

This story is in honour of my daughter's school being in the middle of a seismic upgrade that is due to be completed in 2017, which will also be Canada's 150th.

Christmas Story 2015

Mr. Smith's Distortion

Sunday May 24, 1964

Lighthouse Park, West Vancouver

He could see the glow in the east; it was the pre-dawn glimmer. Exhausted, he sat on a rocky outcrop, not far from the Lighthouse. He was dirty and shivering from his exertions much further up the mountain in West Vancouver.

Bryan's view east to Vancouver was spectacular. He'd come down to the park and, in the dark, trudged to the shore, guided by a weak flashlight and a bright moon. He'd hoped the sunlight would literally and psychologically warm him.

In taking a mental inventory of his actions, he realized that hiding a body in the mountains, with any reasonable hope that animals would not disturb the remains, was much more difficult than first imagined.

What kept shooting into his mind, like a spasm, was the image of her taking that drink. Back at his apartment, Bryan had brought out all the sweet drinks for them to enjoy in bed, but it was the amaretto that did it.

She was so perfect, so beautiful, so wonderfully naked and then – he assumed – it was the almond in the liqueur that knotted her throat. Anaphylaxis; she was dead before he could perform any kind of first aid.

He held his head as the first rays of sunlight revealed his sweaty and dirty body. What had his options been? He was her History teacher. But it wasn't his fault, he reasoned. No one knew where she was. Her parents were a joke – drunks who didn't care.

He moved to head back onto the path to his car. He had to establish his alibi, clean up the apartment, wash himself – maybe a swim on Second Beach – and carry on. He was sad. Would he ever find another?

Friday December 8, 2017

Basement Suite 2201 Balsam Street Vancouver

7:30 AM

Terry's phone rang. Lydia's ringtone was the Bernard Herrmann theme to 1962's *Cape Fear*, which was suitably dramatic and, to Terry's preference, obscure. And considering almost no one ever actually called a person any more, it was rare to hear.

He sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes and answered. "Yes?"

"Are you awake?" she asked.

"I am now."

"I have a huge favour to ask."

"Go on."

"I really want to go to the dance tonight at school and I don't want to go just with Portia and I want to go with a friend and if it's not you what kind of friend would I be taking? I mean we are best friends, right?"

"So, you're worried I'll say no."

"Uh, duh."

"What makes you want to go to a school dance now, when you used to think the whole thing was ludicrous?"

"Well, it's our last year. This will be the school gym's first dance since the Rebuild, and it occurred to me that it would be sad to have never have gone to a dance in high school."

To say no to his oldest friend was not much of an option. Of course Terry didn't want to **show** that he'd do almost anything for her.

"Do I have to wear clothes?"

"Yes," she said. "Clean clothes."

"No special garments or accoutrements?"

"No, it's a semi-formal which means you just should not look like a dirt bag."

"I will have to do laundry."

"It's a Pro D; no school; you have time. I also want you to ask Pash to escort Portia to the dance."

"Pash. Seriously? Why him?"

"Portia wants to go with someone who doesn't realistically expect to sleep with her."

"Ah." Portia was the 'it' girl of Pentland Secondary, BFFs with Lydia, socially connected across all cliques and liked by all. She was pretty without being over the top. Pash, Terry's friend from his elementary years, was a geeky South Asian with a kind heart but a relentless nerdiness.

"I'm sure he'll understand the restrictions on the offer. I'll call him and warn him, but Portia should call herself. He might think I'm kidding."

"Do you want me to pick you up this evening?" Terry added.

"No, Portia and I will make a grand entrance. You worry about Pash."

Terry rose from bed and started organizing laundry.

Friday December 8, 2017

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7 PM

Terry arrived at the school and was looking for Lydia and Portia. He had told Pash to meet him here, but he had not shown up yet. It was a mild concern for Terry as Pash was typically on-time.

Then Lydia and Portia arrived. They whooshed through the front doors, attempting a grand entrance, but their giggling dimmed the effect. But they looked great. Portia was always 100% fashionable and glamorously wore the seasonal LBD (Little Black Dress). Lydia was in a royal blue mid thigh dress that showed both her muscles (she was a chronic soccer/track competitor) and her curves.

Terry saw this vision along with a memory of skinny-soaking-wet-crying-Lydia from preschool, who had taken a tumble in the water park.

"Lydia. Portia. You both look wonderful. I am glad I actually washed before leaving the apartment."

Portia was a hugger. "Where's Pash?" she asked as she squeezed the breath out of Terry.

"Late, apparently," said Terry. "I'll have him executed later. He was **very** excited at the idea of being your companion."

"Let's go check out the decorations in the gym," said Portia.

"I'll hang here until Pash arrives. I'll text him again," said Terry.

Terry fiddled with his phone as other people arrived for the dance. Suddenly, standing beside him was a young man dressed as an airman of the World War II era. One of Terry's father's obsessions, apart from beer, was World War II.

"Wow. I had no idea this was a costume dance," said Terry.

