Concerning Your Future

While predetermination might suggest this attempt at forewarning is a moot point, I feel it crucial to attempt, nevertheless.

I’m afraid with the decades of weathering and hindsight I may be so far removed from the embittered young man I was; positive changes that ironically perhaps have thrown me far from the shoes I once wore - such that you might not give this credence.

However it is vitally imperative that having survived the year 2020, in the interest of self-preservation and progress – when it’s perceptively palpable and obvious, you absolutely must not

[WORD LIMIT REACHED]

Clean Shirt

The passer-by bumps into me and the front of my shirt is soaked in coffee.
The passer-by is gone.
My phone buzzes.

I need a clean shirt for work.
The cashier at J.Deer has the most beautiful smile I’ve ever seen.
    “Would you like to go for a drink with me?”

I leave the shop with evening plans and a clean shirt.
My phone buzzes.
    “Enjoy your first date with the love of our life. You lucky bastard.”
My phone buzzes again.
    “P.S. Sorry about the shirt”.

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Flash Fiction Stories

Rory A Barclay

Concerning Your Future

FIRST PRIZE in the Adult Flash Fiction Competition

Clean Shirt

Matilda Cederblad

RUNNER UP in the Adult Flash Fiction Competition
Monsters

Jayne wants the invention all for herself.

And she’ll do anything to make that happen.

She’s stabbed me and has set the lab on fire. I’m going to die. But maybe not.

I perfected it, you see. Quantum Temporal Entanglement. I can send a warning back to you (me?) to just before I (you?) meet her for the first time.

So, pick somebody else as your research assistant. When she walks into your office, pretend the vacancy has been already filled and turn her away.

Or my final discovery will be yours...

That monsters are real.

Bill Cox

RUNNER UP in the Adult Flash Fiction Competition

Remind Me

Hey C,

Ok, you’ve won the bet - if you can remember, that is. But I gotta admit, I really didn’t see this one coming, so sending over the money might be a bit... y’know, difficult at the moment, at least while I get to grips with it. We were pissed when we agreed, remember? Even I was certain you’d be out of pocket pretty soon. Look at us now, eh? The irony is, even with all these marvellous alterations, I honestly don’t know what reminded me about it.

Anyway, Computer - could you switch me off for the night?

Henry Jaspars

FIRST PRIZE in the Young Adult Flash Fiction Competition

Paranoia

The bells kept ringing, a prolonged, ear-splitting peal in the distance. This felt too unrealistic, fake almost. My mind was racing with contrasting prospects. I sat impatiently in the exceedingly cramped wardrobe as the blaring bells continued. The shadowing footsteps began getting louder and louder as they traveled towards me. A faint noise progressed its way throughout the halls. They were getting closer by the minute. I held onto the coat hanger for dear life as I hear them enter. The door to the wardrobe slowly swings open and I see him standing there. My cat, Leonardo.

Erin Toner

RUNNER UP in the Young Adult Flash Fiction Competition
Elixir

10,000 years later.
“We have landed on the turquoise planet, Duplicous. Home to the Duplicous aliens.”
“Get the slime sample and get out undetected.” Said the chief of operations worryingly.
Lucy got her invisible suit on and turned it to invisible, she stepped out in the anti-gravity space. She floated elegantly past the aliens who were on guard. Finally, she landed with ease, she stopped at the drunk aliens who were sleeping on duty. Lucy poked them just to make sure they’re asleep, they continued drooling. Lucy got out her knife and scraped some slime off the alien’s suit...

from my future self
roam far and free
observe the sun and moon and stars
make merry
manage
your
fears
utilise all your skills
trust in others
undo errors
rely on your instincts
enjoy the silence
smile
everything will be fine
leave the past behind
from my future self, hello

It’s 4am. Nice to meet you.

Eighteen years on and we’re both awake.

I’m waiting anxiously to hear the clattering of high heels thrown in the doorway.

You only get warned about the baby stage don’t you? No one tells you that they never really stop keeping you awake.

Look down now, at her soft round cheeks, her pouting lips, her heavy breathing. Tiny curling hands grasping your thumb. Her small soft body laying across your arm. She won’t always be up every hour.

Be her soft, safe place while you can. Her comfort in a rattly, noisy, hard world.

Bernadette Trimmings
RUNNER UP in the Young Adult Flash Fiction Competition

R L Bates

Bethany Watson
A wardrobe with a mirror stands in a corner. I often look at You through it.
I will keep You safe, I promise.
I will come to visit you often.
I will meet you here. With the doors wide open, I hope you can see Me too.
I am Me. And You are You.
I will keep You safe, I promise.

The Wond(wat)erland
I rushed to my mobile. It was time! Like magic, a technological trick!
A message from the future! How possible?
“Come on…” I said, yet; wondered a lot, and opened my message box.
On March 4, 6.30 pm, the message said:
“Improve your swimming. Learn to fish. Get used to being wet.”
“What… what’s all this?” I muttered. “Being wet? Fishing?”
I threw the mobile on to the couch, turned the TV on to forget – all nonsense.
An expert was on the news, talking:
“Yes, if we can’t stop climate change, melting glaciers will flood the world.”

Soak
‘April,’ the message began, ‘enjoy your bath. Let the water soothe you and the steam take hold. This is the inspirational moment, the one you have been waiting for. Shona comes to you and your life is never the same again. As her story unfolds, her character takes you on a journey, and you travel far with her by your side. Soak deep into the stillness and listen. Take your time to engage with your imagination, your ticket out of here. This is it! Tune in to yourself and the rest will follow. Maybe grab a notebook and pen.’

