

Write Time

Geez, that's the last time I take the hover board to the bodega for a snack. It's my own fault for trying to look cool in front of the other zero-grav skaters, but busting my ass only a block away from my flat wasn't worth it. I can't blame the board for my wiping out; sure it's old, but I've only been practicing for about a month on off-ground wheels. You'd think the principles would be the same as classic skateboarding, but that is where I'd be wrong. The gash on my hand will leave a scar, which will definitely add street cred, but now how will I be able to type messages to myself? I can barely flex my index and middle finger. Why didn't I receive a letter from myself about this accident? Did my craving for Sour Cat Gummies not happen in the other timeline? Oh well, just write a quick note on your Time-Type and hope you learn from your mistake.

Hobbling up the flight of steps to my apartment is harder with a sore leg and heavy hover board. I can't afford one of the newer brands, so I'm stuck with a clunky older model. Also can't afford to stay in a building with a functioning elevator, but what else can I do? Move back to the country to be a fertilizer-farmer on the family compound? Digging in shit and mud all day only to come home to 5G Internet speed? No, thanks! Living might be tough as a writer in New York City, but I can make due.

Would I love to work for one of the big name fashion brand magazines? Of course I would. Do fashion magazines even care about Time-Typers? No, because every time someone writes a prediction about the latest fashion trend, people decide to go against it and create their own trend. Literally you'd go day to day with whole new outfits never being in trend because the future trend is already being rewritten, making the art of

Alyse Morrell

time-typing useless. But you know who *loves* time-typing? The Public Transit Union. So yeah, that is why I work for them and The Railroad Renegade, the most boring magazine about, you guessed it, trains and travel.

As mentally stimulating and financially rewarding as it sounds, I am fortunate that I can work remotely from my home. Writing in my own space is when I produce my best work. Also, a time-type is too frick'n heavy – and valuable - to carry around to an office building seven days a week. Oh yeah, that's another down side; I get like NO holiday time off. Whatever, not like I really want to go anywhere anyway. Once I am done with my morning report and email the results to my editor, I have the rest of the day to focus on writing what I really want. Out of the 157 open projects going on, I will find the right ending to one of them, and it will be the huge success I need to guarantee my name along with all the other legends of writing. So, to the machine I go! But, maybe a bath first; and a load of laundry to wash off the gravel and blood from my clothes.

While my tub is filling up, I should check for any updates on my Time-Type from my future self. I love the old aesthetic of the machine. Like a 1950's retro-futurism standard typewriter, but with huge coiling pipes and cables stringing from the back to the Motherboard Unit. The movers did not like having to move all this equipment to my space, but really where else could I put this, the basement? This is specialized equipment that you have to spend years mastering, not everyone can pick up the craft. Well, actually, that is true for maintenance of the machine, for writing on it yourself, you just need to know basic language skills. But, these machines aren't easy to come by, I'm lucky to have found this one stored away at my grandfather's place after he passed away. No one else in the family had a passion for the craft of writing, so I got to keep it. You do

Alyse Morrell

have to hold a certified permit to operate one of these things so the Time-Agency can monitor the Ripple Effect. Luckily keeping track of on-peak travel for commuters is on the low priority list for the Time-Agency to suspect global espionage from me.

Leaning over the page I can see a note patched through while I was out.

Don't go outside.

Okay, great advice but a little too late. Before I can make a message back to my past self, another note transfers itself in. The keys move on their own to a steady rhythm.

Don't answer the door.

Okay, that's a little bit more ominous. It's not like I can text back "Why?", Time-Types only work one way, and usually give much more detail than this to avoid misinterpretation or paranoia. Before I can even sit to make a note to self about being more specific, the buzzer at my door rings. Through the foggy glass window on the door I can see two looming figures waiting. One decides to knock on the door and announce himself as NYPD.

Crap, I don't know what to do.

I crack the door open with the chain lock still attached, and ask how I can help them.

"Hello, is this the residence of Celeste Jennings?"

"Yes, it is,"

"Are there any other residents at this address?"

"Umm, no, it's just me."

Alyse Morrell

“We’ve received reports of cycle-bikes being stolen from this address and we wondered if you could take a look at our recent reclaimed items to see if one is yours?”

“I didn’t report a missing cycle-bike?”

“Oh, maybe you noticed something that can help us find the culprits, do you mind if we come in for some questions?”

“Actually, now really isn’t a good time,”

“It won’t take long, promise.”

I was hesitant to reply, but I agreed and asked for them to wait so I could turn the bath water off. That was a lie, I really needed to go back to my Time-Type to see if anything new came up. On the white page it read

Call the police!

But, they are already here, aren’t they?

Another knock on the door, “Ma’am, we need to speak on this matter, it is urgent.”

“One moment,” I frantically write myself a message before I hear the two men kick my front door in. A scream is caught in my throat. I’ve never been at a loss for words before, but now I find myself speechless in the face of two strangers grabbing for my neck.

