

Back to The Present by Sriya Kappagantu

As I idly gazed at the crisp, white walls, I felt anxiety bubble in my stomach. "Emma? You can come inside now," a nurse kindly informed me. I rushed out of my chair and all but bolted after her into a small white room. My eyes immediately landed on my mother who lay exhausted on the firm hospital bed. She looked up at me and barely managed to grimace. I winced and turned to my father who tenderly held my mother's hand. My brain seemed to process the information so quickly that I had not noticed the small bundle that my mother held close to her chest. I gasped in shock.

"What's that thing!" I shrieked as I studied the alien object. "Sweetie, meet your new baby sister!" my mom exclaimed. I exploded with joy, careening towards my mother. Finally, I would have a sidekick to execute my wild antics with.

"Can I hold her please?" I asked while batting my eyelashes. "Of course, just be carefu-" before she could even finish I yanked the swaddled baby out of her hands. I gently lifted the ethereal child up to my face as her plump lips parted and her eyes slowly opened and landed upon mine. I saw her chubby cheeks scrunch up as her mouth slowly opened. I gazed at her expectantly, watching as her doll sized hands reached towards her face.

"Wahhhhhhhhh!" she screeched so loudly that even the nurse was caught off guard. "Shhhh...It's okay baby," my mom cooed and tickled her pale chest. My mom and dad looked at the baby lovingly as it giggled and squirmed to my mom's touch. I retreated away from the small hospital room and ran outside.

"She's stealing all of the attention now! I wish my sister had never been born!" I shouted, filled with anguish. An earsplitting noise echoed in my ears and I glanced up towards the clear sky. I looked around me. Did no one hear that?" I questioned aloud. I shrugged, thinking I had experienced a mere auditory illusion, and continued my rebellion by marching forward. I was so caught up in my walking that I did not notice the steaming coffee as it fell onto my sleeve. "Hey what was that for?" I looked up in frustration. My frustration quickly turned into shock as I gazed at the woman standing in front of me. "MOM!" I shouted in utter shock. "Excuse me?" she replied bewildered. "What do you mean? It's me Emma! What are you doing here? Where is the baby and why are you so young and thin?" "You're crazy! Get away from me!" she shouted running off.

I turned around in utter disbelief. How was it possible that my own mother could not recognize me? I tried to search for any possible explanation until my mind landed on it. The loud sound had taken me back in time before my parents had ever met. It had given me the chance to prevent them from ever meeting and from my sister ever being born. I jumped up and down with delight and bolted after my mother. I turned the corner and saw my mom heading in the direction of a tall young man who I recognized as my dad. I was shocked to see neither of them waving to each other until I realized that this was where they accidentally bumped into each other, years before I was born.

In sheer panic I raced towards my mom and shoved her to the ground.

"Ahhh you again!" she screamed angrily, "You're crazy!" She ran as far away from me as possible. I looked back to the end of the street as my dad casually walked in the other direction. "Thank goodness!" I shouted aloud, "Now to go back to the present!" I waited expectantly for another loud noise. "I said BACK TO THE P-R-E-S-E-N-T!" I enunciated my words. Why was nothing happening? I prevented my parents from meeting so my sister would not exist and I should end up happily with my parents forever. "Oh!" I gasped with sudden realization. If my parents had never met, I could not have ever been born. I was stuck in the past! I ran with all of my might towards my father. I cleared my throat to catch his attention. "Excuse me sir? I can't find my mom, can you help me?" I looked up hopefully. "Of course. Where did you last see her?" he asked. "I saw her go that way," I pointed in the direction from where my mom ran away from me. The two of us walked around the corner and traversed the sidewalk in hopes of finding my mother. After what seemed to me as an eternity, I began to give up. "Hmmm....Is that her?" he said pointing ahead. I looked up to see none other than my mom. "YES YES YES!" I shouted with excitement. "Excuse me miss, is this your daughter?" he asked while pointing at me. "You again! I have no clue who you are!" my mother angrily replied. "I know. I lied. You're welcome! Enjoy the rest of your lives," I said running as far away from them as possible. After I rounded a corner, I closed my eyes.

" Now back to the present!" I shouted. Instead of the same loud noise, I heard a chorus of voices calling my name. "Emma! Emma! Emma!" I felt myself shaking. I opened my eyes in confusion. "Emma! We were worried sick!" my mom exclaimed, "We found you passed out here, outside, on the front steps of the hospital!" I calmed down, realizing that time travel was only a hallucination. "Ugh. The baby stopped crying. Finally!" my father said. relieved. "The baby kept crying while we couldn't find you. Now she calmed down," my mother sighed.

I looked up in surprise as my mom handed me the baby and she giggled in my arms. Maybe having a sister would not be so bad after all. "Insane experiences like this remind me of how we met," My dad smiled at my mom. "That's so true. I still remember that crazy girl. She looked just like you Emma," my mom commented, "Emma?" My mom looked over at me when she saw I wasn't responding. I was too busy playing with my baby sister to even notice their conversation.