Un-pause

By Pragati Kharel

Chris’s house has a big front yard that is separated by a small pathway in the middle that leads the front gate to his front door. The pathway is made up of tiny gray stones. Left side of the garden, close to the gate, has a maple tree. The orange maple leaves are splattered throughout the yard. Right side of the garden has an abandoned dog cage in the middle that too has some maple leaves on it.

A guy and a girl enter Chris’s house. The girl is murmuring something nonstop and the guy looks annoyed. The guy slowly opens the gate and the girl starts talking loudly. She holds the guy’s hand pulls him back.

“You sure? You absolutely sure we should do this?”

The guy squints at her and says, “For the hundredth time, Lia, it was your freaking idea. We drove all the way here just because you found our great grand father’s letter.”

“Jacob, wait and think about it. What if these watches don’t work and we get frozen as soon as we enter the house too? I am not sure if we should take the risk at this point.”

Jacob holds Lia’s shoulders with both of his hands and says, “You’re the one who was so excited to see our great great grandfather. You said you wanted him to teach you all the wisdom he has… you said you were inspired by him already. Lia, you will never get to meet him if you don’t take the risk.”

“But Jacob….”

“I am going in there, whether you like it or not. I didn’t drive all the way here for nothing.”

Jacob walks inside the house. Lia hesitates at first but then follows him in as soon as he goes.

The inside looks like a typical 1910’s living room, filled with maple furniture and wooden flooring. In the right side there is a fireplace and two big maple chairs in front of it. The left side has long stairs that leads upstairs. And the straight wall has a big window and an office desk in front of it. The desk chair is faced backwards and a tiny portion of a person’s head is visible.

“Oh my god! There he is,” Lia says. They both walk towards the chair as slowly as possible, examining the room with their eyes. There is no dust anywhere, the flowers in the vase above a tiny white fridge still look fresh, and the room has a different air.

“Are you like, really hot right now?” Lia asks.

“Yeah, I guess Papa left the radiator on.”

“Papa?” Lia starts laughing.

“Well, we can’t keep calling him great great grandfather. We don’t even know how many greats we should use.”

They reach the chair. Jacob and Lia walk in front of the chair from both sides and slowly turn around.

“AAAAAAAA!” Lia screams. Jacob, with his eyes wide open, says, “Oh my god, he looks exactly like uncle Marcus.” Lia examines the face properly, “Or maybe even younger.”

Chris is sleeping like a horse in his chair. He is wearing a white shirt with black strips and a tie. His two front teeth are visible. His glasses are still in place, he is holding a small remote control in his hands and he is not moving at all. He is not even breathing.

“So, it is real,” says Jacob.

“Or… It is indeed uncle Marcus trying to prank us!”

“Shut up Lia. This is so cool. Let’s wake him up.”

“The letter said destroy the remote control to resume the time.”

Jacob slowly takes the remote control out of his hands, puts it on the floor and crushes it with his boots. Lia then goes closer to Chris, hoping to see a change. “Um, Jacob, nothing is happening.” She looks back at Jacob who at one second is standing in front of her and at another gets strangled by something and falls on the floor. It was a white skinny dog.

“Oh my god, Jacob!”

Trying to push the dog away, he says, “What the hell get him out of my face.”

The dog then sniffs his ears and stops its aggressiveness. It starts licking Jacob’s ears. He pushes the dog away in disgust. “What just happened?” Jacob says.

Lia feels her arms and says, “Did you notice that the room just got a bit cooler than before?”

“Lia!” Jacob stands up. “His radiator was not on; the time was frozen in summer so the room temperature was warm.”

“So that means we have unfrozen the time?”

“Yes!”

“So, why is he still frozen?”

“He’s not, he’s just napping, let’s wake him up!”

They both go to Chris, nod him and say, “Papa, wake up!”

Chris slowly opens his eyes. Lia and Jacob move a bit further. Chris yawns. Lia and Jacob look at each other. Chris finally realizes he is awake and he briskly stands up.

“*Oh my god!* What time is it?” he shouts in extreme excitement. He runs towards his cupboard and takes out his watch. “*5 hours?* It only lasted for five hours?” he screams. He quickly comes back, looks at Jacob and Lia and says, “Who are you people?”

Lia smiles awkwardly and says, “We got your letter. We came to rescue you Papa. Your time freezing machine was dysfunctional.”

“And, for your information, it’s the year 2020 right now,” Liam adds.

“*What?* It has been…. one hundred and twenty years…?”

Lia and Jacob say at the same time, “Yes…”

Chris sits down on his chair and says, “Cool!”

Lia gets furious and yells, “Are you kidding me? How is this cool?”

“It is cool my great great granddaughter. It’s like I didn’t create a time-freezing machine but a time machine instead. I can’t believe I am in the future now…. I mean just five minutes ago I came back with my groceries that I walked for an hour to get. *Oh!* Do we have flying cars now?”

