled up to her chin, except this time, she was not ancient, she was... young?

Her eyes were closed and her skin looked ageless, not a wrinkle in sight. Her complexion was pale and smooth. Her eyes moved behind her eyelids, indicating that she was having an eventful dream. I stared at her for a bit longer than expected and moved along with my peeping tom like aurora, looking and investigating around her home. The cigarette smell was still very prevalent, almost suffocating me with the aroma.

I stood for a few moments in the aged living room pondering about how my grandmother had once lived, in this dark, poor place. Deadbeat grey eyes stared at me. With the intent of speaking their mind, yet speechless. "Hello Grandma".

She stumbled around, all the while staring at me as if she had seen a ghost. All of a sudden, Grandma screamed at me to get out of her house. She ran away for a second and came back, now with a wooden broom with prickly bristles. She started repeatedly hitting me with the long stick, until I grabbed it with my hands and broke it in two pieces. This is when she stopped.

"Who are you?" she asked in a soft voice, being cautious, now thinking there was an armed robber in her home.

"Stay calm, please let me explain," I said in a pleading tone, making it easy for her to trust my good intentions.

“My name is H.H, I am from the twenty- first century, and we have met before,” she sat now, intrigued. “I know I sound crazy but you have to believe me, I am your grandson.”

Grandma Joan blinked up at me, her eye twitched as she stayed silent for a few moments.

“How is that possible young man?”

“Something I just cannot say, but it is nice to meet you again, Grandma Joan.”

We talked for a while, I shared future memories we will someday make, while she shared her experiences in the Great Depression. She talked of how hard day to day life is and how she tries hard to provide for her family. I told her she hadn't mentioned much of her day to day life, but when she did, it was hard to hear.

I felt for Grandma Joan, as I knew now of all the hard times she has been through Later that day I told her to show me around, wanting to surprise her with buying food and supplies for her family, knowing my stay here is shorter than we both would have wanted.

We walked through the streets with the cold crisp air shooting up into my dry nose, it was freezing outside today, and all Grandma was wearing was a small red rain jacket with multiple holes and worn down patches. I knew she had to have been freezing. We walked into a small taylors shop. The aged lady sat at a wooden table sewing machine chewing her fingernails as I asked her if she happened to have any extra winter coats for my... friend. She said she would look and see what she can find. A while later we walked out the front door back into the harsh winter wind, now with a new winter coat and less worry.

Grandma asked if we could stop at the grocery corner store up the road. Of course I said yes, knowing that her family is struggling and I would do anything in my power to help out. I reached down into my fanny pack as we walked to the grocery store, pulling out a bottle of water and a granola bar, asking Grandma Joan to split it with me. She agreed and we carried along, munching in silence while grimacing, the feeling of the tips of our ears becoming numb with the piercing air.

We talked for a while once we got back to Grandma Joan's house, yet again learning of her hardships and her adventures throughout the war. Every word sounded more and more captivating than before, making my heart clutch at the stories I hear. We made dinner, beef stew and bread I had purchased in the shop a few blocks away. It was filling and delicious; there was also extra to feed her family for a week or two. I was content, knowing that I had done something to help her out, in more ways than one.

My fingertips started to tingle; knowing what was about to happen-- I hugged Grandma Joan and told her I'd see her again someday, and let the power of the switch take over me until I was sitting back on the cold tile of my bathroom, looking at the same dusty picture frame of my grandmother and mother.

Life is more meaningful when you share a day with a loved one.

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## **7: *Every Last Piece of Him...* by Nicole Chance**

I've traveled many times through time, I've seen many people I care for, have loved, and now lost; I don't know when I'll stop traveling through time. I don't think it'll be anytime soon. I was always a man that kept this ability to myself. After all, the best time to do something someone won't notice is when they aren't paying attention. I have always been aware I could use this ability to cure some sort of disease that may take forever to find a cure, but I don't see the importance of drawing attention to myself especially as a man that can't die to an extent.

It's always risky to draw attention, especially now with me being in my sixties and looking like I haven't aged since my twenties; who knew time travel had its advantages like making it look like you secretly discovered the fountain of youth? I laughed to myself slightly and laid back in my recliner, flipping open a pocket watch that I had modified long ago 'This should be just enough time.' I thought to myself; just before I pressed the small round button on top of the pocket watch, I took out a comb from my tool belt. I combed my brown hair.

If I didn't do this very step every time I time traveled, I'd turn up on the other universe I'm planning to travel to looking like a porcupine was on my head. You see there are many rules to time travel. For instance, you can even end up blind if you're not careful enough or worse depending on where you set the destination. I eventually shrugged off the idea of possibly encountering any danger as I've traveled through time many times before so this wasn't my first rodeo. I then pressed my button on my pocket watch, closed my eyes, and before I knew it I was crammed in a tight space.

It was like some sort of capsule but made completely out of glass, I had never been in a situation like this before so I had panicked a bit only to soon feel a sharp pain in my knees; they were bent completely backward. After some more struggling, I had finally managed to break free only receiving a few injuries to my hands from the broken glass. Curious if I was still the same, I picked up one of the shards of glass it was reflective, and from what I could tell I still looked the same; same brown and well-kept hair, same brown eyes, nose, etcetera. I reached to my tool belt, turned my flashlight on, but before I even thought of exploring I started wondering: how was I still six feet tall with knees like this?

