



By Rosequarts C.

A Christmas Rescue

Copyright © 2022 by Rosequarts C.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. This book is a work of Fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used factiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1..... 1

Chapter 2..... 13

Chapter 3..... 24

Chapter 1

[December 13 || 1pm]

IT was winter, and Christmas was approaching. Before December 16th and 17th, students and faculty at Hollow-End University would plan their Christmas celebration. Their calendar for those two days was jam-packed with enjoyable and stress-relieving activities.

First, the students had to arrange their respective classrooms for Christmas as a block section, while the faculty and staff prepared for the university's Christmas celebration at the ballroom.

According to reports, a limited selection of students was picked to perform at the Christmas celebration, and everyone was excited when they learned who those individuals were. Except for one kid, almost everyone knew who had been picked and could have predicted all of them.

One of them was a classmate of Lorraine's, and when learning about it, she was startled that he had been picked to perform. She knew the boy had the ability to create music, but dancing? Who knows?

One day, Lorraine was taking a seat and rested her head on her arms on her allocated table while the others were busy deciding what food to bring, what games to play, and who to choose for the exchange giving activity at the Christmas party on the 16th.

After falling asleep throughout the first two discussions, she felt a tap on her shoulder during the third. With sleepy eyes and a conscious body still groggy, her eyes squinted from the sudden change of brightness to her vision.

"Pick a student," the class secretary stated as she shook a black hat with shredded bits of folded paper inside in front of her.

She did as she was instructed to, reaching her right hand into the hat and swiftly picking up whichever paper she had originally rested her palm on.

"Once you've chosen a classmate, you may go home." She said after Lorraine's pull. The students, relieved that the day's lessons were finally over, eagerly set out to shop for their selected classmate's requested present. Seeing that, she hastily added, "But before you fully depart, remember to put your desired present on this list so the person who picked you knows what to purchase."

Before departing, the class did just that. Being the sleepyhead that she was, Lorraine chose to unroll the paper she was holding when she arrived back at her dorm. It was a secret Santa game, and she didn't want anyone to see who she had chosen. If that happened, it would no longer be a secret, would it?

As she stood up, she nudged her arm against the enormous backpack and carried it, ready to head back home. However, as she was on her way out, she had accidentally bumped into another classmate of hers. Though she couldn't quite see who she had bumped into at first due to her drowsiness, as she focused on the man in front of

her, her vision gradually became clear, revealing his identity. It was Hansol.

"I'm sorry," she said as she bowed.

"It's no worries; I should be the one apologizing," he said.

"Performance practice?" She wondered aloud, accidentally starting a conversation.

"Yeah," he said while nodding. "Are you planning to attend the Christmas party on the 17th?"

Students were not compelled to attend this campus Christmas celebration. So, it was up to them whether they'd want to attend and watch the performance or just stay at home and enjoy a one-day free Christmas break.

"I have archery sessions that day, but if I finish up quickly, I plan on attending."

"Wonderful! I'll see you on the 17th, bye!"

"Bye! Good luck with your practice!" She waved back as she watched him jog away for a few seconds before walking to her dorm apartment. It had been quite some time since Lorraine had ever talked or engaged in a conversation with a classmate, and hearing his response somehow made her day. And now the Christmas holiday that Lorraine once anticipated for a free break was now replaced with anticipation towards the upcoming celebration.

With a weary sigh, she entered her dorm unit and placed the keys on a valet tray on top of the shoe drawer as she removed her shoes and reached for the knob of the drawer. But when she fully opened it, a little bubblegum-pink box caught her attention.

'Since when did I keep a jewelry box inside the drawer?' she thought. In addition, she doesn't remember owning a bubblegum-pink box, for it wasn't even her favorite color to begin with. With

her dorm room packed with the color purple and black, she immediately knew someone else had misplaced it there but had no clue who it could be.

She picked up the box, replaced it with her shoe, then grabbed her home slippers, ignoring all the questions spiraling in her head. And once she sat cozily in her bedroom, she began opening the package without hesitation. Inside she discovered a pristine, round, crystal-blue bracelet and a little folded paper from within.

The moment her eyes laid on it, it was as if she felt a wave of heat emanating from the bracelet. It was an odd encounter, and she decided to think nothing of it as she focused next to the folded paper. Once unfolded, it revealed a sentence that says, **“Time is rewinding.”**

Lorraine felt that whoever did this was just trying to scare her away. But somehow, a clue to who the culprit suddenly popped into her mind. Her very own older sister. She was known to be the trickster in their family and would always give weird surprises but stopped ever since she went to college, and this same present could be her way of saying “Merry Christmas” in advance.

Nevertheless, Lorraine was too weary to even care. But even in her exhausted state, she was able to recall the secret Santa paper she had picked from the hat. So before forgetting to do so, she quickly set the box aside and took out the folded paper from her jacket pocket and unfolded it.

And to her surprise, Hansol was the student she had chosen! Lorraine felt like déjà vu because the last Secret Santa event they had done, she had chosen Hansol twice by coincidence. And she had a hunch that he hadn't put his desired gift on the list or written “anything” on it, like he had done the last two Christmas events.

Though, if that happens again, she has chosen to treat him to some food for this Christmas. He's known to be a huge eater who

enjoys going to buffets with his pals, so she figured this would suffice. Just like last Christmas and the Christmas before that.

It's December 16, and the Block Section Christmas Party has arrived.

The classrooms were covered with merry decorations, and it was brimming with the food that each student had brought in for each of them to enjoy. But before they feasted, they started the Secret Santa game and exchanged gifts all together.

Lorraine proceeded to find Hansol, who was conversing with another of their classmates as he handed out his present to them. Then, when their gazes connected, he excused himself and walked toward her like he knew she was his secret Santa.

"Hello, Lorraine! Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas, Hansol!"

"Who did you choose for the Secret Santa?" he inquired.

