# The Echoes of 2042

The year was 2042. Technology had made leaps so profound that what once was fiction had crept into reality—self-driving cities, AI courts, neural learning implants. Yet, among all this progress, Dr. Adrian Voss lived a life hidden from the spotlight. Not because he was insignificant, but because he had created something dangerous. Something...impossible.

In a lab buried beneath the rusted remains of an abandoned observatory on the outskirts of Reykjavik, Iceland, Adrian had built a device he called the Chrono Lens. Its sleek metal frame was the size of a suitcase, and inside it, curved plates of dark matter folded time like paper. The device didn’t let you move through time in the traditional sense. It let you see through it.

But last winter, something changed.

Adrian had been scanning the year 2022, observing his younger self struggling through grad school, when the lens pulsed and blinked—a glitch he had never seen before. The interface blurred, distorted, and then showed something impossible.

His own face. Older. Aged. Speaking directly into the camera.

“Adrian… listen. Don’t try to fix it. Let it break. She’s the key.”

The image vanished before he could process it. No record. No logs. Nothing.

For months, Adrian replayed the moment in his mind. What had his future self meant? Who was “she”?

That question became an obsession.

In April of 2043, Adrian made a reckless decision. He reverse-engineered the lens to step through time, not just view it. He modified the energy core to stabilize a human payload for five minutes—no more. If the subject wasn’t back by then, their atoms would scatter across the void.

He programmed the destination: October 11, 2022. The day his younger sister, Lira, had died in a mysterious car crash.

She had been 17. He was 25. Her death had broken something in him—something he had never spoken about.

He’d always wondered: What if it wasn’t just an accident?

As he stepped through the swirling blue haze of the time corridor, the world around him melted and reformed like wax under heat. Then—snap—everything was still.

Adrian stood in the cold morning fog outside his family home in Oslo. The trees were shorter. The air smelled different. And there, on the porch, sat Lira—alive, legs crossed, earbuds in.

He felt a jolt in his chest. She hadn’t changed. Same red hair. Same smirk.

He had five minutes.

Adrian approached her slowly. “Lira,” he called out, voice trembling.

She looked up, annoyed. “Do I know you?”

He hesitated. “I’m... I’m a friend of your brother. Adrian.”

She narrowed her eyes. “He doesn’t have friends.”

Adrian laughed despite himself. “You’re not wrong.”

Something in his tone softened her suspicion. “What do you want?”

“I just wanted to say... be careful today. Please. Don’t take the car.”

She frowned. “Why?”

He struggled. “There’s going to be an accident. I don’t have time to explain—just trust me.”

She studied him, then said quietly, “You look like him.”

He nodded, voice cracking. “I am him.”

Her eyes widened. “No way…”

Suddenly, a sharp whine rang in his ear—his time tether warning him he had under a minute left.

“Lira,” he gasped, “if you change your mind, if you stay home, you’ll live. I know it’s hard to believe, but you have to trust me.”

Tears welled up in her eyes. “Adrian... is this real?”

He grabbed her hand. “I love you. I never stopped. I’m so sorry I couldn’t protect you.”

The world started to pull at him, like gravity in reverse.

“I’ll stay!” she yelled. “I’ll stay home!”

And then—darkness.

Adrian woke in his lab, gasping.

The date read April 2043.

He raced upstairs, out into the daylight, through Reykjavik’s winding streets, past glass towers and wind turbines. He reached a quiet graveyard on a hill, where a gray stone bore her name:

Lira Voss, 2005–2022.

Still there.

His heart dropped. Had she not listened?

He returned to his lab, despondent. But something felt... off. The Chrono Lens interface was different. Cleaner. Updated.

He ran a facial recognition scan on his system archives.

And then he found it.

Lira Voss, Ph.D. Quantum Ethics, MIT, Class of 2035.   
Current: Chief Advisor to the Global Time Integrity Board.

His mouth fell open. She had lived—but not in this timeline. His visit had created a split, a forked version of reality where she stayed home and survived.

But he would never see her again.

Unless...

Adrian sat back, eyes fixed on the Chrono Lens. He could see across time—but what if he could send a message?

He queued a sequence, aimed at March 7, 2042, in the alternate timeline. A date far enough for her to be old enough. Smart enough.

He recorded a short video.

“Lira... if you see this, it means I found a way. I’m sorry I never got to know you in this world, but maybe one day... we’ll meet. And when we do, I’ll bring strawberry ice cream. Like old times.”

He hit “Send.”

In a quiet office in New Zurich, Timeline B,

Dr. Lira Voss opened her inbox. A new message, untraceable.

Her hands trembled as she watched it.

Tears streamed down her face.

She whispered, “I knew it was you…”

Outside her window, time bent gently.

And somewhere, across the echoing fabric of time, Adrian smiled.