Before I could think of a possible solution, a levitating chair soon came to pick me up. There was a small table-like structure by my pod that acted like a tablet, as soon as I touched it I found out where I had recently been abandoned over a thousand years ago and I had genu recurvatum.

"That doesn't make any sense! This place looks like it's been managed for ages!" I yelled slightly frustrated.

'Alright, calm down H.H. Yelling and screaming won't get you anywhere as much as you want to right now.' I thought to myself before using an orb on the chair I figured would allow the chair to move, before I knew it I was going thirty miles per hour right into a titanium wall.

The impact was painful and caused me to slump back into the chair. Turns out that wall was a door. ‘Great, we’re getting somewhere!’ I thought as I slowly touched the orb, I don’t want to make the same mistake and end up with a concussion before I’m out of here.

I was in the location I was for a few hours before I had found out that it was rare to have any sort of problems as the humans from this time were a race of superhumans and they were locking up those with deformities to try and preserve them to study what was wrong with them and how to prevent it, this led to an uprising which eventually led to the destruction of the two. I was the only survivor. The resistance was led by a group who believed they were perfectly normal just as their counterparts; it all changed when the superhumans with slight deformities had set off nukes all over their world, creating a destroyed waste-land-like area.

After exploring the location I was in, I found a power breaker, and after being slightly shocked trying to get the power back on; the lights of the facility flickered on but before I could make my next move I heard a loud thumping in the halls. I wasn’t alone and whatever it was I didn’t want to find out. I quickly got back into my chair and touched the orb, I quickly went through the halls of the facility. It was like a maze! I heard the being that was in the facility not too far from me, it was very loud and didn’t sound friendly; I hid for a bit and after it had passed me I quickly went to the opposite end.

I had escaped it, for now, a nasty creature of darkness. Once I knew I was safe I found what looked like a vault door, at least weighing around six hundred pounds. ‘Well if there’s a door, then there must be a way to open it.’ I thought as I checked my pocket watch “ Five o’clock, I’m running out of time!” I began quickly searching throughout my surroundings, I had to get out of here!

I eventually came across a lever, once pulled the door slowly opened. I felt the thumping again and hid behind the control panel, it was a mass of dark souls; they looked like they had been here for years and were in pain. Once the door was completely open they immediately went out but vanished, I suppose in a way it was like them finally getting the release of death with a screech. I soon came out after having seen the being was gone, except for a small soul it came towards me.

‘ It’s lonely.’ I thought as I scooped it into my water bottle, for now, I know not the best place to keep it but it’s only temporary.

“I’ll call you Ebba.” I saw the small being cheer in delight, seeming to enjoy the name.

I chuckled softly and held the water bottle close to me as I had the chair move to the vault door. I knew the name meant strong as an animal, a fitting name I know especially after what’s happened. I snapped out of my train of thought when I looked over the entrance of the vault, it was a long way down but from what I could see the land was vast and empty like there were no existing life forms at all; the only remnant left was the vault: a painful memory to those that were trapped. I soon heard my pocket watch off and began to head in the direction I knew my pod was in, don’t get me wrong I did want to explore more but I was running out of time; perhaps another day. I had made it back just in time, Ebba looked at me in confusion as to why I had gone back.



“I’m sorry, I’ve run out of time and I don’t think I can take you with me. I won’t forget you, Ebba.” I sighed softly as I let Ebba out of the water bottle.

I could tell Ebba was upset to see me go, it seemed to be enjoying my company. Before I knew it Ebba had fused with the chair I was in and helped me in the pod ‘but how will I stay in?’ I wondered, and, as if it was reading my mind, Ebba placed their cold robotic hands on me as if to hold me in place; it gave me a soft reassuring smile as if telling me “Don’t worry I’ll help you, I hope to see you again sometime!”

I smiled softly “I hope to see you again sometime Ebba.” I combed my hair and then closed my eyes and soon felt the softness of my recliner, once I knew it was safe to open my eyes I did. Ebba was gone and I was back in the home I was used to, the home I was comfortable in. It didn’t feel right though, I had left behind my robot friend and promised I would visit again someday. I can’t forget Ebba now, not after committing like that.

I sighed as I kicked the legs of my recliner down and sat up, I sighed already missing the entity I had become friends with knowing the possibility of me not being able to see them again was high. I knew I couldn’t control where I traveled to and when, it sort of happened with or without my pocket watch just the watch was on for a limited time. Speaking of my watch I went to check my tool belt to see if the time had finally gone out but when I did the watch was gone, I knew I had it with me.

I began to search in a panic but couldn’t find it no matter how hard I searched, then I realized Ebba had it. I smiled softly knowing it would be their last memory of me, as everywhere I had traveled I always left a memory or made a new one. That was always the deal of those cursed to travel time. I got up out of my recliner, knowing it was best not to dwell on the thoughts of Ebba. Though I was cursed to live longer than everyone else, I couldn’t show weakness like caring for something I couldn’t have, let alone wishing I could have more as I am supposed to be happy with what I’ve got for now.