"I'm Flight Lieutenant Jonathon Reynolds. I went here when I was a child. It was a lot different then."

"When was that?"

"1938. Time is short," said the Flight Lieutenant. "I need to show you something," He grabbed Terry's wrist.

October 11, 1943

Over Germany, 150 km north of Berlin

Terry had a sense of nausea and then he realized he was crouched in a Lancaster bomber which, judging by the ridiculous noise level, was in flight.

"What the hell?"

"You are in my Lancaster October 11, 1943."

"Uh, OK. Er, why? Were these things really this loud?"

"Listen carefully. Someone from your year, 2017, is manipulating time. It's for evil reasons, but it gives me a chance. We're getting close. Write this down: latitude 53.4198 and longitude 12.7383. Müritz. It took me many years to figure out the location."

Terry took out his phone. "Give me the numbers again." Once he had the numbers he asked, "Is that you up in the cockpit?"

"Yes."

"What is going on?"

"I'm about to die. Your ... device now has the location of me and my crew. Have someone find us and bury us properly."

"74 years later?"

"Yes. Promise me you'll find us."

"Uh, I promise," said Terry. He wasn't sure who was going to believe him when he tried to tell people that a ghost from the 1940s had told him about the location of the watery grave for a Lancaster crew.

"Get ready," said Flight Lieutenant Reynolds.

"For what?"

Anti-aircraft fire struck the Lancaster. Terry saw the pilots struck by flying metal. Metal seemed to fly everywhere, including *through* him. Here, *he* was the ghost.

"We can go now. I've seen this before."

Friday December 3, 1965

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7:10 PM

They were back at the school, but in the old gym. Pentland Secondary had just completed its seismic upgrade. Therefore, from Terry's view, this part of the school had been knocked down two years ago.

A live band was playing "Day Tripper" by the Beatles.

"Uh, this isn't my ... year."

"I know. As you likely noticed, the Lancaster went down as the sun was setting. We crashed in Müritz Lake. No one saw us. That's why we haven't been found."

Terry looked at the kids in the gym. Some were formally dressed and some were clearly edging their way towards Hippy Land.

"Now it's December 1965. The problem I face is you have to live through the night to release the information on your ... device."

"It's an iPhone." Terry was impressed that the latitude/longitude data was still there. It seemed odd to imagine it working under such disembodied conditions. "So, this whole 'live through the night' statement is giving me some anxiety. Want to elaborate? And what does 1965 have to do with anything?"

"There's a teacher," said Reynolds. "He likes a certain type of student in ways that are not right. Look in the corner of the gym. Just wait for that really big kid to move."

Terry waited for the enormous lad to move and looked. It was a teacher all right. Young, but still too old to be dancing with the student at all, let alone the way he was dancing. Too intense. Hips too close. She was short, curvy and seemed almost blank-faced. "In thrall" was an obscure science fiction-y term that came to Terry's head.

"Oh dear. The big student sees us," says to Reynolds.

The 6-foot-4 football player-sized student approached them.

"Hi. Who're you guys?"

Terry reached out his hand and was surprised that he was as tangible as the big student. "I'm Terry, from the 21st century. And you?"

"They call me Moose. I'm the bouncer. What kind of crazy talk is this?"

"Moose? Seriously?"

"I'm Flight Lieutenant Reynolds. We're just passing through." Reynolds grabbed Terry's wrist and they were gone.

Friday December 2, 1977

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7:10 PM

There was now no band playing. Big speakers were piping in taped music. Terry recognized the end of "Don't Fear the Reaper" by Blue Oyster Cult.

"Would you **please** tell me what the hell you're doing?"

When the Flight Lieutenant turned to Terry, he could tell that the pilot had aged somewhat. And his uniform was fraying.

"That Moose fellow could see us. Interesting. He didn't seem like the sensitive type. This is 1977. I'm trying to let you learn about this temporal knot we're in so that you can escape."

"OK. That makes **no** sense. Why me, anyway?"

"Good Lord, man. You **are** the smartest student in the school, yes? In my experience fear is only controllable through intelligence and focus."

The next song was "Get up and Boogie" by the Silver Convention.

"O boy; Disco. Can we go now?"

"Look on the dance floor," said Reynolds. "What do you see?"

"That same teacher. He hasn't aged – this is 12 years later, right? – and the girl is different, but not a lot different," said Terry.

"He has a *type*, doesn't he?"

A young black student, who stood out from the sea of white faces (with a small mix of Asian) saw them and looked at them quizzically.

"We have another observer," said Reynolds. "Time to go."

Friday December 7, 1984

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7:10 PM

"It's My Life" by Talk Talk was now on the gym speakers.

"OK. At least we're past Disco." Terry was starting to become quite concerned with Reynolds. He was stooping and positively grey. "Uh, are you OK?"

"I'm running out of the energy that I stole from Mr. Smith's temporal distortion."

"Mr. Smith?"

"Bryan Smith. Look in that same corner of the gym."