"Actually... I chose you again," she said, handing him two coupon tickets to his favorite all-you-can-eat buffet.

"Again?" he said, as he took the tickets from her grasp.

"I know, it's the third time in a row, and again, you didn't write down what you wanted, so I had to regift from last year since you seemed to enjoy them the last two Christmases."

"Hey, free food is the best gift you could ever give me. I'm looking forward to this. Thanks," he replied, then stared at the tickets. "But, you know, one ticket is more than enough."

"I didn't want you to dine alone; feel free to bring a buddy."

"Then, would you like to go with me?"

Lorraine was stunned speechless, yet she didn't want to overthink his kindness and decided to keep it safe as she snickered in response. "I'm not much fun to be around. Why don't you bring your guy friends instead?"

"I've already planned to go with you if this occurs again; plus, after that archery tournament you just entered last week, you deserve it," he says.

His words immediately made her think twice, because Hansol was right. After all the practicing for the archery tournament, exams for the final semester were upcoming, and she didn't have time for herself nor time to relax. Pampering herself with delicious food won't hurt and instead will be the right way to take care of her body and soul.

After deliberating in silence, she agreed by nodding in response, which pleased Hansol, who was grinning from ear to ear. "Excellent! Let's go after this event!" He said.

"But what about your performance practice for tomorrow?"

"Stellan granted us today a day off and decided to resume practices tomorrow evening before the big event begins. No worries!"

His cheerful reassurance somehow alleviated her worry, and now she felt excited for today's dinner feast. Her excitement stayed till the end of the block Christmas party, and once it ended after a while, the two classmates headed towards the all-you-can-eat buffet restaurant.

With the tickets in hand, they entered the restaurant and were immediately greeted by a waiter. After showing their reservation and paid tickets, they were immediately directed to their designated seats. Walking through the tables and seats, Lorraine could feel her heart pumping in excitement, which elevated even more as her attention was drawn to the wide range of meal options available to the customers.

It was just as Hansol described it on their way to the restaurant. Every meal that caught her eye was so appealing to look at that she drooled unknowingly at the sight. And as they began to eat, every

mouthful she took as she chewed gave her a rush of different exquisite flavors bursting in her mouth.

Because of this experience, she now understood why Hansol's favorite restaurants are buffets, especially the restaurant they were in. It nevertheless surpassed her expectations, and she would gladly go again just by herself. However, bringing her back to the present, she was with someone, and a hangout session could never be completed without conversations.

Hansol and Lorraine couldn't stop talking about themselves as they ate, and because of this one-night hangout, they have grown to know each other a little bit better than before. Never did Lorraine know she would actually enjoy a man's presence, and for it to be fun and filled with laughter took her aback, but nevertheless, she loved the experience.

The next day, Lorraine had archery practice. Although she had joined a tournament last week, there was another that her university team will be joining, and she was chosen once again to be one of the students from the Archery Club to participate.

Though because of the exhaustion and stress she had experienced at the previous tournament, it would be an understatement if she was excited and happy to be chosen again. Anxiety, stress, and pressure; she was afraid of the same experience happening again. The only reason she had joined the club was because her mother was an alumna and grand champion of the team. That talent had transferred to her, and she was a professional archer even before joining the university team, and seeing her talents, she was begged to join for a handful of benefits.

Though, even after all the practice she had done, she still believed her abilities were far from being nationally worthy. Mediocre

is the best she can describe herself. But though she was scared to join the tournament again, she wanted to win. She wanted to somehow earn her own title, not as Lorraine's mother's daughter, but as Lorraine herself.

Practice lasted for four hours. She was preoccupied with hitting the bullseye as far as she could, progressively improving, going further and further, and beating her previous record. It was a difficult practice, but she had fun and felt she had improved a little, which she was pleased with.

It was now 3:30 p.m., according to the time on the wall. She still had the time to watch Hansol and the other performers as they prepared for their show and maybe assist with the decorations.

At 4:45 in the afternoon, after taking a bath and changing into something clean, she arrived at the ballroom where the Christmas party will be held. It was large and excellent for ball activities. Seeing no trace of Hansol, Lorraine decided to assist the others with the decorations. And 30 minutes later, the boy and his other group members arrived.

When he noticed her presence, they both smiled and waved at each other. Hansol sprinted in her direction, where she was getting ready to climb the ladder to adorn the top of the building.

"You arrived earlier than I thought," he said.

"Practice finished early, and I had nothing else to do after that, so I chose to help!" She said, "How's your practice going?"

"It's going well; Stellan wanted us to practice here so we'd get used to the stage's width."

"Well, I heard he's a perfectionist, so with him leading the team, I'm sure your performance will be fantastic!"

"Thanks, that really didn't put any pressure on me," he bantered, receiving a chuckle from her.

"Oh, you'll be fine, I'm sure of it!"

"Hey, Hansol! We came here to practice, not to talk; we can relax later once we're finished," Stellan exclaimed, capturing their attention.

Lorraine snickered in astonishment when she heard how serious the man was with the performance. *'Guess he wasn't nicknamed "the talented perfectionist" for nothing,'* she thought to herself.

"Coming!" He then turned to face her, quickly adding, "I'll talk to you later!"

She nodded. "Good luck!"

They said their goodbyes and went about their business. Lorraine kept herself mentally prepared before climbing the ladder all the way to the top to adorn the ceiling with some festive decorations. Everything was going well until thirty minutes later; the ground began to quake. Which gradually grew ferocious, making every single student panic out of the ballroom.

What's worse was that Lorraine couldn't run out as everyone was doing because she was at the top of a fifteen-foot ladder. Her mind went blank, and all she could think to do as she felt the ladder shaking vigorously was to balance as if she were one with the circus performers, hoping she wouldn't succumb to her death.