“No, we don’t. I am leaving,” Lia says and starts heading out.

“Wait! Where are you going?” Chris says.

“I just thought our Papa would be an inspiring genius who would talk big words and save the world but you seem so careless and selfish.”

“Lia come on now. Be glad our Papa is so cool,” looking at Chris, “I get mine from you.” He winks and Chris winks back.

“I’m outta here.”

Lia walks towards the door and Jacob follows her, “Lia, wait!”. Lia opens the door and they all hear a loud screaming voice of a woman. It sounds like somebody set a wild cat on fire. The woman is running in the street in total fear and shouting as loud as she can. “What the hell?” Lia says. The woman sees Lia and tries to run inside the house. Lia panics and closes the door.

“What the hell was that?” Jacob says.

Chris gets up from his chair and walks towards the door. He peeks from the door’s peephole and sighs. He looks back at Jacob and Lia who look confused and frightened.

“It was Delilah, she is my next-door neighbor,” Chris says.

“Are you telling us that your neighbor got frozen too?” Jacob says getting away from Chris.

“Okay, this is it. This is serious! How many people or things did you freeze for one hundred years?”

They all sit on the chairs near the fireplace. Chris is holding a screen with a map in his hands.

“Now, kids. You do not need to freak out. By the help of this map, we can figure out what places were affected by my machine. I was afraid something like this may happen so I made this detector.”

Jacob says with his wide smile, “You are such a genius Papa.”

“Yeah, his genius shows.” Lia rolls her eyes.

Chris examines the map for a bit and says, “Looks like it was just my house, my neighbor’s house and this one location that I cannot figure out. It is pretty far away and I only made this map for the area of this city.”

“You made a stupid time freezing machine and you did not have time to make a proper map?” Lia yells. Jacob goes to Chris and looks at the map himself. Chris says, “I have the coordinates of the location, so if we follow this, we may end up at the exact location… but kids… it may take days.”

“That’s alright! We will all go on a travel mission together, and you can tell us everything about how you invented this machine… and maybe even figure out what went wrong and fix it! Lia we should go pack!” Jacob stands up.

“Hold on. No one is going anywhere. Come on dude, this is 2020, we have Google maps. Tell me the coordinates Chris, I’ll figure out the location in less than a minute,” says Lia.

“Wait, are you telling me you can find the exact location?”

Rolling her eyes, Lia says, “Yes.”

“Within less than a minute?”

“Yes.”

“And we will know exactly where on the earth it is?”

“Yes.”

“And it will teleport us to the location?”

“Yes…. wait what? *No!* Are you crazy?”

“Dammit! 2020’s technology was this close to impressing me,” Chris sighs.

“Okay, give me the stupid numbers,” Lia takes her phone out.

“25.0000° N, 71.0000° W”

Lia puts the coordinates in Google maps.

“It’s showing an ocean….”

Jacob goes and looks at the map and says, “It’s north Atlantic Ocean.”

“That is great! So, I froze some fishes and sharks, nothing huge. And by the way, if I had frozen a land then not only people who were in it, but also people who go there would’ve paused,” Chris says.

“So, all the fishes and sharks probably got unfrozen now, right?” Jacob asks and Chris nods. Lia is still trying to figure out the location.

Chris gets up, goes to his refrigerator and opens it. “Aaah! Look at these grapes. I remember bargaining with the shopkeeper a few hours ago, can’t believe it’s been a hundred years since then.”

“OH MY GOD!” Lia screams all of a sudden.

“What?”- “What’s the matter?” Chris and Jacob say.

“Oh my god this is bad. This is the location of *the Bermuda triangle!*”

Jacob’s eyes are wide again, “Holy shit, the location where so many aircrafts and ships disappeared?”

“That sounds like something my time machine would do. It probably froze everything that entered the area.”

Lia stands up, “You are a horrible person. So many people lost their loved ones because of you.” Chris goes to Lia and holds her hands, trying to calm her down and says, “I am so sorry kid, it was not my intention. I was just an ignored scientist and I wanted to prove my abilities to all. I never thought it would come to this….”

They all don’t speak a word. Then Christ adds, “And the people who disappeared, they are not dead. They probably got unfrozen when you two broke the remote…. So, don’t worry,” he casually opens the fridge and takes the grapes out to wash them.

“Oh, my freaking god! Jacob! Turn on the news on your iPad for god’s sake.”

“Why are you freaking out Lia?” Chris innocently asks.

“You seem a little too dumb to be a scientist,” says Lia.

Jacob hurriedly opens the news on his iPad.

The news says, “Two aircrafts and a boat that went missing in the Bermuda triangle has returned. The most bizarre thing is that none of the passengers who disappeared have aged. Even the ones who were in the military flight that got lost in 1951 are as young as when they disappeared….”

Chris sits down on the sofa, looks at Jacob and Lia and says, “… oops!”