The same Mr. Smith from 1965, 1977 and now 1984 was dancing inappropriately with a student who was not the same as the others, but cut from the same cloth.

"Judging by the music, this is the mid-80s," said Terry.

"1984."

"Wouldn't that make him in his mid-forties?"

"Aging much better than me," said Reynolds. "But, he's not aging at all, is he? This is because he is, somehow, warping time."

Reynolds noticed Terry looking around the gym more closely than before.

"Looking for your parents?" asked Reynolds.

"Sort of. I have low expectations. I suspect my Dad is out back smoking and drinking with his friends and my Mother is probably in a dark corner trying to remove the jeans of some helpless boy."

A student, in about Grade 11, stopped in front of Reynolds. "This is a totally crazy get-up, man. Pity it's not Halloween."

Reynolds simply stared at him. Terry however recognized him from photographs. It was his Uncle John. Terry wanted to say something, but it was challenging to find something to say when you were looking at a dead man. Uncle John had died of an AIDS related illness in 1995.

"And who are you? Man, you look like my Grandfather from really old pictures."

"I get that a lot," said Terry.

Uncle John was called away by another friend.

"Was that a relative?"

"Yep. Uncle John. Like you, he's dead. But in his case he doesn't know it yet."

Reynolds feebly grasped Terry's wrist.

Friday December 3, 1993

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7:10 PM

Reynolds looked terrible. His uniform was in tatters, like it had decayed and his skin was flaking.

"There's not much time," he said. "Look in the corner."

The teacher, Smith, was slow dancing with another girl of that same type. So what was the count? Four? But the teacher **still** looked the same. Was it still the 80s? Duran Duran was coming

from the speakers with "Ordinary World". Terry remembered that was an early 90s hit. And judging from the way the kids were dressing, the Nirvana / Grunge influences were kicking in.

"It's 1993," mumbled Reynolds. "That teacher in fact no longer teaches at the school. He took early retirement. The year following the discovery of a body."

"He killed one of them?"

"I don't have full knowledge of the circumstances."

Terry couldn't help but listen to Simon Le Bon's voice.

But I won't cry for yesterday
There's an ordinary world
Somehow I have to find
And as I try to make my way
To the ordinary world
I will learn to survive

"It won't be a very ordinary world if you don't stop Smith," said Reynolds. "When you return to your time, you **must** escape the school and track down Smith in your time and stop him. He's warping time. You can't collapse decades upon each other and expect no consequences. People will die."

"How do you collapse time on itself? What's he got – a TARDIS?"

"I don't know what that is. But Smith is doing **something**."

A very intense Grunge styled student approached them.

"Who the fuck are you guys?"

Even Terry, who'd witnessed bad manners of all sorts both at home and at school, was taken aback at the fearlessness of this fellow. However, Terry – never short on smart-assed comebacks – said, "I'm The Pope and this is my bitch."

Grunge Boy, to Terry's surprise, held his ground. "This guy looks dead and it does **not** look like a fucking costume."

"There's no time," croaked Reynolds, "Go back and stop Smith. Remember the Lake Müritz coordinates."

"How do I get back?"

Reynolds abruptly turned toward Terry and, in full view of Grunge Boy, revealed his head wound from the Lancaster crash. "Go!"

Terry was so shocked and sickened, he fell over backward.

Friday December 8, 2017

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

7:15 PM

Two students helped Terry up. "What're you doing on the floor?" one asked.

"Uh, I was tired," said Terry. He looked about, relieved to be seeing his modern, overly glassed, school and not a past version. He grabbed his phone and found the entry in the Notes app.

Lake Müritz 53.4198 12.7383.

"Damn, damn, damn," he said and ran off in the direction of the new gym. "Lydia!" he yelled. She heard him and she and Portia came into the hallway.

"What's with you?"

"We gotta go. We gotta go now. There's no time to explain."

Terry grabbed their hands and pulled them to run. Unsurprisingly they resisted. "What the hell?"

Then there was a deafening crunch. The windows of the school all turned black. The walls shook, as if being compressed. Then there was the screaming.

Terry watched as two students ran for the exit. When they opened the door and stepped outside, it was if they were suddenly incinerated, but with no smoke and no smell. The first was a boy, who was mostly out the door, howled and then quickly fell to pieces like a charcoal sculpture. The girl, his date, fell back into the school where others watched her writhe for a moment while the darkness from her arm and leg – those limbs that had made contact with the outside – grew to cover the rest of her body. She turned to ash.

"Holy shit!" said Portia.

The few remaining supervisors and students huddled against the wall, away from the doors.

"Is this an earthquake?" asked Lydia.

"I know what this is, but you won't believe me," said Terry.

In the wall next to them, a doorway opened. It was the size of a double door but shaped more like a cave entrance. It was pure white light, in contrast to the blackness showing from the windows to the outside. Coming from the light, Terry could hear the 1965 band playing "Day Tripper". Then the band suddenly stopped and the now familiar crunching noise could be heard. Without hesitation Terry stepped through.