However, the vibrations wouldn't stop and instead, became more intense, shaking harder and harder, stronger and stronger. Until she lost her balance and tumbled into the decorations and curtains.

"Lorraine!" Hansol screamed in terror as the people on the ground witnessed her fall. It was as if she was about to die; happy memories began playing in her mind. But she refused for this to be her last. She still had so much she wanted to do in her life as Lorraine, so she couldn't give up just yet.

Quickly, she acted fast and grabbed the big curtains that were still attached to the roof and hung on while she swung back and forth with her eyes shut. The momentum of the quake kept the curtain swinging, and she wasn't able to drop smoothly as she expected.

Her eyes slowly opened, and they fell on the large clock in front of her. It suddenly cracked and fell to the ground. Behind that clock was not what she had expected to see, because in front of her was a small, hairless, goblin-like alien with big green eyes, he had three antennas on its head and his back was hunched greatly, as he was holding a match in one hand and a circular item in the other.

Lorraine was too stunned to speak about what she was witnessing before her eyes because she had come face-to-face with something she had only imagined existed in the fantasy tales of the story she had read. Then, all of a sudden, the creature gradually set fire to the ball.

As it did that, Lorraine couldn't take her eyes off of it, but instinctively, she shifted her gaze at the object it had flamed. Focusing on it, she realized it was no ordinary ball she had thought it was; it was a bomb that the creature ignited. And the last thing she saw was the creature's wicked grin before the bomb burst, killing many, including Lorraine.

THE END.

But was this truly the end?

Did Lorraine actually die that evening, along with Hansol and several students?

Just as the bomb blasted, time had stopped as the bracelet from within the pink box shimmered as it hovered slightly above before one of its beads cracked.

The sudden occurrence put Lorraine in her unconscious state. Remembering what happened, she recalled what had happened and presumed she had died from the blast. Not until heat began permeating Lorraine's wrists. Quickly, the warmth slithered across her arm, torso, and legs until her entire body was covered with it.

Chatter suddenly began to be audible around her, and then two taps on her shoulder were felt. Her eyes sprang open as she sat straight up from her seat, her breathing heavy, gasping for oxygen. The class secretary fixed her gaze on her while she wiggled a hat in front of her. Thinking she had scared the girl, the class secretary chuckled slightly, "Sorry to scare you, Lorraine. It's your turn to pick a student."

"What?"

"Pick a student," she replied, "for the Secret Santa? Did you forget?"

Lorraine was perplexed by what was going on. She couldn't seem to think straight after everything that had happened. Questions spiraled through her mind, and unknowingly she blurted out, "Didn't we do Secret Santa? What about the explosion?"

The secretary glanced at her as if she were babbling nonsense. She, like her, was perplexed.

"Are you okay, Lorraine? Have you had enough sleep?" she bantered as she chuckled.

Noticing she was the only one behaving confused, she didn't want to alarm the others. So, she went with the flow, beginning with a faint nervous giggle. "I'm sorry, I've just had an hour of sleep; I must have been daydreaming there."

The secretary laughed at my response, believing what she had just said. "It's okay; it happens to everyone here," she said as she wiggled the hat in front of her and continued, "Pick a student."

And Lorraine did just that, and as soon as she made her decision, she unfolded the paper with Hansol's name written on it. Looking around, feeling her body and face, only now does Lorraine realize that she is alive.

It was like *déjà vu*. *No*, it is *déjà vu*, because the exact same thing was happening all over again.

Just then, a sudden memory of the letter she received with the bracelet flashed through her mind. She looked down at her wrist, feeling something heavy on it, and saw the bracelet snugly wrapped on her.

Though something was amiss with it; of the 5 beads that were glowing clear blue, one was now black. Everything didn't make sense to her. Conscious or unconscious, she was not sure which reality she was now living in. However, one thing she knew for sure that she had to keep in mind was the phrase written on the paper she was gifted, and that was, **"Time is rewinding."**

Chapter 2

"Time is rewinding."

Maybe, just maybe, all of this is true, and what was mentioned in the paper was accurate. But Lorraine still couldn't believe time was turning back. With her suspicions still there, she checked the date on her phone. The time was 12:01 p.m. on the 13th of December.

Yet even with the date confirmed, she still wasn't convinced. She didn't want it to be what she thought was happening at that moment. *"This may be a dream! Yes! I may have survived the explosion and am now in a coma at the hospital, experiencing this dream!"* she thought to herself. Because what other explanation can she give for the situation she was in right now? And the more she spiraled about it, the more it didn't make any sense to her.

Still thinking it was just a dream, she pinched her right arm as hard as she could, expecting to feel nothing, but was immediately struck with pain. *"It hurts. Why does it hurt?"* she questioned herself. Because if she felt pain, then that meant that she was living in her conscious state, still alive and well.

"Once you've chosen a classmate, you may go." The students were relieved as they rose eagerly, ready to go. "But before you go,

remember to put your desired present on this list so the person who chose you knows what to purchase," she continued.

Witnessing the students obeying once more, it was as if she was watching everything on a record tape because everything was being replayed in exact detail. Lorraine was puzzled and had no clue what was going on; however, if she wanted to concentrate and dig deeper on this, she knew she wasn't going to be able to concentrate on where she was now. Therefore, she needed to go back to her dorm, where she'll be able to think to herself privately.

As she rose up, anxious to get home, she ran into Hansol again. However, the look on his face was a little different than it was before, because instead of a smile, it was as if he was astonished, almost as scared as Lorraine was. Replacing his calm demeanor with a tinge of fear.

But he brushed it off and grinned as if everything were normal as Lorraine did the same. They exchanged the same dialogue as before and went about their business. But instead of walking, she dashed to her dorm unit and hurriedly shut the door behind her.

She removed her shoes and entered, leaving them cluttered on the floor. Turned on the lights in her room and noticed that everything was in order. Except for one thing: the bubble-gum pink box sitting on her desk, which had the letter unfolded on top, revealing the phrase "Time is rewinding."