I got ready to go purchase some more granola bars, as the current ones I had taken with me had somehow managed to melt. I’m not sure how, but if I had to guess it must’ve happened sometime in the vault; I shrugged it off knowing I didn’t have time to think about the granola bars. I had lost the pocket watch to Ebba and needed to hurry as I could now travel at any second and last I need is some little dopey kid and their mother seeing me travel right before their eyes. I tossed out the melted granola bars only to be left with a sticky remnant on my hands to proceed to lick the remnant off then wash my hands, then leave my home, and make it onto the bus right on time. This bus always had a convenient route to the supermarket. I was greeted by a few people I had formed small talk with occasionally on long trips however, this time I didn’t feel like talking.

I sat in my usual window seat getting ready to take a small nap before not too long an elderly lady poked my feet.

“Excuse me, sir, the seats are all taken and I was wondering if I could have yours?”

I looked up at the older woman “Of course.” I sighed softly and reluctantly stood up.

Before I knew it the old woman's face was distorted and everything froze around us, I looked around slightly terrified of what I had gotten myself into.

“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!” I asked in a fearful but hopeful tone that my voice would at least get someone’s attention but there was nothing. Before I knew it everyone else on the bus had vanished, it was just me and the old lady. I then felt something firmly grab me, the hand on my wrist was like bones as what used to look like a sweet old lady had become a being with a tux and dice head. Cuffs soon formed around my wrists.

“H.H. number 4,378.09 You are now under arrest for violating the laws of time travel.” The being’s voice echoed out in the empty void.

I sighed knowing there was no way out of this.

“What are the charges?”

“Becoming attached to a creature in M#4,000,000.89-B. You named it Ebba meaning you were forming a bond with it, you then lost your pocket watch, and then proceeded to alter the universe by messing with the vault. You will stand trial for your actions!” The being demanded.

Before I knew it, I was in space, or at least the location had a similar look to it. The being I had traveled with being the judge sat in front of me with a mallet, at their true size I was nothing but an ant. They restored my granola bars and lifted me to them before I knew it everything I had done in the current universe was undone, Ebba was killed right in front of me, and the pocket watch was destroyed.

“NO! HOW COULD YOU?!” I screamed.

The being chuckled and aimed a finger at me and I was being shocked, I screamed only to jolt awake on the bus. The old woman was next to me. Everything was proceeding as normal, but as I checked my pocket I saw my watch was shattered and the button from the chair Ebba had taken control of was crushed. Once off the bus, I sobbed softly.

“What have I done. . . It’s all my fault, Ebba is gone. . .”

I held the pieces close to me, they were now my reminder not to get too close to anyone. They were all I had to remember about what mattered to me. Once I had purchased my extra granola bars, I returned home exhausted. I fell asleep only to have a dream. . . NO- a nightmare of Ebba being destroyed right in front of my eyes. All I have to say is I didn’t sleep well for three weeks as the dream always came back; I felt broken like every last piece of me had been stolen.

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**8: *It Lives* by Melina Flint**

It had been a month to the day since my previous venture. Steam elevated from the black coffee residing in my mug as my eyes gazed out yonder towards the swirling grey clouds above. The clouds bellowed with a roar of thunder, and I assumed not too far would come lightning. I now glanced at the time presented from my microwave: 4:53pm. Seven more minutes, and I would officially be turning twenty-two.

The pitter patter of rain began to knock against the roof and windows, causing me to grow more tired than I had been previously. Though a part of me wished to get dressed and go

out, celebrate another year of living, the other, bigger part of me only longed for a night's rest. A night's rest at 5pm. I knew well I could not go out; I've done that many a time and am now banned from multiple restaurants for 'dining and dashing'. I can't sleep, either; else I'll wake up someplace with only a robed garment draped around me and teddy bear slip-ons.

My cup was now empty; I added it to the pile of dirty dishes sitting in the sink, now resting in hot soapy water. I often don't get this messy, but I have been relaxing more so than usual.

I walked up the stairs, my robe draped around me, dragging along with each step I took. I entered my excuse for a bedroom, which is that of a mostly bare room with a laptop on a desk in the corner. My bed layed upon a bed frame, but in itself was mostly naked other than a thin grey blanket tucked neatly at its sides. Two white pillows laid slanted against the wall, one indented with the outline of my head.

I began to walk to my closet, sliding the wooden door to the left, now presented with various colored collared shirts. Changing into a burgundy collared shirt, with matching beige shorts, I made sure to tighten my fanny pack around the belt loops of the pants. Upon opening the zipper, I went over the inside items, ensuring I had all necessary material I would need when disappearing abruptly.

Flashlight, *check*. Switchblade, *check*. Water filter, *check*. Pack of Blackforest Gummy Bears, *check*. Among various other items, not nearly as important; yes, the gummy bears are important.

At just the right moment, I had transported in the blink of an eye to yet another unknown parallel. Or- wait, *what?*

*I'm still home*. Except- I wasn't.

Everything appeared normal, just as before; my bed, the desk in the corner of the room, even the closet. The only apparent difference was a slime; a mysterious black substance, resembling that of slime, only it moved on its own in the same way an insect would wiggle if rolled onto its back, unable to stand. This mysterious goop covered the edges of my desk, spread throughout the clothing hung in my closet, and was currently wrapping itself around my bed. It was not all connected- it was sprawled.