Now back in 1965 he scanned the gym, which was now in the throes of its own pandemonium. However, in the corner Smith and the girl student still danced, oblivious. Terry started to walk toward them.

"You!" Moose grabbed Terry by the shirt. "What the hell have you done?"

"It's not me. Let go."

The next thing Moose knew was that a 5-foot-7 girl in a blue dress and bare feet was executing a Taekwondo Jump Spin Kick that landed the heel of her foot on his chin. Terry was released and Lydia said, "Is this ??"

"Yes, it's the old gym. It's 1965."

Moose rose to his feet with rage in his eyes.

"Listen. Wait. It's Mr. Smith. The teacher. We have to get him and his ... girlfriend over there back to our time."

Moose simply glowered.

The gym ceiling was starting to drop tiles on them.

"Help us grab them and we go back through the light. Please please," said Terry.

"**That** teacher?" asked Moose.

"Yes. The pilot guy I was with told me. You remember him?"

Moose stomped across the gym floor and grabbed the oblivious pair by the shirt and blouse respectively and marched them over.

"How do you know this guy?" asked Lydia.

"I don't. I saw him when I was here before. We have to get out of here then I can explain." Terry led Moose, his prisoners and Lydia through the portal.



"OK, what was **that**?" asked Portia.

Moose let go of his prisoners and gaped at the new school.

"And who the hell are these people?" yelled Portia.

"Portia, Lydia listen. These people are from 1965. The older one is a teacher. He's causing this problem. We are being compressed by at least 5 different eras. Can you talk to the girl and try to get her name? If I'm right, this teacher – he'd be in is late 70s today – is doing this."

"Are you insane?" asked Lydia.

"No," said Moose. "You have a hell of a kick girl. Some kind of kung-fu?"

"Taekwondo."

"I saw him in my time. What year is this anyway?"

"2017. It doesn't matter," said Terry. The flight lieutenant told me we had to stop him on the outside. But we can't get out.

"That teacher is a scumbag," said Moose.

"Why?"

"I think you girls will understand when a teacher has his pets. Girl pets."

"Ewww," said Portia and Lydia at the same time.

Down the hall, another white shimmering cave-shaped portal opened.

Terry ran to it. He heard the strains of Talk Talk and walked right through.

"What the hell?" said Lydia.

"I'll go get him," said Moose. "You guys watch this pair."

Lydia and Portia stared at 1965 Smith as he pulled the girl student to him and started slow dance to music no one but he heard.

"I think I'm gonna barf," said Portia.



In 1984, Terry ran toward the corner of the gym where 1984 Smith and his choice of student were dancing. Moose was close on his heels, yelling, "Wait for me!"

The roof in this decade was also coming apart and students were screaming running for exits, where many were meeting painful disintegration.

Terry was happy to have Moose's help. 1984 Smith pushed back. Moose clocked him hard in the face and Terry grabbed the hand of the girl.

As they turned to head back to the portal, Terry's Uncle John stood in their way.

Talk Talk's "It's my Life" was still playing.

"If you don't want your face busted, get out of the way," said Moose.

"If you want to live, come through that portal. Pick **one**," said Terry, "Now."



In 2017, Uncle John said, "Wow, nice layout." At that moment there was another crunching sound and everyone was ducking for cover. The building groaned. Terry noticed that the portals were decreasing in size. He hadn't thought about it before, but he couldn't help but think it would be bad if anyone touched the portal mouth edges.

Lydia was staring at Uncle John. "Is this ... "

"Yes," said Terry. "It is. Uncle John, please meet my friend Lydia."

"Uncle John?" he asked.

"Yes. You are the younger brother of my father, Sam. It's 2017 now so that explains why you are younger than me. See the teacher clones over there? A 2017 version of them is controlling all this somehow. I was supposed to get out of this building before it all came apart."

"That's nuts," said Uncle John. "The guy we pulled out looks like Mr. Smith, but is a lot younger."

"Terry," said Lydia. "Tell me you have a plan."

"I don't have a plan; I have a theory. If 2017 Smith is outside controlling this, parts of him – think Voldemort in *Harry Potter* – are inside these semi comatose younger versions."

"You used a Harry Potter reference," said Portia.

"Desperate times," said Terry. "I figure if we gather them together, we might be able to sort something out."

"Did you know that Mr. Smith was messing with students?" asked Moose. He was talking to Uncle John.

"Uh. Rumours for sure."

"Do you know that girl we brought back from 1984?" asked Moose.

"I know her to see her."

"Hey Portia," said Terry. "I have a favour to ask. Can you update Uncle John here on HIV safety standards for the late 20th and early 21st centuries?"

"Health Class to the rescue!" said Portia.

"Er, uh,"

"Don't be embarrassed, Uncle John," said Terry. "Your life might depend on it."

"Also, move the girls away from The Smiths," said Terry. "Portia, when you're done with Uncle John, can you talk to the girls and see what you can find out? Like, who the heck are they?"