She picked up the paper and read the words several times. Everything, she had just observed was proof that time *was* rewinding, and this was now her reality to contend with, which she wasn't happy with. If she would have to relive the same moments every single day and die and then revive every single time, she would rather die permanently than actually relive the same thing over and over again repeatedly.

As Lorraine's attention travels about, she feels disturbed and ponders about how she could get everything back to normal. Then, eventually, her sight caught another folded piece of paper on top of the box, under the first paper she received.

Swiftly, she took it and unfolded it, displaying the sentence, "It becomes your reality."

'My reality?' she thought, her brows furrowed in puzzlement. She then connected the two pieces of paper together, placing them side by side to link the phrases. Which now reads, "Time is rewinding; it becomes your reality."

Reading this, not only did things make sense, but it also addressed her worries and questions. This was the truth, and it was occurring in her conscious state. But why is that? And how so? Was this something that only happened when she died as a result of that incident? Moreover, what was the goblin creature? Were the FBI aware of how it got there, or were they somehow involved in this accident?

So many questions that were still unanswered. But whatever the situation was, Lorraine knew she had to prevent the creature from causing malice. Maybe then time will no longer turn back, and her life, among hundreds, won't be taken.

[December 14 || 11am]

Lorraine had decided to skip lessons for the next two days before the 16th and visit the library to learn more about the upcoming incident. Although she was aware that finding information regarding the creature and any fantasy-like happenings on earth was impossible, nevertheless, she was determined to acquire whatever information she could in order to gain more answers to her many, many

questions and perhaps be provided with some guidance on how to break the repeating cycle.

[December 16]

Lorraine was rushing to the university around 10 a.m. She had researched the incident all day long but still had not discovered any answers nor information about her situation, not even a single one. She had concluded that there may be no record of this happening, and she may be the first to witness such an occurrence.

Just before the party started, she arrived just in time for the gift exchange. Entering the classroom, she sees her classmates with the food placed in the middle for everyone to enjoy. Quickly, she placed her share in the center of the table with the others and immediately looked for Hansol to give out his present.

Seconds later, their gaze met, and they smiled once they found one another as she waved at him. He excused himself from his classmate and hastily approached her.

"Hey! Merry Christmas, Lorraine," he said.

"Merry Christmas."

"I assumed you weren't coming today, but you arrived just on time!"

"I know. I was preoccupied with something I needed to investigate," I explained, adding, "Oh, and, well, here."

I handed him the buffet restaurant tickets, which he took with a smile.

"You purchased two again."

Lorraine was taken aback by what he had said. *'Again? What did he mean by 'again'?* she thought as her brows furrowed and head tilted in suspicion.

"Pardon?" she said.

"Oh, it's nothing; would you like to accompany me?" He inquired, quickly changing topics.

"Um, yeah... if you don't mind if I go."

"No worries!" he exclaimed. And having the conversation end so quickly took Lorraine once again by surprise. She noticed his answers were different from before and that this time it was cut short. Though she didn't want to think too much about it, she couldn't help but spiral. In the end she concluded that maybe not every event and dialogue will repeat, and that theory caught her interest.

But from here on, the same thing still happened. Hansol and Lorraine went directly to the restaurant after the celebration and ate for the second time. And this time, she was able to consume something different from what she had previously eaten.

However, for then and there, their discussion appeared to shift as well, and oddly enough, they spoke about something different that taught her something new about him. Even though it was an interesting change of event, it didn't bother her at all, it just simply caught her off guard. Yet, to her, it did feel like they were in an impromptu play where Hansol was attempting to deviate from the script and improvise another scenario.

[December 17]

After finishing her archery practice, Lorraine made her way to the ballroom a little earlier than usual. Her mind couldn't focus on her practice and was solely focused on what was about to occur because that was more significant than anything else.

Unlike before, she came prepared to save the school and had carried a few rocks with her in hopes of frightening the creature away and preventing it from igniting the bomb. At first, she thought of using an arrow and bow, but the more she thought about it, she re-

alized she wouldn't be able to hold herself still while aiming and shooting.

She had nothing to support herself; she wasn't Tarzan, and holding the curtains with her butt cheeks was obviously impossible to do. In addition, carrying firearms to school wasn't permitted, and for sure she'd be arrested if she had done so. For that reason, she had come to one solution and thought rocks would be a suitable alternative.

Taking with her the available ladder in the ballroom, she positioned it so that the end was directly in front of the clock. She climbed up, pretending to help with the top decorations, and swiftly removed the clock from the wall. With the rock in hand, she was ready to throw it inside the hole. Except, to her astonishment, there was nothing behind it but a smooth wall.

A wall!

No visible hole on it; nothing!

Seeing such nonsense stunned her greatly. Was her sight deceiving her? Though she was very certain she had seen the creature in a hole when the clock fell from the quake, and that occurrence still was vivid in her memory.

As her mind spiraled again, Hansol and his teammates entered the ballroom to practice. He recognized Lorraine by her back and snickered at what she was doing, in his point of view, staring at a wall. He headed his way to where she worked.

Standing beside the ladder, he caught her bewildered look as she gazed at the clock, then back at the wall. Without announcing his presence, he questioned, "You need assistance there?" catching her attention.

"Oh, Hansol, you're here early!" she exclaimed as she placed the clock back on the wall and descended.

"You're here early as well!"

"Practice went faster than I expected," she said, jumping to the ground. "How's your practice going?"

"It's going well; Stellan wanted us to rehearse here so we could get used to the vastness of the stage."

"He's a perfectionist, so I'm confident everything will be OK!"

"With your reassurance, I'm sure it will!"

"Hey, Hansol-ah!" Stellan yelled, "We came here to practice, not to talk; we can unwind later if we're done."

"Coming!" He said, then turned to face her, "I'll chat with you later!"