I decided to investigate the rest of the house, but made sure to not be too comfortable despite the resemblance of my home. Peering around the bedroom doorframe, it was only a second or two that passed until I felt a grip at my left shoulder. My head turned frantically to the side; I now gazed at a tall, approximately eight foot creature, resembling that of the black slime. I noticed the black goop continuously moving within it; its left hand was built into a large, pointed object, while its right resembled that of a normal hand, except with jagged claws at the end of its fingertips. It's mouth was unhinged, taking up more than half of its face; it bore no concrete teeth, but pointed, jagged teeth, also made by the slime. It had no eyes, and made a bellowing screech unlike anything I have ever heard before.

Gripping at the switchblade from within my fanny pack, I quickly unsheathed it, stabbing into the abdomen of the creature. It screeched louder than before, this time in pain; it did not

bleed, nor was a hole or bruise left by the blade. It only screeched for a second, or two, and continued to swing for me with its claws extended. I quickly jumped back, almost falling, but catching myself by putting one foot back to push up my body. The creature swung again, this time knocking the glasses off of my face, causing my sight to become blurry. Ducking, I crawled between the creature's legs, frantically searching for my glasses. The creature leaned forward, seeming almost confused at my sudden vanish. That's when I remembered:

*It must be blind.*

My hand hit against a pair of thin plastic; I pulled the end of my glasses onto my ears, pushing the middle up so that my glasses were now up on the bridge of my nose. I let out a sigh at the slime at the corner of one lens, but nonetheless, persisted forward.

The creature had now been wandering the room; it wandered against the closet, screeching as it bumped lightly against it. It's head shook frantically from one side to another, as if it hurt itself against the closet door. I withheld my chuckles, army crawling towards the hall as to make an escape from this creature- this house.

*Definitely not my house,* I thought to myself.

I had made it just past the doorframe of the bedroom when the creature had screeched again, and I heard it frantically running around the room in search of me. Rummaging through my fanny pack as silently as I could, I gripped onto the bag of Blackforest gummies. Without any hesitation, I threw the pouch towards the inside of the room, hoping that the creature would not wander towards the door frame, and to the sound.

It was successful, as the creature made a clicking sound, walking towards the direction I had thrown the gummy bears.

Distraught over the loss of my snack, I stood up once in the hallway, now walking down the steps with caution.

*Almost to the door.*

Looking towards the door that would lead to my escape, I had failed to notice the same black gunk forming the creature, now making home of one of the middle steps. Stepping against it, I was revolted by its movement, and fell, as gracefully as I could, down the rest of the steps. Luckily, I only suffered a bruise on the forehead, and my hair, skin, and clothes were all lightly tainted with the black mysterious goo. Before I had any moment to respond, the screech of the creature could be heard down the hallway upstairs, as well as its heavy footsteps. It was running now, towards the direction of the stairs.

My heart raced in my chest as I quickly stood up, deciding that I had not enough time to open the front door. Instead, I now ran to the kitchen; a window was open, just big enough that I could fit with my thinner physique. My breath was shallow and heavy, the creature not that far behind me. Running was never a strong suit of mine.

Entering the kitchen, I jumped onto the counter in haste, arms forward so that I may swiftly fit through and exit out of the opened window above the sink. I had almost made it onto the ground, when I felt a tugging at my foot. The creature gripped at my foot, climbing up onto

my leg and pulling with a force no man could ever match. It wailed, its arm now festering and wrapping itself around my leg. It began to walk back, attempting to pull me in with it.

Kicking and pushing at the outside of the house, I fought against the creature with all I could, until it morphed into a bigger shape than before. The slime now thickened around my leg, and screeched in such a manner that if I thought it had emotions, I would have guessed it was furious. Single tear droplets ran down my face as I feared that this, out of everything, would be how my life would end. I would succumb to the jaws of an outrageous freak of nature.

As my eyes shut tightly, assuming the worst, I suddenly fell forward, hitting the ground below me. The dirt was wet and mud now covered in place of the slime that had once been tainted on me. It was dark outside, no clouds to be seen and the only comfort of light was from the moon in full gleaming brightly above. I picked myself up, groggily so, out of breath and with my heart still racing.

I peered into the house from the now closed window, the same window I had made my exit previously before; the house bore no appearance of slime, nor was there any slime creature screeching about in my home. A sigh of relief escaped me, and I walked around to the front of my home, drawing my house key and retreating inside. I looked at the time: 12:34am.

I had slumped into bed after a warm shower and changed back into the robe I had worn previously before. My fingertips grew warm against the cup of hot herbal tea I had made, and a smile grew on my face. No matter the places I've traveled to, the places I've never been; nothing is better than home.

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## **9: *The Feds.* by Michael Moylan**

“So... Mr. H, I'm curious.”

He looked at me.

“How did you escape our holding cell?”

I was dumbfounded. What does he mean escape? I literally just got here an hour ago and I'm already being questioned by the BFI.

“I didn't.”

“Bull. We have multiple eyewitness accounts of you being in there one moment and gone the next. It's insane. This is the 32nd time you've escaped in the last five years.”

“Sir, no disrespect but I've never been in this building in my entire life. I didn't even know it existed until now.”

“Oh it's the 'I've never been here before' stuff again, eh?”

The agent looked at me and smirked. He started to move in closer.

“If you don't tell me,” he said under his breath, “we'll put you back in the room.”