As Portia took John away, Lydia asked, "Aren't you worried that you'll mess with the timeline?"

"I thought about that and, since I think The Smiths here have done temporal damage already, I don't see how I can make it worse. And, if the universe gives me a chance to save a blood relative from a disgusting death, I don't see why I should not embrace the chance. However, this will all be meaningless if we can't figure a way out. I'm assuming all cell phones are not working, not just mine. What about networks?"

Left in the immediate area were Fernando and Stefan, grades 11 and 10 respectively, who were reasonably tek-savvy. By examining phones, breaking into the school office, and hacking an aging PC, they realized that the clocks on all the devices were constantly jumping around within a 12-hour period for Friday December 8, 2017, the day in 2017 people thought of as today. With the clocks constantly changing, they only had a couple of minutes at a time to use the Internet before the signal reset.

Portia provided names for the girls from 1965 and 1984, which were Dani and Samantha. When they did Google searches for them, there was very little. No LinkedIn profiles, nothing on Facebook. They tried an obituary search. Samantha from 1984 looked like she'd passed away in the 1990s. The reference was very short but it seemed to indicate substance abuse.

Down the hall, Terry heard a voice calling "Hey, another portal opened!"

"What's the music like?"

"Disco. Gross."

"OK, I have to go."

"Wait," said Lydia. "You have to figure a way out of this. I can go."

"No, no, no," said Terry.

"Why not?"

"OK. Uh, you know when I told you that I didn't apply to those mini schools with the upgraded math and science programs because my parents wouldn't sign the applications? I figure you know by now that I was lying, right?"

"Yes. I had no doubt you could get around that if you wanted."

"Did you ever figure out why?"

Lydia looked blankly at him.

"Until we met in pre-school, I had never felt safe. And, I have never met anyone else I feel safe with. So I went to school where you went to school. If you had moved to Mongolia, I'd have moved too."

"So, you're telling me you love me?"

"Er. Yeah, I guess so."

Lydia slapped him really hard. "This is **not** the time to tell me. This whole in-the-face-of-death confession is so *Pirates of the Caribbean*. And you hate those movies."

"Ow."

"I'm going, and when I get back we're having a **proper** conversation."

"Moose, take Lydia to the 70s. Make sure **nothing** happens to her."

"Yes boss," said Moose.

"And look for the lone black guy there. He saw me and the Flight Lieutenant and looked like he might be able to help."

Lydia and Moose were gone. "I pity the poor idiots who try to get in their way."

"Fernando ... Stefan. Do we know which device has the best and longest connection to the Internet? I'd like to be able to call for help even though I'm not sure who to contact and how to describe this."

Another portal opened behind Terry. He could hear Duran Duran. "That's the 90s," said Terry.

"But it's Duran Duran," said Stefan.

"Trust me on temporal distortions and musicology," said Terry.

Another crunch and groan happened. All the portals started to shrink and the building shook. Cracks started to appear in the walls.

"Uncle John! We're headed to the 90s. Stefan and Fernando, you are on guard duty."



As soon as Terry and John stepped through the portal, Terry realized things were worse than he had seen previously. The darkness that was turning people into ash was crashing through the walls. Terry grabbed John and they ran toward 1993 Smith and his female victim.

Suddenly the music changed. The PA switched to Cold Play's "Clocks".

That's not 1993, Terry thought. More like mid 2000s.

Then an entire other copy of the school gym crashed through a wall at an impossible angle, dumping students from 2005 onto the floor of the 1993 gym.

They grabbed the still dazed 1993 Smith and girl and started running to the portal. Grunge Boy saw them. "You again!"

"Come on!" yelled Terry, "We have a way out!"

A friend of Grunge Boy followed but as they hustled through the portal, it contracted and the friend's shoulder was hit by the portal's perimeter. He screamed and started to fade to ash. Grunge Boy was stunned, half way through the portal. Terry and John grabbed his arm and hauled him through.



"What's your name?" asked Terry.

"Seb ... Sebastian." His senses were on overload. The new school structure was disorienting and the group of three identical Mr. Smiths was not helping.

"Welcome to 2017."

"Hi sweetheart," said Portia, grabbing the new girl's hand and leading her away, "Let me just introduce you to some girls you have a lot in common with."

"Mr. Smith, I'd like you to sit over here please," said Fernando.

"Terry, that's a lot of bad noises coming from the door there," said Portia.

"The other time zones are literally coming to pieces. Where's Lydia and Moose?"

"Not back yet."

Terry trotted down the hall. He could not imagine 1977 being better off than 1993. He noticed the portal to 1965 was nearly collapsed.

He stared at the portal. Go in? Or wait?

Then he heard voices.

"Stay still you sonofabitch."

Through the portal came Moose and the black student, whose name was Leon. Moose came through wrestling with 1977 Smith. His female victim of the era was pushed through by Lydia and, as she was passing through, another compression crunch occurred that cracked the plaster in the ceiling. The collapse caused part of the portal to scrape against Lydia's ankle.

"No!" Terry pulled Lydia through.