She nodded and continued to assist. *'Might as well help if that creature was just an illusion,'* she thought while she sighed and raised her brows as she carried the ladder to the previous location, she had found it in.

30 minutes later, she was seated in the same position as before, busy decorating the walls and ceiling, when the earthquake struck again. Lorraine felt the earth tremble, but this time, she was ready to leap onto the curtain. With her eyes locked on the nearby curtain, she jumped across and grabbed hold of it as she swung back and forth from the momentum she had made.

But then, as she swung, she saw the same clock she investigated fall to the ground, and to her surprise, the black hole reappeared, along with the goblin creature.

"Lorraine!" Hansol yelled, but she was so concentrated on the thing in front of her that his voice was muted in her perspective. Quickly, she extracted the rocks from her pockets, aimed at the hole, and tossed them inside, hoping they had hit the creature.

Hansol, who was watching her, was bewildered as to why she was tossing rocks. Shifting his gaze to where she was looking, he saw the

same hole that she saw and was even perplexed about it. Why was Lorraine bothered by the hole if there was nothing inside? He thought. Suddenly, his point of view changed when he saw a glimpse of three antennas, followed by half of the face she was seeing.

Everything made sense to him now.

"Don't you dare light that!" Lorraine suddenly yelled, but the threat didn't work as it let out a loud chuckle, and the beast, once again, detonated the bomb in his hand.

"NO-!"

BOOM!

Another end.

And again, time has rewound, and Lorraine has awoken within the classroom, gasping gently. It happened yet again, and she was unable to prevent it. To defeat something from a distance, rocks weren't such a good idea after all, and it would have been simpler if she had used her bow and arrow. The biggest problem was how to shoot it while swinging on the curtain.

Breaking her thoughts, she noticed the class secretary approaching her. She huffed in exhaustion, knowing she had to go through everything again.

"Pick a student," the secretary said, dangling the hat in front of her.

Lorraine obeyed silently and, of course, chose the same person again.

When she came back to her dorm unit, she headed straight to her bedroom and rested. She felt irritated with reality, not knowing what to do, how to avoid the upcoming disaster, and how to avoid the endlessly rewinding time.

Though again, the only difference for this third rewind was that she hadn't run into Hansol a while ago. Maybe it was because she had exited the room before the rest of her classmates got up after being dismissed. Her mind was preoccupied with the situation she was in, and she was stressed at the fact that she was the only one to save and stop this occurrence from happening again.

She huffed as her back slumped against the rolling chair. "Why is it so hard to be the hero?" she whined as she felt her brain frying from the stress she felt as the exhaustion slowly slithered across her entire body. "If something so fantasy-like is happening, why can't I have superpowers? That way it would be much easier to halt the never-ending cycle of repetition and kill the goblin once and for all," she muttered to herself.

Sighing, she turned to face her right and noticed the bubble-gum pink package on her desk. And this time, there were three sheets on top of it; two were unfolded and one wasn't, which surprised Lorraine. Was it a new hint she was given? A new answer to her many questions?

Wasting no time, she pulled herself towards it and swiftly unfolded the third piece of the paper, which said, "Eliminate the King."

Her brows furrowed, "The King? Who the hell is the King?" she wondered. Then, after minutes of deliberation, it struck her. Was the goblin the king? He does, after all, have three antennas that resemble a crown. Maybe *he* was the monarch she needed to get rid of?

With a lead on her case, she suddenly felt pumped, and motivation to keep on going fueled her energy. But in order to eliminate the goblin, what can she do?

As she thought of a plan, her phone suddenly vibrated, which caught her attention. Staring at what caused it to shake, it showed a notification that Hansol had sent her a message.

It read,

[HANSOL]:

"Hey Lorraine, Are you free tonight?

I need to discuss something with you."

Reading that has piqued her interest even more. She unlocked her phone and responded.

[LORRAINE]:

"I'm available; where do you want to meet?"

[HANSOL]:

"At 7 p.m. at the Sing-a-long Karaoke Bar near your dorm, if you're alright discussing it in a closed room,"

[LORRAINE]:

"Is it really that important?"

[HANSOL]:

"Very crucial, almost as vital as the explosion on the 17th.

Bring your pink box with you."

Her eyes widened as chills ran through her body, and goose-bumps appeared all over. Why was he aware of the explosions, and how did he know about the pink box?

So many questions spiraled yet again, and there was only one way to find out.

[LORRAINE]:

"See you later."

Chapter 3

IT'S 7:10 p.m., and Lorraine was in one of the karaoke rooms she had reserved when she arrived at the place. While waiting, she couldn't do much but sit and worry about the upcoming meeting with Hansol. But she had come prepared and ordered a small snack and two beverages for them to enjoy while they talked to somehow lighten up the mood.

Then, 15 minutes later, Hansol entered. He was breathing heavily as he did, which had brought Lorraine to think that he might've rushed over.

He apologized through his heavy pants, "Sorry, I'm late."

"Don't worry." Lorraine replied worryingly, "Here, have something to drink." She then lent him his glass of iced tea she had bought for him seconds before.

"Thanks." He took off his coat and placed it on a hanger. "Sorry for arriving late; Stellan would not stop us from practicing," he explained as he sat next to her, then drank the tea he was given.

"No problem, I didn't wait that long." She reassured him, "Anyway, why did you want to meet here at the karaoke bar?" She inquired, and the crucial discussions began. They normally would've

discussed it at a cafe or a library where it was cozy, so it piqued her interest as to why he chose the location they were in.

"I needed a place where no one could overhear our chat," he explained, then reached out for his jacket and took out a bubble-gum pink box, which he then placed on the table in front of her. Once he opened it, inside revealed an identical bracelet but in rose quartz.

