

Tingyo Chang

Professor Daniel Tiffany

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Time Travel in NYC

When it rains in New York City, it feels like the entire world is winking at you. This is what I remember thinking to myself as I stood on the corner of Broadway and 34th Street, facing the otherworldly glimmer of NYC and the Empire State on the last day of my senior trip.

Following an exhausting week of finals, sports championships, and club meetings, my best friends and I took a red-eye flight to New York for a whirlwind weekend of sightseeing. But only under the April downpour of our last night in the city did I feel like I was truly seeing New York and ourselves for the first time. The rain seemed to illuminate a new world around me, encouraging me to commit to memory the neon lights flashing a path of fluorescence toward the bright star of the Empire State, the iridescent shimmer of puddles spilling into gutters, the sound of cars rushing by, honking, people shouting and laughing and crying out. In the midst of the city's wondrous disarray, I could still hear the quiet snap of a camera as my friends, Lily and Olivia, tried desperately to capture the city's ever-beating pulse. I felt like I was on a carousel of sensations, my eyes flitting between the different sights so quickly that the crowd of umbrellas in the distance blurred into a single colorful paint stroke. Each raindrop seemed to spotlight a new gem of city life, uncovering a cosmopolitan universe my suburban teenage self had only ever dreamed of witnessing.

And somehow, the spaces between the raindrops also felt like they encased a gem of our familiar childhood memories. The secluded awning we huddled under to get out of the rain was

so reminiscent of the sheltered and quiet street we grew up on. The smell of damp concrete brought us back to a simpler time when rainy days meant indoor recess and watching movies at lunchtime. It was in this heartstopping combination of familiarity and unfamiliarity that I could have sworn I was seeing both into the past and the future. Flickering in front of my eyes was the memory of me, Lily, and Olivia at twelve years old as we discussed some hypothetical senior trip in our impossibly far-off, endless future. And when my current reality flickers back into place, I remember I am standing on the opposite side of the country in a torrential downpour of rain our California selves had never experienced before. In this present-day reality, the three of us are standing in a whole new world in a whole new city, running around at midnight because we're eighteen now and we're too old to have a curfew anymore. One more flicker and I can see that even in my present moment, I too am becoming a memory for some other, hypothetical, far-off-in-the-distance self to look back on. Perhaps a moment of beauty is enough to transport you across time, to pull you back into the past, and to give you a glimpse of your future.

When I look back on photos from that night, I laugh. The photos are blurry because we were laughing while taking them, and in them, our hair is soaked through, our makeup running. But, we're smiling so wide we look like our twelve-year-old selves again. Each time I tug the memory out to reminisce on, I feel an increasing warmth for that moment in time. We may each recall a different set of details – maybe Lily caught a whiff of someone else's cigarette or Olivia noticed how round the moon was that night – but I know they too recall the flickering of the past and future from that night. Now separated by time zones and thousands of miles, when we call on the phone we throw around ideas of another hypothetical senior trip in our impossibly far-off, endless future because maybe a sudden downpour of rain in NYC really is the world's way of winking at you, saying with a twinkle in its eye that you've grown up so much, that you still

have so much growing to do. And we can't wait to get caught in the rain again to see how much time has passed between then and now.