“What-”

Suddenly, the door swung open.

“Sir, the subject.”

It was like a mirror. I was looking directly at myself. The only difference was today I decided to wear a blue shirt while he wore red. We both stared at each other for what felt like an hour. The BFI agent’s mouth gaped.

“What the...”

“Sir? Who-”

“We can explain!” the other version of me suddenly shouted.

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The three of us sat in silence. The BFI agent, Agent Smith, looked like his world was collapsing.

“So you’re telling me that our world, this world, isn’t the only version?”

“Yeah,”

I started. “Wait, wait, and there’s more of me?”

“Yupperino.” the other me said.

“So, which one of you is the one from here?”

We both looked at each other.

“We can figure that out for you, but you’d need to give us time alone.”

“Done.” The BFI agent stood and left the room.

The other version of me got up and sat across from me. We looked at each other for a good 10 minutes before anything happened. I noticed that his hair was slightly longer than mine. He also had a tiny scar under his ear that I didn’t have. Other than that it was like looking in a mirror. Well, a mirror that was flipped horizontally.

“How many have you met so far?” he asked.

“Pardon?”

“You know, how many of us have you met.”

I hadn’t met another one of us yet, but I wished I had. I could ask them so many questions about what was happening to me and all that. I’m still stumbling universe to universe like a little baby who learned his power yesterday. I honestly don’t think I’ll ever be able to do it on command.

“Just you.”

“Shame.”

I started thinking.

“Wait, we shouldn’t tell them which one of us is from this universe.”

“Why not?”

“Well,” I began, “If they knew which one of us was from here, the one important to them, then the other one would become, um, expendable, if you see what I mean.”

“You’re right!” he shot up, “We might as well figure out which one of us it is anyways, though.”

“Yeah, I’d love to ask you questions.”

He started pacing back and forth. Neither of us had thought this far ahead. We didn't know where to start. While he thought about questions for me, I looked down at the cuffs around my wrists. They were tight and uncomfortable, connected to the table by a chain. I then looked around the room. Typically a room like this would have a camera or a one way mirror, but there was none of that. It was simply just a room with a door, a table, and some metal chairs.

"Who's president of your time?"

"Jason Schlatt." I responded.

"Jimmy Donaldson for me."

"That doesn't really help, we don't know who's president here."

He sighed and started pacing again.

"Why is Jimmy your president?" I asked.

He at first looked at me like I was dumb, but then softened his expression when he assumedly remembered I was from a different version of his world.

"You see, on September 19th, 1881, President Garfield was assassinated."

"Yeah, by Charles Guiteau"

"No, by Lyndon B. Johnson."

"What? No way!" I shouted.

"Yeah, and after that, the way it was handled was interesting. They set up a system where if a vice president challenged and defeated the standing president in a battle, and then they won, they could take the presidency without being charged with murder, assassination, or treason."

We continued talking about different things for roughly two hours or so. It was surprisingly fun. We talked about how in his world, Australia annexed New Zealand, and eventually broke off into separate states rather like the US. Antarctica was also slightly populated where he came from too. Other than that, it was mostly the exact same.

It was rather disappointing when Agent Smith walked back in the room. He had a somewhat glazed and confused look on his face. He sat there for a few minutes before he finally spoke.

"So, have you figured out which one is from here?" he asked.

"Well, we've been thinking..." I started

"That- maybe we shouldn't tell you which one of us is, well," other me paused, then continued, "expendable."

Agent Smith looked slightly offended, but understanding.

"You think we'd torture you? Do tests on you? That's inhumane."

"Yeah, but we have no clue what you'd do, could be from a different world, you know?"

I said

"Especially since it's our lives at r-" he suddenly stopped mid sentence.

Both Agent Smith and I looked at each other, then back to where the other me was standing. He was just gone in an instant. I finally knew what it looked like for other people when I would shift in front of them. It wasn't anything special, he just vanished.

Agent Smith turned to me.

“So, which one of you was from here?”

“I’m the one from here, I think.”

“How do you know?”

“Well, in his universe, Garfield was shot by his vice president, when our universe he was shot by Guiles.”

“Picasso stabbed Garfield.”

My head shot up as he said that. He suddenly turned to the wall and pressed a button. A man with a metal came in as he tied up my arms. The table was covered in different tools and some vials of some unknown liquid.

“What are you doing? We were right? The one that wasn’t from here is expendable?”

“That’s exactly right. This will only pinch a bit.”

He took a knife and brought it to my hand. As he was about to presumably slice my finger, the hard metal chair became a couch. I was in the public library again. I sat back and breathed a sigh of relief. I slept with one eye open that night, though.

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### **10: YEARS ... by Roman Weaver**

The pain was unbearable. I wanted to cry, but I could only let out a frail moan. I pushed my fingers against the white ground, dragging myself across the ground as a trail of blood leaked out from my shattered ankle. I’ve had plenty of horrible occurrences between the universes: I was stabbed, shocked, shot, once nearly even drowned, but this was the most painful situation I had ever felt. Looking forward, I saw a white pedestal of granite, and some sort of brown book on it. I looked past the pain. I couldn’t keep crying forever, feeling bad for myself. This pain was temporary. Only temporary. I just needed to... stop panicking. I needed to keep pushing myself. My other leg was fine, just slightly bruised. If I could just stand up on that pedestal, I could try to figure something out before I bled out. Maybe I could rip off a part of my shirt to use to stop the bleeding.