Seeing the same exact box, she had astonished her, and she had thought he had stolen it from her. Witnessing her reaction, Hansol immediately could tell that Lorraine knew what the box was and was instantly reassured that his hunch feeling turned out to be true.

"How did you get that?" Lorraine asked.

"When I got home from rehearsals two explosions ago, I noticed this box resting inside my desk drawer," he continued. "I assume you have the same thing?"

I pulled out my box and placed it near his, leaving it open.

"I assumed my elder sister had given me this as an early Christmas present, so I never gave it any attention," she explained, "H-how did you know?" She stammered, a bit flabbergasted with his intuition.

"When the first rewind happened, you were suddenly wearing a clear blue crystal bracelet. Then when I got home, I coincidentally found a box that had an identical bracelet as yours, only it was in pink, in my desk drawer," he explained. "I didn't think much about it, but then the second rewind happened, and that's when it clicked: these bracelets are the source of these déjà vu experiences."

Lorraine's brow wrinkled in bewilderment. "Do you mean *this* is the tool that made us travel back in time?" she questioned, pointing to the bracelets.

"I believe so."

“And what makes you think that?”

“The beads,” he replied almost immediately, then picked up his bracelet to showcase his discovery. “When I received these, only one among these five beads was black, then when the second explosion happened, two were now black. Coincidence? I think not.”

Lorraine curiously shifted her gaze at the bracelet she was given, and to her surprise there were indeed two black beads on hers when she remembered it being only one from the last explosion. Realizing Hansol’s theory might be true, she was speechless, and a ball of anxiety suddenly muddled in her chest as she began to feel nervous.

“Why is this happening to us? I don’t even know.” He continued, “But, my guess is that we are given five chances to do something to prevent the explosion from happening. Although, it’s easier said than done, knowing nothing about how or where the bomb was placed.” He sighed, “We’ve used two lives; now we only have three, and I fear once all turns black, we might lose our lives permanently.”

As Lorraine kept listening to Hansol’s hypothesis, she had been staring at the bracelet. She knew the situation she was in was bad, but she never knew it could be *that* bad. After all, who could predict such strange occurrences to happen all of a sudden?

But thinking about it, her mind came upon the notes she had received and remembered the discovery *she* had made herself. With a deep breath in, she began, “I think I’ve figured out how to stop it.”

Her statement caught the boy’s interest, but he was puzzled by it. “What do you mean?” he said.

Lorraine then took the three phrases she had been given and set them on the table next to each other to form a sentence. “Time is rewinding; it becomes your reality. Eliminate the King...” He read, “Is this all?”

"I don't know," she shrugged, "but what I do know is that we need to assassinate the king to get everything back to normal."

"Who's the king?"

"I believe it's the goblin alien-looking monster that only appears during the earthquake on the 17th."

An idea then popped in his mind. "Do you mean the thing that lives within the hole behind the fallen clock?" he questioned, and she nodded in response.

"That explains why you tried to throw rocks at it," he said, which made Lorraine sigh as she recalled her failed attempts.

"Unfortunately, it did not work."

"Why don't you use your bow and arrow? You're an expert at aiming with that," he said.

"That counts as a firearm, right? Won't that be confiscated?" she questioned. "Plus, shooting with them requires the use of both arms; how am I going to support myself while both of my hands are occupied?"

"With your feet? There's a technique for that." He replied, "And it doesn't count as a firearm. It's a weapon, but not a firearm. Plus, I heard from one of the professors that you can bring your own bow and arrow to campus if you're in the archery club, if you have one, that is."

It only now struck her just how many crucial things she had missed and overlooked. If not for Hansol, she would've remained stuck and clueless. She sighed in frustration. *How could I have forgotten?* she thought.

Bringing weapons onto the school campus was impossible, but being part of the archery club meant she could bring her own bow and arrows. And if shooting while holding onto the curtain became an issue, she could rely on a skill she learned from aerial silks, which

was to wrap the fabric around her foot so she could stand suspended above the ground.

It was as if she had finally pieced the puzzle together, and for the first time, she felt confident enough to form a proper plan.

[December 17]

These past few days, Lorraine had been working on her aerial silk postures as well as her archery skills at her dorm unit, and although it was tough at first, she eventually got the hang of it and was soon enough able to stand and balance while pretending to wield her bow and arrow that she had brought from home.

She has been practicing the same thing every single day until the 17th, and by doing so, not only has she improved her abilities and balance, but she has also built some muscle, and was able to shed 4 pounds.

The tension grew as the 17th approached. However, Lorraine didn't feel alone or under pressure. Because now, she had a friend who was aware of what was happening. Hansol will be by her side, assisting her in resolving this tragedy that had been laid upon them.

When the time came, Lorraine rushed to the ballroom with her bow and arrow and helped with the decorations, heading to the same place at the same time doing the same thing. Hopefully, this time will be the final repetition.

Hansol came 30 minutes later as planned. He waved and approached her as they both prepared themselves for the upcoming foreseeable earthquake.

"Are you prepared, Lorraine?" he inquired.

"I'm more prepared than ever," she sternly replied.

Another 30 minutes passed by, and the earthquake hit the ground for the third time. When the curtain slightly collapsed, she

prepared herself and leaped on it. Focusing on her foot arrangement on the cloth, she tried to maintain steadiness while doing the method on her feet, tying one of them to the curtain.

As the curtain rocked back and forth, Hansol walked up to the second level to bring her bow and arrow, and after several attempts to reach for it, she finally got a grip and quickly aimed it towards the already fallen clock. There stood the creature, and as soon as Lorraine got the tempo correct, she shot and luckily hit him right on the torso.

"I did it!" She screamed in joy when she witnessed the creature getting hit and saw his lifeless body lying on his back as Hansol clapped his hand and cheered along for their victory. However, when they both thought everything was over, the creature abruptly moved his hand and pulled the arrow from his chest. To their horror, the creature was still alive and was now sitting up, as the hole they had caused disgustingly healed instantly.

