

(3rd place-Young Adults- Karina Manapaya)

D. THE LETTER THAT CLUNG MISERABLY ON TOP OF MY-

sixteen-year-old Celeste Chikovski's-crumpled up English test.

The ink clung on the paper's fibers.

Miserably.

Just like the dark, shallow rain clouds, desperately clinging on to the clear sky above my head. A crystal clear raindrop landed soundlessly on top of the dreadful letter. I looked up only to have more raindrops splash against my somewhat pale face. The precipitation began to pick up speed. When I finally understood what was going on, the thoughts of my mother smothering me with punishments vanished, and my legs sprung towards the nearest shelter.

I didn't even bother looking where I was going. Heck, I didn't even think! I just told these legs to run, and they did. Forward. Down the sidewalk, and towards the closest door in my reach.

When inside, the rain sounded so silent only the light taps against the windows were heard. I was panting now with water dripping from my clothes onto the clean, yellow tiles. I looked around the place with a baffled expression spread across my face.

Holy... my thoughts drifted off as I scanned the room, noticing that every inch of the room was covered with clocks, not even a single space on that wall was bare for anything else to fit.

"Hello, there!" The loud greeting kept from behind me-close to my ear. It was so loud and unexpected that I fell on my back as I turned around and screamed bloody murder. The voice that frightened me belonged to the shopkeeper of the clock shop. He waited patiently until I caught my breath, and began again:

"Hello, welcome to our shop," he said with a big cat-like smile, and added, "Did I scare you?"

“Of course not,” I replied sarcastically, “I always fall on behind and scream in somebody’s face”

A moment of silence followed. The shopkeeper was the one who broke it:

“Really?” He replied.

“What?”

“You always do *that*?”

“No!”

“But you just said --”

“*I was lying!*”

“Why would you wanna do that?”

Silence again.

“Are you stupid?” I asked in a tone of disbelief.

The young man just blinked, turned around and steered himself in the direction of the cash desk. He leaned his body against it, balancing his weight on the desk’s surface where his hands were neatly folded together on top of an opened notebook. It seemed that he was waiting for the curious little old me. Noticing this, I followed. He was just an inch away from the cash desk when the man said;

“That’s quite the malicious grade you achieved.”

I followed the man’s gaze, and saw that I was still clutching the test in my fist. But what was strange is how the mark was even noticed by someone standing so far away from it, when I myself was holding the paper right in my hand. Especially seeing how the letter no longer looked like a letter but like a red blotch of ink.

“I bet you’d like to rewrite it, now that you know all the answers.” Said the shopkeeper, whose eyes were still upon the wet, ragged tissue of an English test. He smiled and with that disappeared underneath the desk for a moment or two. When he came back in his hands he held a small, dusty old clock.

“Is that a mini-grandfather clock or somethin’?” I snarled.

The man continued happily, ignoring the question, “It’s a bloody time machine! All you do is set it back say... five hours and Voila! You’ll go back in time five hours ago!”

I just looked at him as if he were a lunatic talking gibberish. Putting on a friendly smile, I just said, “Right...” then turned around to leave. Anything, even bad weather is better than talking to someone who’s not only a stranger but is bonkers as well. Just as I reached for the door, the man quickly positioned himself in front of the door. What scared me the most was the man’s height. *Six foot two? Six foot four??* I wondered-guessing mostly.

“Please don’t leave!” Said the man, but changing his request seeing that he gave me more than a heart attack, “Okay, leave! But please buy the clock. Only five dollars.”

“Alright, Alright!” I said, searching though my pockets for money “Here.”

I took the clock and said, “Thank you mister ...?”

“Ian.”

Just as I opened the door, I heard him yell: “*don’t kill anyone!*” With chills down my back, I scurried home.

* * *

Three hours passed since I came home, from the store. Three straight hours since I was grounded, and sent to my room. The three hour that I laid on the bed belly up, staring at the clock. Watching every second go by. Listening to every tick that the hand makes. Thinking about everything that happened when it began to rain. My thoughts were soon interrupted by loud knock on the door. It was my mother telling me to wash the dishes. I pretended to be asleep.

Looking up at the clock again I remembered what that loon, -Ian, was it?- said about the clock. I reached out and adjusted the hour hand backwards on seven just for the heck of it. Pulling the covers over my head, I dozed off.

