

Years 11 & 12

1st Place: Fola Ogunleye

Year 11, Dale Christian College

### **Intertwined**

There was no end to my suffering. My dad's bakery was a small one, on the corner of a busy New York street. I could say with confidence that our pastries were authentically made from the heart and soul of my father. That was one of the reasons why, despite it being a tiny shop, it garnered a plethora of regulars from across the city. That being said, only two customers sat inside the bakery. Every other time I'd come in to visit my dad, the place was swamped with customers. Of course, the one time I was left in charge, it was practically a ghost town.

I leaned my head against my hand, bored. Standing in an empty bakery and letting the hours slowly pass was not my idea of fun, but my dad had fallen ill, and it was only expected that I would take his place. My vision lulled as I started to lose consciousness. I hoped this mundane day would go by fast, but fate doesn't always go the way you want it to. My eyes shot open at the sound of the door opening.

Through the door entered two figures. Upon entry, they stood out, not only because the shop was a wasteland but also because, despite being on the older side, they were dressed in vibrant, abstract-looking clothes. The middle-aged couple included a woman who sported a neon pink coat, hand in hand, with her partner. His colour palette was tamer than that of his companion, but the design of his boots was almost as eye-catching as the woman's coat. I startled from my daze. Upon seeing the customers, I smiled, looking forward to easing my boredom. As they approached the counter, my excitement faltered. The woman's long, dark hair and the way her eyes creased as she beamed at her husband. It felt all too familiar. My hand began to tremble as the couple stood in front of me. She was a mirror image of my mother.

"Hello sweetheart," she greeted me with a warm smile on her face. Memories of my mother replayed in my head. I held my trembling hand with the other. I blinked before I plastered on my customer service smile once again. I must've been going crazy. This lady was just a lookalike. My mother had passed away over two years ago.

"Hello Ma'am. What can I get for you?"

I spoke calmly, and the trembling in my hand ceased. The man beside her seemed amused to hear my voice. I turned my attention to him, trying to ignore the eerie feeling the woman gave me. He had fairly tanned skin, sparkling green eyes, and, for his age, a

decent amount of hair. Looking at his features, I might've found him attractive in his youth; I possibly could've dated him.

The couple shared glances, almost like they were telepathically formulating their order. My eyes drifted towards the lady. Upon further examination, the woman didn't exactly resemble my mother. In fact, I was starting to see similarities between her and my dad. Her slim nose and doe brown eyes were similar to my mother's. However, her facial structure and the poutiness of her lips reminded me of my father. Oddly, she shared both of their features. It made me increasingly uncomfortable. It was like I was on the verge of figuring out a family secret.

"If you need any help deciding, I recommend –"

"– raspberry cheesecake."

Uncannily, the lady answered for me. The inner corner of my lips twitched. She looked surprised by herself as her mouth parted.

"I was just about to suggest that dessert."

"Well, isn't that funny?"

She laughed at the coincidence. I didn't join in. Her speaking my exact thoughts combined with her appearance was enough to make me unsettled. I decided to end this whole encounter. Quickly, I grabbed the cheesecake and served it to them on a plate. The man looked at it concerningly

"That comes down to \$8.95."

They turned to each other, again. I was starting to get suspicious. All these weird little incidents were adding up.

"Can we get it to go?"

The man asked kindly enough. I stared at them for a second before shoving the cheesecake into an empty cake box. I would rather go back to the monotonous day from earlier than spend another minute talking to this couple. The longer this interaction drew out, the more I felt a shift in the air molecules. An intuition that something was wrong.

The man placed a \$10 bill on the counter before the couple rushed out of the store, empty-handed. My jaw dropped. I completely froze for a moment, in complete shock of the situation. My eyes glanced between the cheesecake and the door. I wouldn't be able to stop thinking about this moment if I just ignored them. Without thinking, I grabbed the cheesecake and note. I felt a rush of adrenaline as I stepped onto the streets of New York

My eyes darted around, desperately searching for the duo. In my peripherals, I caught a glimpse of neon pink slipping into an alleyway. I chased after it, not caring whose

shoulders I knocked into. Turning into the alleyway, I was met with nothing. I furrowed my eyebrows as I scanned the area for clues. Two brick buildings enclosed the walkway. On the wall was a passageway that connected this alley to another. Timidly, I entered the passageway. I could feel the adrenaline fading, and now I was questioning my decision. I must've been possessed to follow them here. On the other side, I heard voices.

"She saw me coming down here."

I peered out of the passageway. The lady from the bakery was standing beside the man, looking discouraged. Her husband wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

"That's exactly how you remembered it."

His words had affection seeping out of them. Supposedly, he was comforting her. But what about?

"I already messed up in the bakery. Why did I finish my own sentence?" I narrowed my eyes in confusion. Were they talking about me? There was something off about this pair the second I saw them, but were they more devious than I imagined? What if they were plotting some heinous scheme that involved my family?

"It won't change a thing."

He reassured her by squeezing her shoulders. She wrapped her arms around his neck, and he pulled her into a tight embrace. I averted my gaze. They were suspicious, but now I felt like a dirty stalker. I leaned back, accidentally bumping into a loose pipe. The pipe clattered on the wall, alerting them to my presence. They both turned in my direction.

"Someone's here."

The welcoming voices of the couple turned cold.

"Hide the time machine . . ."

My ears droned out the last part of his sentence. Time machine? Did he just say time machine? The man approached the passageway. They were going to figure out that I was spying on them. Dropping the cheesecake, I hightailed it out of there. I probably just misheard. There was no way they were referring to an actual time machine. Time travel was fictional, a complete fantasy.

I crashed onto the pavement as I collided with another body. I yelped in surprise. Whatever I was holding was knocked to the ground. The boy I'd bumped into picked it up and handed it to me.

"You dropped this."

I looked at what was in the person's hand. It was the bill from the couple, but now that I was really looking at it, it wasn't normal money. I wasn't even sure if it was a form of currency, anywhere. I grabbed it from the person's hand, examining it carefully. It was rectangular in shape, but instead of paper, it was a thin sheet of hardware, with a

screen. Upon contact, it lit up and projected the words '\$10 USD'. Under this it gave the option to convert the money into different currencies. I was speechless.

"What is that?"

I looked up, locking eyes with beautiful green ones. A tanned boy, about my age, had his eyes on the contraption in my hands. He looked like his head was about to explode. I had the same bewildered expression, but not because of the device. It was unbelievable. This boy looked like a younger version of the man that was in the bakery. In the distance, the couple stood watching us try to put together our thoughts.

"I told you it would be fine."

The man smiled, looking at a younger version of himself.

"Of course I knew that."

She shot him a cheeky grin. "I had to say that otherwise we wouldn't have this moment."

"The work of fate."