At that moment, they had thought they had upset the creature but instead were met with an even more unsettling aura as it creepily grinned at Lorraine as it ignited itself on fire, igniting the bomb alongside it.

"SON OF A BI—!"

Boom!

Another end, another rewind.

Lorraine awoke inside the classroom for the fourth time, and it was December 13 all over again. Once again, she began to spiral on her seat as her palms rested on her forehead. What went wrong? How did that creature survive the arrow that was bigger than it? They had done what the notes had told them to, yet why was the end result not successful? Wasn't that beast the king, or was it an immortal one, and there was actually nothing they could do about it?

She sighed in despair as her gaze shifted to Hansol two chairs behind her, who shared the same expression and emotions. He was perplexed and unsure of what to do. When he saw Lorraine gazing at him, he gave a soft grin, to which she responded with the same expression. They felt hopeless, and right now, all they ever wanted was to rest their minds.

Minutes passed, and Lorraine returned back to her dorm unit in a fatigued state from re-living the same events. After a few hours, she decided to watch a movie in her living room as she waited for the pizza she had ordered earlier. A cozy reset was what she needed for her brain to recover from all the brainstorming she had done previously from the last attempts.

She let herself be engrossed in what she was watching, and minutes later her attention was caught by the doorbell ringing. Thinking it was the pizza she had ordered a while ago, she happily rushed towards the front entrance in her cozy blanket-covered self with some cash ready in hand. "Coming!" she exclaimed before opening the door, but to her astonishment, Hansol was on the other side.

"Hansol?" she questioned, watching him pant heavily as if he had rushed all the way to her apartment. "A-are you okay? What happened?"

"I received a paper that looked like yours," he said, raising the folded paper to show her.

Without thinking twice, she invited him in as she stepped aside to give space for him to enter. He removed his shoes as she closed and locked the door, and both headed to the living room. Hansol makes his way to the couch as Lorraine turns on the lights before

walking towards him, then unfolded the paper once she was beside him. Together they looked at the note he was given.

"With your weapons sorcery," Hansol read the fourth paper.

Lorraine then arranged all three of the notes she had and placed all of them together to form another sentence, and it read, "Time is rewinding; it becomes your reality. Eliminate the king with your weapons sorcery." They had thought with all of the missing pieces gathered, they would finally have another clue on how to defeat the king, but instead, they were given more questions than answers.

"Your weapon's sorcery? With magic? But we don't have any magic." Hansol said, baffled. With a long, hard thought, Lorraine suddenly had an idea in mind.

"Maybe, we do!" she exclaimed as she dashed to her room and returned with the pink box. Immediately, Hansol understood what she was trying to convey, and with a slight gasp, he turned to his bag and took out his box. They then placed the bracelets side by side, hoping something magical would happen, but nothing did.

"What do we do with these again?" Hansol asked, a little confused.

"The note says with the weapon's sorcery it can eliminate that goblin, and since magic doesn't really exist here on earth, we use these to make our weapons!" She explained, "The problem is, how...?" She wondered as she gazed at the bracelets, brainstorming ideas in the process.

"Do you think we can shapeshift it with the magic it possesses?"

"I'm not sure," she huffed in frustration as she never left her gaze from the bracelet. If they could shapeshift it, how? It was their first time handling magic, for they lived in a world without it, so it was difficult to make a plan. "Perhaps we could carve the orbs of the bracelet into the tip of the arrow."

"Like you'd do in anime! That's a good idea!" Hansol said, and the two heroes started brainstorming ideas on how they can carve their bracelet into weapons. Each bead was big enough to create a small sharp dagger; maybe they could carve it with a chisel stick and hammer? Or maybe head to a workshop and borrow their machines to make the piece?

Many ideas were formed, and as they continued, they started sketching ideas on how the shape of the weapon will look like. After minutes of deliberation and teamwork, they had come up with a sketch of a weapon that could be used as the arrow's tip.

It was perfect! All they needed to do now was make the actual piece; however, the moment they stood to proceed taking action, the bracelet suddenly ignited, and one from each bead sparkled as they glided towards each other, combining into the most magnificent lavender bow and arrow.

And just like that, they magically have been given a weapon with magic! The two were flabbergasted, as they were patting one another with their mouths gaping open out of awe, trying not to scream from the magical transformation they had just witnessed.

"Ugh, I *love* magic," Lorraine said with her teeth gritted, as she felt her heart burning with excitement.

"Now..." Hansol began, his voice deep as he then shifted to Lorraine beside him and continued, "Let's save Christmas, partner."

His sudden change of his voice was enough to make Lorraine cringe giddily at the boy as she slapped him on the shoulder. "Oh, my goodness, STAHPI!" she bantered as the boy kept on making faces as if he were one with the heroes, eliciting more laughter from her, and eventually he joined in the laughter.

[December 17]

Lorraine had been training with her magical bow and arrow for the past few days, and fortunately, unlike traditional wooden arrows, the arrow she was going to use for the murder had an endless lifespan and will not crack no matter how much it hits.

The day before the 17th, Lorraine and Hansol had been together doing aerial silk exercises to practice for their battle. Following that, they bonded at a restaurant, which the boy generously paid for. Having him pay for everything, Lorraine felt bad because of how much he had to spend. So, after their meal, they went to the convenience store to shop for desserts, which she paid for.

Never has Lorraine ever known how fun it was to be with Hansol. She had known him to be very quiet and cranky, but never did she see this day to come where she would see the opposite of what she had regularly seen from him.

Now, she was at the archery section on campus, practicing her shots as she does as usual. Though as she was focused on her practice, memories of all the pleasant moments they had together the day before came rushing through her mind. Because of that, she slightly missed the center when she realized she was suddenly smiling to herself. Nevertheless, she didn't dismiss the happiness she felt and smiled even more, glad that she was able to make a new friend, especially a close one.