"Shit that hurts," she said. She fell to the ground. Her foot was gone.

Terry sat on the floor with her, holding her tightly. "No no no." The darkness started creeping up her leg. "You can't go; you can't go; you can't."

"Terry listen," she said. "You can figure this out. If that freak is using time ... so can you." She changed to what looked like charcoal.

In another three seconds Terry was holding only ash.

By this point, Moose and Leon had restrained the rather aggressive 1977 Smith.

Terry stood and faced those around him. Portia was an utter mess, sobbing. Terry was homicidal. He leapt at the first Mr. Smith (1977 version) and started punching repeatedly. Then Terry shoved the teacher away from him in disgust. 1977 Smith slammed into two other Smiths. A flash of light blinded everyone and when eyes adjusted, there was only one Smith.

"You morons," said Smith. "Do you think this makes any difference?"

The combined Smith was more coherent and quite angry.

"Shut up you crack-licking maggot," said Terry, which he followed with, "Moose, hoof him in the balls, please."

A moment later, Mr. Smith was writhing in agony.

"If he tries to get up, kick him again," said Terry.

Sebastian, AKA Grunge Boy, approached Terry and said "You don't swear, but you are fucking mean."

"When I want to hear good swearing, all I do is ask my parents for money."

"This Mr. Smith," said Sebastian, "from my perspective, retired last year, looking a lot older."

"So?"

"It was the year following the discovery of a girl that had been missing from the school since 1964. A girl who looked a **lot** like these girls here."

The four girls, who were 15 and 16, were more animated than when initially rescued, but showed all the signs of survivors of abuse, with a haunted look and skittish body language.

"What was her name?" asked Moose.

"Pauline ... um, something French," said Sebastian. "They found her in a makeshift grave in West Van, north of Lighthouse Park. New housing project uncovered her."

"Brazeau?" asked Moose.

"Yeah."

"You bastard," Moose lifted Bryan Smith from the ground, slammed him against a wall and put his arm against his throat. The school started to shake and plaster was falling.

"It was an accident," the teacher gasped.

"And I suppose she buried herself in that grave," said Sebastian.

"Put him down," said Terry. "I don't think killing this, er, incarnation of this scumbag is going to help us get out of here."

"No one gets out of here; this goes on forever," said Smith.

The black student from 1977 walked in between Terry and Smith and guided Terry away. "Hi. I say ignore the weird veiled threats from the psycho, OK? My name is Leon."

Leon then beckoned to Portia. "Hey girl, what's your name?"

"Portia. Did you say Leon?"

"Yeah. Now you two seem to be in charge, despite it all, and I'd like to help. You certainly have had a trauma. And, Terry, you're the guy I saw with that WWII guy, right?"

"Yeah. Huh."

"I'm positive, Leon, I know you. What's your last name?" asked Portia.

"Cameron. I've got two first names for a first and last name."

"Portia, you're right, it's him."
 "Him, what?" asked Leon.
 "Nevermind," said Terry. "We're running out of time. Let me just tell you that same sex marriage rights are legalized in Canada in the 2000s. So your upcoming activism won't be wasted. Assuming we can fix this."
 "Don't be a tease," said Leon.
 "I'm not in the teasing mood," said Terry "I'm in a figure-this-out-before-we-all-die mood."
 Then Terry took a couple of seconds to look at Portia. He'd always liked Portia because she never took her popularity for granted. And of course because Lydia liked her. Her makeup was a mess from crying and as she looked at him, she was welling up again.
 "Where's Pash?" Terry asked suddenly.
 "Who's Pash?" said Leon.
 "Pash was supposed to be Portia's date. He didn't make it to the school."
 "What kind of name is Pash?"
 "It's a nickname," said Portia. "He's South Asian and has a long complicated name but his mother made a fortune making and distributing pashminas. (I have a few; they're gorgeous.) But, **someone**," she was looking at Terry, "nicknamed him Pash."
 "What if he didn't come to the dance because he was busy saving our lives?" asked Terry.
 "If that was the case, I'd forgive him for standing me up."
 "Stefan! Fernando! I have an idea."
 The two younger boys ran toward Terry.
 "From that desktop computer, we still have network access?"
 "Yes," they said.
 "But still the clock is changing," said Terry.
 "Yes," said Fernando. "It seems to be jumping around faster."
 "What I want to do is record a short video on my phone and then email it to Pash's phone."
 "If we compressed the video file, it might get to him before the clock changed," said Fernando.
 "We have to pick a clock time after 9 AM so that he has time to help us," said Terry.
 "Got it. You record something short and we'll get ready."
 "Portia," said Terry, "help me."
 Terry set the phone to record them selfie-style and he started. "Pash. There's a problem. We're stuck in the school. An ex-teacher named Bryan Smith – he's in his late 70s – is creating a time distortion that's killing us. I know that sounds crazy, but the school is being destroyed." Terry briefly panned the phone's lens around the mess behind him. "Lydia is **already dead**."
 Portia started to cry.
 "Find Bryan Smith. Bryan spelled with a Y. Make him stop whatever he's doing. And **don't** come to the school."
 "Be careful," said Portia. "The guy is ... bad. We think he murdered a student named Pauline Brazeau in 1964." She started to wipe her eyes.
 "Remember: Find Smith. Stop him. Don't come to the school," said Terry. "And don't fuck this up."
 He stopped the recording.
 Terry handed the phone to Fernando. "Let me know when you compress the file."
 "Wow, dude, you swore," said Sebastian.
 Terry turned to him. "I'm so glad you're happy. Pash has known me for years and has heard me swear, like, twice. The risk is that he'll think this video is a prank."
 "Oh."
 "Yes, 'oh'.
 "File's compressed!"
 Terry walked into the room where the computer was. Fernando showed him the file folder. Since he had to use webmail, he'd have to log in, attach the file and send it very fast. He watched the rapidly changing clock. When it read 9:12 AM, his fingers flew over the keyboard and he pressed send.
 "Now what?"
 "No idea."

