I woke up in the usual sleepy haze I usually wake up in. What’s different is that my alarm didn’t go off at the usual 8 am timeslot, in fact it didn’t go off at all today. Weird, it’s still plugged in to the socket. Oh well, I thought. I get off the bed and make my way to the bathroom to freshen up. Once I had finished, I approached the alarm clock to check on it once again. When I looked at the alarm, I noticed a strange occurrence. The alarm’s digital screen had gone haywire and started to show weird glyphs. Random symbols that I had never seen before. It suddenly stopped before displaying, “Welcome to Cryoa, Sera”. I freaked out. Am I being hacked? I had only just bought this alarm clock yesterday. Did that sketchy salesman do something to this alarm? Before I could do anything, a blinding light emits from the clock and I faint.

I wake up and find myself in the middle of a flower field. However, I’m freezing to death here considering I haven’t changed out of my PJs. I look around me and see ice coloured flowers. Where am I? How did I get here? (Sanad)

I look at my hands, my fingertips are already turning blue. I rub them together and it burns a little- they’re stiffening quickly and I can feel icy crystals forming in my nose. I’m going to freeze to death if I don’t get somewhere safe soon. I scope the area frantically, the trees surrounding the field look full and impossible to navigate through. Closing my eyes hard I try to pinch back the tears of panic. As I open them once more, the field has vanished. I find myself in an alleyway, the buildings are enormous. There is no sky in sight and it is bright as day. The brick building behind me rumbles and I jolt off the wall. (Erin)

My body jolts upwards in a frantic motion and I am greeted by the familiarity of my lavender bedroom walls. No longer am I caught between being buried alive by rubble in some suffocating city, nor am I stuck in the middle of a field where people go to freeze to death. As I try to catch my breath, my chest rising and falling faster than I can manage, my eyes dart about. Scanning my surroundings, I really am back in my bedroom, except one thing is different from what I last could remember. My alarm clock, which has previously been hijacked by some sort of cryptic message, is completely dark. No sign of life is coming from it, which I should be more relieved about than what I am currently feeling. It is simply a dead alarm clock. However, for some reason, I cannot shake the feeling that I am *meant* to see whatever it is I saw. There was something… familiar about it all.

“What the hell keeps happening?” I whispered to myself. (Carla)

I eyed the alarm clock for several minutes before taking it outside and smashing it with the mallet I keep under the front porch. I didn’t stop until it was nothing but tiny pieces of black plastic and metal pushed into the dirt. I have never fully trusted inanimate objects; stories of cursed dolls and trunks, haunted rings and entire homes have sometimes left me with the feeling that there is something more than fiction and superstition behind them. I have often wondered what happens with *things* before they reach us, before we purchase them and take them home with us, oblivious to their histories and secrets. Transference from the touch of someone’s fingertips, proximity to a horrific occurrence or even the slow exposure to a miserable existence as unhappy hands put together the bits and pieces, the clockwork. The ideas felt far away from reality, more like a dramatic TV show or something you read about but never actually experience.

I blinked in the cool air, the familiar rumination distracting me from the bizarreness of the frozen field and alleyway. It began to feel more and more likely that it was all just an intensely vivid dream, that I had probably destroyed a perfectly good alarm clock for no reason other than my own neurosis. As I turned to head up the porch stairs, I saw it, and the feeling of vague familiarity flooded back. A small ice-colored flower lay on the doorstep, it’s petals like converging fun-house mirrors, reflecting and shining in the early morning light. (Kirsten)

In a blink of an eye the world shifted once more. Though this time I was back at that stupid sales cart.

“And that will be $6.67 dollars please.” Croaked the once smooth talking salesman.

“What the hell is this?”

“Look lady, I did say 5 dollars but once you consider the tax...” The weather was just as I remembered. The gentle wind rocked the tall grass of the field, as the autumn air was slowly getting colder, and the sales car stood at the side of the dirt road as it did before. Everything was as it should be except for the fact that I am still in my pajamas and the sale’s person’s face appears to be all but a blur.

“What are you?” I repeat. But all he replies with are the same two recorded lines. After a short while of this I launched at him, slamming him across his little merchant stand.

“Answer me!” I cry. His faceless face glitches like television static to form a semblance of a grinning mouth. Through his sharp teeth he releases a sharp hiss.

“You made your deal, and broke our bargain. I’m afraid…” He pauses and the world suddenly glitches back to normal; now back in the outfit I was that day, and the smug face of the salesman returns to its rightful place. From the undamaged merchant stand he picks up the cursed clock and says, “that will be $6.67 dollars please.” (Tamila)