When I woke up with a jolt, it was eight in the morning. Quickly putting on my jacket, I ran out the door with my bag in my hand.

I sat down, just as the second bell rang. I noticed my friend R.J. had his face buried in his English notebook, feeling my presence he shoved the notes in his bag and turned to meet my face. His expression was now pleading,

“Tell me you didn’t study, man.”

“For what?”

Now it was happy, “So you didn’t!”

“Huh?”

“English?”

Just as I opened my mouth to answer, Ms. Osaki told the class to clear their desks, as she circled the classroom, she dropped off a paper to each student. Before I even began to scan the sheet, I realized it was *the* English test from yesterday. I whispered R.J.:

“Isn’t this yesterday’s?”

“If it was, would I worry so much?”

Point taken. The confused-little-old-me looked away and began scribbling answers.

* * *

B. The letter that clung-*no, wait that already happened.*

It began to rain-*wait, that too!*

I found myself finally at the store. I spun around expecting to see Ian in front of me, but he was nowhere in sight.

“Hello, Celeste.”

I spun back around. This time the man looked different. He no longer had chestnut hair and blue eyes, but black with green eyes. Before I could say anything the man looked past me and yells happily:

“*Ian! It’s that German girl!*”

Out from the back door, Ian came rushing in. His gaze dropped upon me,
“Finally! So how was the past?”
“Okay.” I responded,
“I see you got a B.,” said Green Eyes.
“How did you...?”
“Brother told me”
“You’re related?”
The men exchanged looks, “It says: *Tamkin Clocks* - on the door”
“So did you’ve come to return the clock?” asked Green Eyes.
“Yes Mister.”
“It’s Lloyd Tamkin.”
I reached out into my bag for the clock, then froze.
“Something wrong?” Asked Lloyd.
“Actually, yes.”
“Oh?”
“Can I go back in time and change *anything*.”
Lloyd looked at his brother, then back at me, “As far as we know.”
I smiled and said: “I want to help a friend with his leg injury.” Turning
back around I added, “I’m *Russian*, not *German*.”

* * *

**That night I turned back the clock exactly a year back. I closed my eyes
and let my soul rest. When I woke up the next day, the only thing that my brain
allowed me to think about was my best friend’s injury.**

Today’s the day I fix R.J. I thought.

* * *

To say the least, everything was pretty much the same as in the one-year-
away-future. My locker was still unorganized, Ms. Osaki still had her red-purple-
yellow hairdo, and my principle was still clueless about everything-except his

precious liquor cabinet at home. R.J. though was different. He didn't *look* different but he sure *felt* that way-Okay his hair was shorter but who gives? I couldn't tell what was difference, but I knew that it did and that was good enough for me.

Throughout the whole entire school day I had not taken my eyes off R.J.- not literally of course. One other thing I did noticed was that R.J. had a *girlfriend*- not just any girlfriend, but Penny Cheung! As far as I was concerned, R.J. could be with any girl he wants-*but not Penny!* Cheung was also a sophomore even though she is a year older than her friends, she loves the color white and has short curly blond hair-which was ironic because she looks like a Chinese version of Marilyn Monroe. She hated me before we ever even spoke. Either someone had slipped something into my coffee this morning, or I was suffering from long-term memory loss because no god-dammed-way did I forget about *her* being my friend's love interest! I could never forget this treacherous hell of a nightmare. But why didn't I remember know about this?

What in all the bloody seriousness was going on?

"Well I gotta go. I see you later?" Penny interrupted my thinking, her accent told me she wasn't born here. What came next was gruesome. First they *kissed* good-bye! Then Mr. I-got-a-schizophrenic-for-a-girlfriend called her "*My little fuzz-wuzzy-bunny.*" And she called him "*My little muffin-bear.*" I made a face. As she left, he turned to me and asked:

"What's up?"

"We need to talk, *muffin-bear,*" I teased him

"Knock it off, Cel." *Cel.* His nickname for me. Beats *fuzzy-wuzzy-bunny* any day.

"Listen," I slowly led him aside from the crowd passing through, "Maybe you should quit the football team-I'm dead serious-you'll damage your leg you know."

“Huh?” I lost him.

“I know the future.” I pointed out.

“You’re nuts,” *That I am*, “I can’t quit, I mean I got Penny.”

“But--” He cut me off.