Friday December 8, 2017

#22 Bus, Vancouver

9:15 AM

Pash was looking at his phone and saw a new email from Terry. He had his headset on already, so he watched the video. Once, twice, then three times.

Pash got off the bus. He had never seen Terry so scared and, despite Terry's tendency to fool around, he didn't pick up any sense of fun in the video. No vibe of a prank. Plus, he *swore*.

At a nearby coffee shop, Pash pulled out his tablet computer and connected to the Wi-Fi. Time to research Bryan Smith.

For the next three hours, Pash did deep searches of all sites that he could think of. Mr. Smith had a very light Internet presence. He researched Pauline Brazeau, which was an unsolved missing person's case of a Pentland Secondary student. On a couple of social media sites there were references to a predator teacher, but it was vague. Smith had retired before the Internet had gone big, which reduced his online footprint. He was, apparently, married. A notion that struck Pash as odd given the circumstances.

In the end all he had was a location. Smith's residence was now Vancouver Senior Terraces, which was within walking distance of the school.

Friday December 8, 2017

Vancouver Senior Terraces

3:15 PM

Pash quietly entered the facility. He was starting to feel silly. If it wasn't for the feeling of authenticity from the video, he would have given up by now and declared it a prank. However, Pash was also seriously curious. Could some guy in a senior's home be manipulating time?

He had bought a poinsettia to make him look like he was a legitimate visitor and quietly located the room. He placed the poinsettia on the tray-table that would later hold Smith's dinner.

The decor was freaky.

It looked like something from the recent *Dr. Strange* movie. There was a pillowing canopy over the bed, which felt like a tapestry. All over the walls were motifs from many cultures, some which Pash did not recognize. There was a constant low chiming. It reminded Pash of Buddhist meditation chimes, but the sound was warping as it played, like a Doppler effect. There of course was incense, coming from a vaporizer, but it smelled off to Pash. Mounted on the wall was a large crystal, with a blue light emitting from it that was shining on the face of the 77-year-old Bryan Smith.

Although the man did not look well, but was serenely lying on the bed. In contrast to the Sumerian, Hindu and Greek images, there was a Haida Dream Catcher dangling over his head. His eyes were rapidly moving under closed lids.

Pash did not know what to do. "Stop Smith," Terry had said. "Stop what?" Pash muttered, "being a New Age freak with no sense of cultural consistency?"

"Who are you?"

Pash spun around to see what could only be described as a Scary Old White Lady. The lines in her face told a story of misery. Her scowl would make a full-grown gorilla cry.

The fact that this was probably Smith's wife did nothing to reduce his fear.

Worse, when Pash had swung around, his backpack had knocked the poinsettia onto Smith in his bed.

"What have you done?"

"Oh shit, let me help."

As Pash tried to pick up the poinsettia and the dirt, he knocked the Dream Catcher off its string. Smith's wife started screaming. Smith himself started convulsing.

"Get out of the way!"

Pash moved, saw the glowing crystal and had a moment of pure intuition. He jumped up, grabbed the glowing crystal and ran. If anything was causing Terry's trouble, it was the freaky blue glowing crystal with no sign of a power source.

Pash had never run so fast in his life. Within eight blocks, he was by the water. Panting, he sat on a park bench and looked at English Bay on a cold pre winter day. From inside his coat, he pulled out the crystal. Its glow was fading and turning to a dull blue.

"If this doesn't qualify for Terry, I'm going to kill him myself."

Then a calm darkness overcame Pash.

Friday December 8, 2017

Pentland Secondary School, Vancouver

Time Unknown

Terry paced the hall. It had been five minutes since the email was sent. Two compressions had occurred and more pieces of ceiling structure fell. Smith sat and scowled at them. Moose watched, foot ready.

"How're we supposed to know if that mail you sent worked?"

It occurred to Terry that Moose would have been a student before the term email had been coined.

"No idea," Terry replied.

Then Smith started to convulse.

"What the ..." said Moose.