But something’s... strange. The book was seemingly moving by itself. The last time I went into a universe with inanimate objects moving by themselves, I got beat up by a gang of sentient furniture, so I had quite a bit of fear around objects moving by themselves. I couldn’t even enjoy Halloween anymore without having problems with those Halloween decorations moving to try to scare you. I swear, I’m not insane. Just a bit paranoid.

Anyways, it goes without saying that I should try to get a better look anyways. Maybe I could do something with the pages to help stop the bleeding. Maybe the binding was sticky enough for me to not have to worry about wrapping my wound. I mean, after all, I just gotta hold out and hope that the shift happens soon... At the same time, though, I didn’t want to be some sad little baby cowering in the corner. Whatever. I just needed to see what’s on this pedestal.



“GOOOOD....!!” was all I could let out as I stood on my leg. My ankle was terribly destroyed, and my other ankle was badly bruised. I don’t know how long I can stand these conditions. But, looking at the book, I noticed it was... writing. Like those fake paranormal shows that you always see on TV, but instead of the book clearly being written by the same cast member every episode, this one was... actually writing. I looked down at the book, and there was a quill under it. The writing was appearing without the quill moving, strangely enough.

“GREETINGS FAIR BEING,” the book had written in it. “WHAT ARE YOU?”

I thought that over for a second. What did the book mean by, “WHAT ARE YOU?” Is it not familiar with humans? I lifted the quill and began to write. “I am human”.

“FROM WHERE DO YOU ORIGINATE?” it wrote back.

“Earth, what are you” I wrote in response.

“I AM EVERYTHING YET NOTHING MORE THAN THIS BOOK. I AM THE GROUND IN WHICH YOU WALK, YET AT THE SAME TIME, I AM THE AIR IN WHICH YOU BREATHE. I AM THE PEN IN WHICH YOU WRITE, BUT I AM ALSO THE BOOK IN WHICH YOU WRITE IN. YET, AT THE SAME TIME, I AM NONE OF THESE, ONLY IN EXISTENCE BEFORE YOU. I CAN SEE YOU, BUT YOU CANNOT TRULY SEE ME. I AM ONLY CONCEPTUALIZED BY MYSELF, AND IF YOU COULD CONCEPTUALIZE ME, YOU WOULD BE A BEING OF DEATH ITSELF, ONLY HERE TO BRING ENTROPY TO THE WORLD. ARE YOU ABLE TO CONCEPTUALIZE ME?” it wrote back.

I didn’t know what this book was talking about, and didn’t really pay enough attention to read it. After all, I couldn’t stop thinking about the pain in my ankle, and I really didn’t care for whatever rant this book was going on. “I AM GOING TO DIE, IS THERE A WAY FOR ME TO STOP THAT FROM HAPPENING” was all I wrote back.

“CREATION IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT” is all it wrote back. “SIMPLY STATE AS FACT THAT YOUR ANKLE IS NOT BROKEN AND IT IS DONE CREATURE”

What? “Yeah let me just say out loud that my ankle just simply isn’t broken and that’s just how it is” I wrote back. Jokingly, I let it out. “Yeah, my ankle isn’t broken, idiot. Just imagining things, haha.”

The book wrote quickly and angrily, “DO NOT MOCK FACT OR I SHALL TURN YOU INTO ASHES YOU VILE CREATURE”. I didn’t know how to respond. “LOOK DOWN YOU LOW INTELLECT WANNABE”

I looked down. Shock hit me like a car going 125 miles into a one-hundred ton stone wall. My ankle wasn’t broken. In fact, my entire leg that had been injured in my original universe was fine. I could bend it properly, no more cuts or scrapes, my ankle had felt better than it ever had. It even looked stronger. I had to test this. “I have a slice of pizza that my mother used to make before she passed away. It’s perfectly warm and in my hand.” I said out loud. I looked down, and there it was. The original crust, the perfect blend of cheese, the handmade pepperonis that my mom used to make at her butcher shop. I could only stare for a moment in disbelief before tears began streaming down my face.

“There is a couch behind me right now.” is all I said before I fell backwards into the soft cushions of the couch. Staring at the slice, I took a deep breath and took a bite out of it. The same unbelievable taste of my mother’s cooking couldn’t help but make me cry at the memory of her before she passed. I heard the book write, but I didn’t care for the moment. I wanted to spend a little bit longer resting. “There is a clock in front of me using the standard Eastern Standard time of the planet Earth.”

The clock appeared with a small blue explosion appearing on it. I sat and waited for a bit longer before I decided what I wanted to do. The clock read that time here was moving at a standard rate. “This realm is a bit darker.” The white void I was in turned into a darker shade of gray. All I could do was rest on the couch, thinking of the memories of my mother. I wanted very badly to say out loud that my mother was alive, but I couldn’t bring myself to do it. This universe is just an illusion. It has to be.

I don’t want to bring something back into existence that isn’t truly real. She isn’t alive. She died. It will only hurt me in the long run if I try to deceive myself into thinking that a memory of her is still living with me. I rested for just a few more moments as the book stopped writing.