"I see someone is pleased today."

When she turned behind her, there she spotted one of her club-mates joining in on the practice.

"Did something happen?" she asked.

"It's nothing out of the ordinary; I just had a fun time yesterday."

"Hmm, is it due to something... or someone?" she teased as her brows wriggled when their gaze met. Prompting her to burst out a chuckle, not being able to contain the giddiness she was feeling.

Though, when she panned up to the clock, she realized how much time had passed and quickly began to pack up.

"Secret," she teasingly answered back as the girl playfully whined in response.

"You're as cold as ever, Rain," she said as Lorraine was getting ready to leave.

"Merry Christmas; I'll see you later," she said as she hastily walked away.

"Merry Christmas!" she replied with a soft wave as she watched her leave.

The earthquake was about an hour and a half away, and she couldn't afford to miss the vital occurrence later on. As she walked back to her dorm to change, she hoped that this day would be their final attempt.

An hour had passed, and Lorraine was now busy with helping with the decorations for the Christmas celebration. Hansol then arrived, and seeing him enter, she waved at him, and he responded the same way. She descended the ladder as he jogged towards her.

"Hey, good luck later," he said.

"Thanks! Though, I'm sure everything will be ok."

"Yeah," he said, then paused for a bit as if he was contemplating before reluctantly continuing, "and—and by the way, if...if everything goes well, would you want to go on another dinner date with me tomorrow?"

Lorraine was taken aback by his sudden invite. All day long she had always referred to their hangouts as a hangout, not realizing the other person had taken a different view on it. Yet, she didn't seem to mind and felt her heart pounding in delight.

A date, for the second time, with Hansol? To her, that sounded fantastic, and without realizing, she nodded in response. "Sure, sounds like fun!" she said with a smile.

Her response caused the boy to grin shyly as he then looked down, concealing his blushing cheeks and pushing him back from grinning like a fool. The aura between the two started to shift as they both couldn't look at one another anymore, until Stellan came to pull Hansol back.

"Hey, Hansol! We came here to practice, not to flirt; if we're done, we can unwind afterwards," he said with a teasing grin.

"Coming!" Hansol exclaimed as he turned to face Lorraine. "I'll talk to you later!" he said, and she nodded shyly, then continued with the assistance.

30 minutes later, the ground began to shake. Precisely what they were waiting for. Hansol prepared for his cue and dashed up to the second level as soon as he felt the ground shake, armed with the magical bow and arrow. On the other hand, Lorraine waited for the curtain to fall in front of her before leaping upon it, then she quickly tied her foot on the cloth, finding her balance.

Hansol handed her the weapons, extending them as far as he could for her to grasp. Once she successfully grabbed it, she waited for the clock to fall as she aimed towards it. Without wasting any more time, as soon as the clock fell, she released her pull, nailing a bullseye on the head of the goblin before it could even stand on its feet.

Lorraine stood for a few seconds, watching the creature in the midst of the earthquake. And just when she had believed it had died, the goblin sat up. Her heart sank as she saw the goblin attempting to remove the arrow on its head. But somehow it couldn't, no matter how many times it tried; like it was glued on it.

Then when all hope was lost, the bow she was carrying suddenly turned into a ball of light and rushed towards the creature. The light engulfed it, causing the creature to float, and the goblin screamed as it attempted to flee the light that was slowly eating him alive until it vanished altogether along with the bomb and torch.

After it vanished, the hole in the wall vanished as well, and miraculously, there was no longer a hole in the wall.

"You did it," Hansol said in surprise. "You actually did it!" He cheered happily.

"It's...finally...over..." She chuckled in amazement and relief. Finally, they were able to defeat the king and stop the rewind from happening.

However, although the struggle with the king was over, the earthquake was still ongoing, and the structures around them were being steadily wrecked by it. Noticing this, Hansol quickly rushed down to the bottom floor and shouted, "Let's get out of here, Rain!"

Hearing his warnings, Lorraine immediately loosened the drape on her foot and climbed down, repeating the same process to avoid falling and fracturing herself. And as soon as her feet touched the ground, Hansol grabbed her hand, and together, they fled out of the ballroom as the roof creaked and slowly collapsed.

Fortunately, none of them or the students were injured during the escape. The fact that they had managed to seize the time rewind from happening again made both of them proud of what they had accomplished. Looking at each other, they smiled and then chuckled as the relief washed over their bodies. Huffing and puffing from all the exhaustion they had endured.

Everything returned to normal after the earthquake. Surprisingly, the only structure that was damaged was the ballroom, and thankfully no one was killed nor seriously injured. As a result, the univer-

sity opted to hold Christmas celebrations on the open field still located on campus, where a stage had already been set up.

The students and teaching staff had a great time and appreciated every aspect of the occasion. The food and vibe were fantastic, as was the performance done by Hansol and his group. Though there were some hardships throughout the process of their heroic act, they were in awe that they were able to experience something so magical. But still, being able to view and meet their future self was the best ending they could ever ask for.

THE END. (This is it; it's the end. I promise.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, Teresa, also known as Rosequarts C., was born in 2001. Although she graduated with a degree in studio art, her love for storytelling began early. During her junior high years, she decided she wanted to write her own stories, starting with lighthearted fanfictions created just for fun, most of which remained unfinished. It wasn't until the end of her junior high years that she began her first serious fanfiction project.

Inspired by stories she discovered on YouTube, Teresa eventually created her own channel dedicated to sharing her written works. She continues to create and post her stories, not minding the size of her audience but rather hoping to reach the right readers who will appreciate her imagination. Her goal is to bring joy and inspiration to her readers, the same joy she feels when bringing her characters to life.

Writing isn't her only passion. Teresa also enjoys gaming, cooking, dancing, singing, and crafting jewelry with clay and resin, creative outlets that help her unwind and fill her life with happiness.