“Get some rest, and quit staring at me in class-Its creepy.”

“That *is* creepy.”

“Yeah. You’re creepy Celeste.” He turned around and left, refusing to listen to me any further.

I really lost him.

I did get some rest that night, but I know he didn’t because the next day everyone knew that *fuzz-wuzzy-bunny (her)*, broke *muffin-bear*’s heart.

I sure came at the wrong time of this year.

* * *

After school the next day I couldn’t find R.J. anywhere. He couldn’t have called in sick even after what happened with Cheung-He was too strong. I figured it was just coincidence that he was absent, but my lab partner told me that he saw R.J. wandering the hall during third period-it was already fifth period.

The coincidence theory might have to go.

I ran around the school like a deranged-rabies-infested-dog when I was peering in every classroom, looking for R.J. So far, all I found was-A couple making out, a male teacher powdering his nose, and a janitor asleep-Supposedly drunk- on top of a desk. And that, ladies and gentlemen was only the third floor. What other surprises await me? Then I remembered the window, R.J. loves to look out from when he’s daydreaming-Room 102.

* * *

The door to room 102 burst open and closed with the same maniacal force used to open it-That gave R.J. quite the heart attack. He was now standing on the window ledge, prepared to jump anytime now.

“Whateveryoudodontjumpyouimbacilicfool!” I spoke so fast that every thing sounded like one big word-or rubbish. He turned his head to look at me-like I’m a loon-and said: “If I wanted to die, don’t you think I would have by now? From the *third* floor?”

“Oh,” My face was beet red. I came and stood next to him, full of excitement and relief. I patted him on the back-one might call it a big slap on the back-and said, “That’s my boy!” That was foolish of me to do, because he fell. When realized that I gasped, and everything stopped moving. Confused, I looked around the room and my heart skipped a beat as I shrieked and fell on my bottom when I noticed that two men stood before me.

Ian and Lloyd Tamkin.

“What the--” I started.

“He fell didn’t he?” Said Ian, peering out the window, then at Lloyd.

“Fifteenth time ain’t it?”

“Try fiftieth.” He said.

“What?” I chimed in.

“Well, you did this fifty times already in the past.” Explained Lloyd.

“How?”

“Well,” Started Ian, “Do you remember Cheung being R.J.’s girlfriend? Or how he damaged his knee?”

“Y-yes,” I stuttered, “It was a sports injury, and no I don’t remember her being--”

Ian cut her off, “Well we brain-washed every one and sent you back in your own time-a year ahead.”

“Who are you guys, really?”

The brothers looked at each other, “Time-travelers who can brain wash people-can’t tell you how-, ready to go back?”

“W-what-No! I’ll pay for causing this!”

They made a face like they heard that line before.

“Look, we’ll make a deal-*again*-, if you come back we’ll brainwash you and every body else-*again*-, and make your life a little more-good? If you don’t it’ll be bad for our business-There’s other time-travelers competing.”

I asked quietly, “He’ll okay?”

“Yes!” Said Ian, “Let’s go back-*again*-!”

“How can you be so unserious?”

“Do *fifty* times mean anything to you?”

Lloyd spoke again, “On the record, it was all my big brother’s fault. He didn’t warn you enough. He acts like a ten-year-old than a twenty-year-old.”

I looked at them surprised, “Older? Twenty?”

“Watch it!” They both said out loud, and Ian added, “I’m only a year older. But at least we’re attractive to all women.”

“Not to me.” I said oh-so-plainly. Then everything went fuzzy and I blanked out-soon forget everything.

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D. The letter that clung miserably on top of my crumpled up English test. The ink clung on the paper’s fibers.

Miserably.

All of a sudden it began to rain furiously. R.J. grabbed my hand and ran. So did I. We entered the closest store we could see in our way. He patted me on the head for at least trying my best on the test. I smiled in returned.

How did this happen? I thought, *It’s not supposed to rain today.*

“Hello!” Came the loud greeting from behind me, I nearly fell but R.J. caught me in his arms. Before us stood two young men who looked so alike. One had a small grin on his face, with black hair and green eyes. The other had a big cat-like smile-chestnut hair with blue eyes.

“I’m Lloyd, that’s Ian.” said Green Eyes.

“Hello!” my mouth answered, but my mind exclaimed:

Déjà vu!

END