## THE SECOND HOUR

I remembered the book writing after resting my eyes for about twenty minutes. I quickly stood back up and read what the book had to say. “YOU ARE BORING,” the book wrote in big bold letters. “ANY BEING WITH HALF A BRAIN WOULD HAVE ALREADY CREATED THEIR GREATEST IMPOSSIBLE DREAM TO LIVE OUT RIGHT NOW BEFORE SOMETHING HAPPENS TO SOUR THEIR TIME”.

“I want a small castle, made for the greatest of Kings.” The ground shook, and I watched as a tall castle came from the ground. The book, going up with it, had the sound of quick and panicked writing occurring from it. I quickly ran up after it. Going inside of the main entrance of the castle was a beautiful interior. A golden throne with velvet seating, a long red and gold carpet extending from the throne to the main entrance. Beautiful stone architecture, a picture of many great kings before the throne from ancient times, and 2 tall stone guards standing on either side of my throne. The best and most beautiful part yet, a tall stained glass window of the sun placed high above my throne, angled down at the throne. There was a switch on the wall next to me, and I hit it. The torches in the room leading to my throne flickered a wicked orange hue, lighting up the halls leading up to me. Four doors existed in the hall, with 2 on each side of me. Finally, there was a staircase at the far back of the hall, to the left and behind my throne. It clearly leads up to the upper balconies, where an additional 6 doors with 3 on either side of the room stood. The stone guards suddenly turned black and silver, made of granite, before purple fire formed where their eyes would. The knights immediately ran towards me in a march, before all of them surrounded the space in front of me and kneeled, presenting their swords to me. “You can keep your swords, knights.” was my reply.

The knights did not respond. They all formed a square formation around me, holding their swords pointed up in front of them, marching perfectly in sync with my movements. I walked around the castle more, looking to see where the book had disappeared to. I found a strange door behind my throne that had a large lock on it, that flickered with a purple hue, as if it did not belong in this universe. I was about to call out a command for this lock to be destroyed, but I was distracted by the ancient man who had stood behind me, walking towards me. “My King, I am sorry to disturb you.” the man said.

“It is fine. Who may you be?” I replied.

“I am your servant. I will maintain this castle for as long as you are here, and I hold the key to the Chambers, the door you are standing in front of.” he responded. “Would you like an entry, my lord?”

“Yes, please. Unlock this door.” I called out.

Then, suddenly, he disintegrated into ash that disappeared in moments, before ash appeared next to me and recreated him next to me. He had taken a key out of his inner suit pocket before quickly unlocking the door. The lock had split into two and disappeared before my very eyes.

The knights quickly formed a blockade in front of the door as I walked in. The torches inside were purple, lighting the room strangely. It was a typical bedroom with more expensive looking upholstery. However, something more caught my attention. There was a door at the very back of the room. I slowly opened it, and peered in. It was a small pitch black room, with a light shining in the center onto the same pedestal from earlier. The pedestal was marble, crafted brilliantly, and reminded me of Greek architecture. There was a large round clock above it that didn't seem to read any time I had, but was instead a timer. I went up to the book.

“Timer?” I wrote.

“UNTIL IT ALL HAPPENS TO YOU” it wrote back.

“Until what happens?” I wrote in response.

“A BRILLIANT BREAKDOWN” it wrote.

“What do you mean?” I wrote back. “Explain in detail”.

The book then wrote in a strange language I had never seen before. It didn't look human. It didn't look like anything, yet it looked like... everything. I can't explain what I'm looking at. “TOUCH IT” was all it wrote under it in small text. Following instruction, I touched it with my finger... and...

I could not bear the pain that came with knowing everything. The letters were that in which the truth of everything in existence was held. My hair became aged, and my body became pale. I could not handle what I saw. I had just learned everything. Every single thing. I know who killed the Kennedys, I know what happened to the Mayans. But I know. I know more than I want to know. The anguish that comes with this merely hurts.

“Time is brought to a crawl in this borderworld. The shift will not occur.” I spoke loudly. “I want to forget most of what I learned. Keep my form. I wish to be happy. Such information as

this only gives me wishes of harm upon myself.” A large flash was the last thing I saw before forgetting everything that had happened in the last 5 seconds.

“Never wanna do that again” I wrote down. “I’ll create my own universe. Where humans can act freely.”

The book wrote back only four words. “YOU ARE A FOOL”

“Life will inhabit all nations, and I will be their leader. They will not see me as a God. That is egotistical. They will see me as a fair King who rules them all. However, they are not forced to see me as this, as they will have freedom of thought, freedom of actions” And so, it was. I forwarded the pace of time so that everything could build up faster, and decided that I’d spend a year to further my beliefs.

At this point, time is passing by quickly. I don’t know why, but it seems the day cycles I have created are beginning to go faster. It’s crazy to believe that it’s been a year so far in this place, but life is just getting better. I had a beautiful wife, two beautiful kids, and a beautiful society. However, recently, people started coming to me and complaining about how weird things are happening. Disappearances, for instance. Random buildings are just disappearing in the blink of an eye. I asked the book why this was happening, but I didn’t get a response that explained it. Just a witty remark again about how I’m dumb, or something. The book really doesn’t seem to like me much anymore. I don’t expect much, though. I walked behind my throne into my bedroom before letting my head hit the soft pillows that awaited me. I covered myself in the warm embrace of my furry blankets.