"Couldn't happen to a nicer guy," said Sebastian.

Smith was starting to turn blue, but not just as a result of choking. His body and his clothes were turning blue.

Then the hallways at the end of their sightline turned utterly black. It was not just lights going out.

Terry turned to Moose. "If you get back to 1965, you stop this bastard. Do what you have to do. We can't let him do this to these girls. It doesn't matter that we might change history or I might never exist as a result of you doing something. He has to go. For decades no one stepped up. No one protected them when everyone had an obligation to help."

Terry and Moose looked over their shoulders. They were watching people being engulfed in darkness. Sebastian, Portia, the girl victims, Uncle John, Fernando, Stefan and Leon ... all swallowed up.

Terry and Moose shook hands, said "good luck" and it was done.

Friday December 8, 2017

Basement Suite 2201 Balsam Street Vancouver

9:15 AM

Terry's phone rang. Lydia's ringtone, *Cape Fear*, caused him to sit bolt upright and grab his phone. "Lydia? Are you all right?"

"I was going to ask you the same thing."

"The school. Temporal distortions; you went to 1977."

"Yes."

"But ... it's the *morning* of all that."

"I'm coming over. We need to talk." And she hung up.

Terry put on clothes and decided to check his phone. **Latitude 53.4198 and longitude**

12.7383 Müritz was stored in the notes.

His phone rang; it was Pash. "Hey," said Terry.

"Hey you, man. What the hell was **that**? I woke up remembering something happening at a time today that hasn't happened yet and you sending me this **fucked up** video."

"You still have it."

"Yeah I still have it. It's messed up stuff, but I have it."

"Lydia's coming over. You come over too."

"What do I do about this crystal?"

"What crystal?"

"What do you mean – what crystal? Jeezus I'm coming over."

"That's what I told you." And they hung up.

"Terry!" yelled his mother from the other room. "Your idiot Uncle John is here."

At least my mother is still a total bitch, thought Terry.

Into his room came Uncle John. He was older, but very alive.

"You remembered what Portia said."

"Hard to forget."

"What do you remember?"

"Everything, but as a dream, basically. I've been waiting for this day for a chance to thank you."

"What about Mom and Dad?"

"Sadly, they're still assholes. Bred to the bone."

Terry realized he had a dual set of memories. One life with Uncle John and one without.

"Terry!" yelled his Mother. "Lydia and Portia are at the door. What the hell is going on?"

"Send them in!"

"Who the hell are you?" they heard in the distance. There was yet another person at the door with further commotion. "Pash! Take your goddamn shoes off."

Lydia and Portia came into Terry's room. Lydia and Terry hugged. Portia approached Uncle John. "It's **you**," she said.

"Yes, aged, but me. You I also have to thank you." And Uncle John hugged Portia.

They all felt the presence of a large lumbering man with a cane, aged about 70, enter the room. "This is quite the reunion."

"Moose," said Terry.

"That's Mr. Livingstone to you, kid."

"I never heard your real name."

Terry looked at Moose's damaged leg. It looked like an old injury. "What happened?"

At this point Pash entered the room and saw everyone.

Moose limped over and shook Pash's hand. "You must be Pash. I assume you got Terry's message."

"Holy cow. Who're you?"

"Pash, just tell us what happened," said Terry.

Pash recounted his visit to the senior's home and showed them the crystal he stole.

"But this hasn't happened," said Pash.

"According to my studies," said Moose, "this is a classic paradox caused by me. Our friend Mr. Smith was unmoved when the police found Pauline's body, based on an anonymous tip. (One day I'll bore you with how long it took me to find Pauline's body.) Anyway, he showed no signs of remorse. The police could not make the connection."

Portia was scanning through search results on her phone and blurted out, "Smith died in 1966. Car crash."

Moose patted his bad leg. "Yeah, that hurt a lot."

"You were ... " said Terry.

"The other driver," said Moose. "Looks like you won't need to go to that senior's home, today Pash."

The entire room, except Uncle John who knew all this, stared at Moose.

"It's OK," said Uncle John. "He became a social worker."

"Hey," said Moose, "I nearly forgot." He pulled out an iPhone 7 and punched in a few numbers. He then pointed the screen on which Leon and Sebastian – both appropriately older – were waving. "Hi guys! It's great to see you," they called out.

Everyone said hi and cheered.

"Are you ready for the party tonight?" asked Leon.

"Haven't told them yet," said Moose. "Guys, we're having a kind of family reunion."

"Not at the school," said Terry.

"Good lord no. I've been saving up for over 50 years. We dine like kings tonight. Plus I figure you'll end up with severe PTSD if you go near the place tonight."

They sorted out the details of where they would meet later and, eventually, Terry got them out of the apartment. He said he needed to figure out how to tell the German government to locate a sunken Lancaster bomber in Lake Müritz. Lydia remained.

"Hey Lydia," said Terry. "Maybe we should go somewhere to talk? Can I buy you breakfast?"

"Yes and Yes," she said.