Ughh, that’s really going to bruise. I don’t understand why I can’t get the hang of this hover board? Whatever, at least it was worth it to get these Sour Cat Gummies. I grab

Alyse Morrell

a bag of ice from the freezer when my Time-Type notifies me of a new message coming in.

HIDE!

What the f...

Three rapid knocks on my door distract my thoughts. Where am I suppose to hide, this apartment is tiny and sparse. I locked my door, right? If I stay quiet, they will just leave. But then I hear tingling, like they have keys, or at least know how to pick the lock. I smuggle myself under the bed, pushing as close to the wall as I can get and avoiding breathing in any dust bunnies. Instinctually I reach for my phone, but naturally I left it on the kitchen counter, in a moment of crisis!

“I thought you said you saw her come back?” One of the men says.

“I thought I did? Maybe I was watching the wrong girl?” the other answers.

“You idiot, pay attention, do you know how much is at stake on this deal?”

“I know, sorry, geez, she’s not here anyway, let’s get the machine and go.”

“We aren’t taking the machine, just some parts. Do you know how hard it is to smuggle a whole Time-Typer out of a seven-flight walk-up? Besides, we need to be out of her before she comes back.”

He sets his tool bag on the floor and knells down to riffle through it. I cover my mouth to make sure my breathing is controlled. *Please don’t notice me, Please don’t notice me,...*

A chirp rings out from my Time-Type. I’ve never heard it make that sound before and it takes the attention of the man on his knees to stand up and look at the device.

“**Mark. Mark. Error. Error.**’ What does that mean?”

Alyse Morrell

“I don’t know, and why is it in red and not in black like the other notes are? I didn’t know there could be two different color inks in at once?”

“It’s a time-traveling typewriter, holding two ink colors is the least impressive thing it can do. Look, it’s writing more.”

Red ink? That means it is from the Time-Agency. I’ve only ever gotten a message from them once before, but it was a reminder to renew my certificate last year.

The one with the deeper voice read the new message, “‘Cover your eyes and ears.’ What’s that about?”

I didn’t take the time to dissect the message; I just took its advice. Suddenly a horrible squeal came from the type-writer and flashing lights blanketed the room. The two men dropped to the floor in agony. I couldn’t hear much and could see even less with my eyes shut tight, but I could tell the two men were trying to reach the machine to turn it off. Some sort of effect was happening to my muscles as I found it harder and harder to keep my hands to my ears, and I felt certain that it was worse for the two men who received the full blow of the alarm. Even if this was my opportunity to run I couldn’t.

As suddenly as the alarm started it stopped and a voice came through the ringing in my ears, “It’s okay, you can come out now.”

I cracked my eyes to see the face that matched the reassuring voice, with his hand reaching toward me. Just past him were other feet and hands shuffling around my room picking up the two burglars from the floor with handcuffs tied around their wrists. My muscles felt like they just ran a marathon but I managed to shimmy out from under the bed, dust wads still clinking to me. This new man assisted me onto the bed and looked me over.

Alyse Morrell

“We have a medic coming on sight to help with your wounds. Are you hurt anywhere else?”

“UH, NO, I’M OKAY.” He chuckled at my response. “WHAT? WHAT IS IT?”

“It’s just, you’re yelling. Part of the effects from the Sonar-Stabilizer.”

“OH, I DIDN’T REALIZE, I mean, my bad.”

“It’s okay, happens to the best of us.” A pulsing blue light emitted from the Time-Typer and another red coded message came through.

Mission Complete: Status – Success

“What is going on?” I asked him.

“Celeste Jennings, as part of the Time-Agency as a certified and employed Time-Typer, it is our duty on the Time-Patrol Board to protect citizens from Time-Infringement Crime. We’ve been working on uncovering a ring of black market dealers trying to use Time-Typers for personal gain, causing long term negative ripples in our current timeline. Our office received an emergency message from this Time-Typer this morning and we needed to act immediately.”

“But, I never sent an emergency message to the Time-Agency office?”

“No, you haven’t yet,” He went to the side panel of the device, that I honestly paid no attention to before, and typed in a code, changing the blue light to green. From there, he typed the message

**Hyde Street, Flat 714, 16:25. Code 10-33, B & E
in progress. Suspects:2 Victim:1 Stop**

“Does that say ‘Victim, one’?” I asked him.

Alyse Morrell

“That is just phrasing, it will make sense to the past, but don’t worry about it. Seriously, the med team should be here by now, can I have them look you over?”

“I’m fine,” I said rubbing the bruises with my non-bleeding hand, “I got these before they even came in.”

“Okay, well, let me set this back to work-function,” He went to the same panel and typed in what I am guessing was the same code again, turning the light off completely, “Do you mind if I take your statement now?”

“Ah, sure, where do you want me to start? At the beginning, huh? I guess it started when I felt this craving for Sour Cat Gummies and decided to take my hover board to the corner bodega...”