I woke up to screaming.

I ran out of my room, slamming my door open, seeing that my servant was partially in the ground as ashes, and my knights were crumbling into small rocks. My wife was on the kitchen counter, with half of her body gone. My kids were screaming and sobbing horribly, and my wife was looking at me with horror. I quickly ran over and tried to save her. “My wife is safe! My wife is fine and safe!” Nothing happened. “My wife cannot die! She is an immortal being! She is fine!” Nothing happened. She grabbed my hand and looked me in the eyes. “I love you, with all of my heart, my King.” That’s all she said before she turned into ashes. My kids fell onto the ground in sync, and simultaneously calling out for me, their Dad, they turned into ash, leaving only their tears on the ground.

I looked out of my window to see large scale rioting. Explosions, people turning to ashes, screaming and hysterical crying, and worst of all... blotches of the white universe reappearing within mine. The people were disappearing, others attacking and killing others, and I watched as buildings toppled over, turning into ash before they hit the ground. I quickly ran through my self-destructing castle back to my chambers. The servant looked up to me as I was about to open the door. “It was an honor to serve under you, my sire. I believe it is time for me to return to which I have come.” He turned into ash, separating across the floor before disappearing for the final time.

Kicking open the door, I walked over to the pedestal where the book had lay. I wrote down only two words. “WHAT”, and “WHY”.

The book responded cryptically. "YOU ARE A FOOL. I HAVE STATED IT ONCE AND I SHALL STATE IT ONCE MORE. I WILL SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU. F - O - O - L."

I wrote down while crying onto the book. My ink was splattering from hitting my tear drops. My form had turned to ash before me. My injured leg was back from my original universe, my eyes had returned. I was wearing my old pajama pants and tank top. The cut on my lip returned and burned for a moment. "Why?"

"AT ONE END OF THE UNIVERSE, PERHAPS TOO, IT CAN BE THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER" it wrote down.

"Answer me or I will rip all of your pages out" is all I could write back in my anger.

"THE SHIFT IS INEVITABLE, EVEN I CANNOT STOP IT, FOOL. I WARNED YOU BEFORE NOT TO FALL IN LOVE, NOT TO HOLD ON TO THE UNIVERSE YOU CREATED. YOU EVEN KNEW THIS YOURSELF WHEN YOU HAD TOUCHED THE MARK OF THE BOOK, AND PURPOSEFULLY MADE YOURSELF FORGET. RETURN TO WHICH YOU CAME. YOU HAVE CAUSED NOTHING BUT TROUBLE HERE."

I was thrown back from the book, and as I was about to go head first into the stone wall, it disappeared, and I landed back to the white void I once found myself crawling through with a broken ankle. All that remained was one person. A young child, standing before me, looking down at me. I cried as the young peasant child crouched down in front of me. The sound of the pedestal hitting the ground and returning to where it originally stood tipped me over. The child grabbed my hand and looked me in the eyes, with small tears coming from its eyes. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry that this happened to you. I never wanted to hurt my people. Never in a million years did I want to hurt any of you." was all I could let out in my sobs.

"It's okay, mister," the kid replied to me. "I still love you as my King, and even if I am gonna die, I'm sure my mama and papa would have forgiven you too." He wrapped his arms around me, hugging me. I set my arms around him, hugging him tightly, and closed my eyes. I felt him turn into ash, heard the sound of the shift occur, and felt myself fall a very short distance onto my basement floor.

I let out a cry so loud that I'm sure my neighbors heard it. I punched the hard stone floor, leaving my knuckles bloodied and hurt. It hurts so much, creating everything and losing it in mere moments. I could feel the tears stream down my face. Everything hurts. Everything burns. With the memory of my old wife in my head, and the beautiful rosy cheeks of my children, I stood up. I wiped away the tears, and went upstairs. My cat walked out of the living room, and the bag of cat food was tipped over and opened, leaving a mess on the floor. The gallon of water that I normally had above the water dish so that the cat was taken care of while I was gone was nearly empty.

I sat on my couch in deep thought, feeling nothing but pain. I searched for an answer in my head to how to move on. I got up and moved to my room, closing the door behind me before falling onto my bed. I looked around my room and looked at my door. I stood up and opened it, peering out to see if any of the beautiful faces I knew would still be there. No. They're gone

forever. They aren't coming back. I sat back down as my small orange cat that I had completely forgotten about walked back in, looking at me with a goofy look on her face.

I looked at my nightstand, where the portrait of my family and friends stood. I grabbed it and embraced it in my hands, staring down at it for a few moments. It hurts to move on, it really does. But, maybe I can move past it all using the people I have now.

I stood up, wiping the tears from my face. I walked to my room and, while quickly getting dressed, pulled out my phone. I dialed up one of my friends. "Hey. Can you come over to my house?" I weakly spoke out. "I need a ride to the store. I need to buy cat food."

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### *Epilogue*

It's a blessing that my adventures are the fog in my life. My connections to other people in other places--- in other times, however, have made me stronger, more appreciative of each breath that I draw. Not knowing or understanding where or why I have been transported is really a human condition. Each day, I begin anew. Imagination is the oxygen I need. Returning home is my Hope. None of us can know what adventures await. With a little faith and gratitude-- I will awake to another sunrise. Today is a new day.