Rebecca woke up feeling slightly different this morning. She couldn’t quite put her finger on it, but the world seemed brighter and clearer. Chalking it up to just a good night’s sleep, she emerged from her bed and started getting ready for work. She put on a nice dress, chose flats over high heels, and ate a bagel.

As she got into her car, she began thinking about her plans for the weekend. It was Friday, and that meant that it was time to party. After a long, stressful week, Rebecca always appreciated the opportunity to let loose. Unfortunately, Rebecca had just moved to a new city, and didn’t know anyone yet. “Maybe I could ask the girl at the cubicle in front of me,” she thought. “She looks young enough to know how to have fun.” She pulled out of the parking lot and continued this internal dialogue as she entered the freeway.

Suddenly, while trying to merge into another lane, a car came out of nowhere and was about to hit Rebecca! She panicked, and instead of swerving away, reflexively put her hands up. But she did not crash. When she looked up, the car had stopped moving – as had all the other cars on the freeway. As had Rebecca’s.

She looked around at the people, trying to figure out why traffic had suddenly stopped. They were all going 60 miles per hour before, why would a traffic jam suddenly form? It was then she realized: the people weren’t moving either. Two cars down, a mother had reached over to pick up her child’s dropped toy, and she was frozen in that position. The driver of the car she almost collided with had a determined look on his face and his foot on the gas pedal. She rolled down the window and looked up. A bird was hovering up in the sky, unmoving, yet still in the air. It was as if time had completely stopped.

Bewildered, Rebecca stepped out of the car to survey her surroundings. She looked down at her hands. “Did I do this?” she asked aloud. “Looks like it,” said a voice. She jumped. Standing in the middle of traffic was a man, no older than 30. “You… you can move?” she asked. “Of course I can,” the man replied, “because I, too, can control time.” Rebecca approached the man, yearning to learn more about her newfound abilities. “Why did this happen? What does it mean?” She had so many questions. “You’ll find out,” he said, and winked. “But now… you have to act. Your powers are new, so you will not be able to keep time frozen forever. Look at your predicament. You must figure out how to avoid the collision before time resumes, or you and the driver will both be gravely injured.”

“Couldn’t I just stand off to the side and watch, and not be injured?” she asked. “You could,” replied the man, “but then your vehicle would be ruined, and many more drivers would be harmed.” Rebecca pondered this, realizing that the man was correct. She got back into her car and maneuvered it so that she was side-by-side with the other driver. “There. Now when time resumes, I will just attempt to switch lanes again, and wait for him to pass.”

“Good work,” said the man. “You can resume time now, if you concentrate. We will meet again.” “But when? How? How will I know where to find you?” asked Rebecca. “Don’t worry about it,” replied the man. “I will find you when the time is right.” Rebecca opened her mouth to ask more questions, but the man had disappeared. She was bewildered. “What happened? Did he teleport? Can I teleport too? Maybe he just travelled through time? How do I do that? How did I get these powers?” Numerous questions raced through her mind. But the man was right – she had to get out of traffic, first, and she had to get to work. For a split second, she was worried she was going to be late – but then she remembered time was not moving. She sighed in relief.

Worried her calmness would start time again, she raced back to her car and got in the driver’s seat. She put her foot back on the gas, trying to estimate where it would have been before, and imagined the freeway buzzing with life. It worked.

Time suddenly resumed. Her gas pedal estimate was a little too strong, and she had to brake suddenly to stop herself from rear ending the other driver. The driver to her left sped off, as he was doing before.