From: Queen Canute
Hello, old self. Take this message as a wink through the wormhole. NB. 21st hour of the 21st day, year, and century. If you live happily, high on a hill, in splendid isolation. From upstairs, one sees the North Sea, licking the bowl of Stonehaven. But curses, spring upon summer has dried up your well. Ever practical, you’re preparing to bore for aqua vitae. Don’t bother. Sit back in your lilac Adirondack chair and watch the water come to you. The whole town submerged. The tide laps at your garden. The bigger question: whether to build an Ark?
“Text Generation

Stop!


You are on the verge of becoming part of the Text Generation, a generation robbed of posture from decades of being hunched over phones. Now physically unable to lift their heads, their eyes point permanently downwards. Brilliant blue skies and radiant orange suns have been replaced by people’s feet and dog turds.

I’m not suggesting you take up yoga – spandex was never your friend – but, straighten up. Lift your head. Look at what’s around you, not just below you.

Don’t make a rod for your own back. Otherwise, that’s exactly what you’ll need.”

Circadian Rhythms

It was a pale, arid day – the kind you only experience in January. The merriment of the festive season gone, the cold air parched and crying out for rain, snow, even hail. A reality check in the aftermath of obligatory joy. I turned a corner but found no solace in the change. I regretted it now, having no understanding at the time of the butterfly effect until one fateful autumnal day by the lake. Winter bites, mercilessly. Take heart, the seasons come and go as waves ebb and flow. You, joy will always follow.

Dinna be a Numptie!

Bide at hame! Dinna ging first fittin the nicht! Yer life winna be the same if ye dae. Afore January’s oot yer mither an faither’ll be in the hoasipital, an baith yer grans an yer grandas deid, wi nae a sowl tae haud thir hauns. Yer faimly aw awa, doon tae ye! I dinna say ye’ll be affa ill yersel, mebbe aye, mebbe nae, bit ye’ll nivver be the same loon, I guarantee. Jist min’ ma words! Fan the Covid’s awa, thir’ll be ither years tae be gaan aboot, jist nae noo. Stay ben thae hoose!
Stop messn abt. Now. Pls. Focus!


Sorrysorry shock. Bt u need! I needed. Ws aslp 2 lon.

Now breath yr clean air. Moremore. Be gr8fl.

Now ShiftShiftShift 4 our tmoros.

My Father

His was a life of simplicity, hard work and devotion, never seeking limelight, always in the background, quietly enabling opportunities for his family and others. His naval service during World War II shaped his love of Canada, a quality he passed on to his children. Post war, he made a life for his family for whom education and jobs beckoned with his encouragement to work hard and achieve their goals. He was a man of easy humour, quiet faith, and deep commitment to those around him. In short, an incredibly decent man, my father, not to be forgotten.

A short reflection on a beloved parent who lives on his children and grandchildren

Rob Donelson

Hello Emma, aged 60.

This is yourself from 10 years in the future trying this new gismo. Just to prove it’s me, the letter is still in the gap under the loose floorboard. Life’s good. Quilting’s still fun as are the swings during the morning walks. Raj is still as cheeky. Golden Wedding Anniversary is on the horizon.

Don’t give up on the chocolate, proven to do no harm. Take the vaccine, that’s what held it at bay. It was all countries working together, vaccinating the world that did it.

More next time

Toodaloo

Your 70-year spritely self

Emma

Marka Rifat

Hema Kamath
FINDING A SIGNAL

Finding a signal is getting harder. Most masts are beyond repair and broken into recyclable parts. It’s much quieter now, but not in a good way; there are fewer of us. If you can’t work the land, you’re expected to just walk off into the hills. To vanish. A bard came by this Spring, with tales of everything southwards dying. So sad, we could have changed, had we really known what would happen, but it was kept from us. You must tell them. What will really happen, if we don’t, if we can’t, stop burning hydrocarbons.

Sent from my iPad

Submission:

Ross, I won’t tell you when it happens. You don’t want to know that. But I can tell you it was quietly. Depression doesn’t get you. You are not suffocated by those wretched tendrils. You are a survivor. Sure, the road ahead isn’t completely smooth but you finish the journey. Your not maggot food either. The root of a cherry blossom tree pierced you were your heart was. When the tree scatters it’s flowers you can hear the world in the wind. You will hear his voice, he is a man now and you will be so proud.

Richard Bennett

2744

Hit the glaik, old Sunovagunny! Lang time no seek. The WD40’s workin good, never fear. I’m younger than some o the kids on the block noo. 743 in auld money! Another year and I’ll be havin another one – or 2 ... or 10. So she says, anyways, Heyho, nae Yowes on Yooraynus, as we yoost to say! Weel hard on they Chinee boyz, tho, eh? The nicht’s fair drawin in here on Venus. Miss Mars – sometimes. Say hullo to the Moon when you see her. I mind the way that cold eye used to hold us.
**No Karoshi**

No time for questions. I’m dying. You’re dying. We’re dying. Again.

Good news? 200 years from now, you’re alive. In ten year’s time, our brain died. Overwork. But another was taken from a healthy compatible, bleached, and its cellular structure replaced with our brain cells.

It’s happened another four times since. Otherwise, medical science keeps us fit. The next ten compatibles are in stasis. We go to work every day. Because we’re needed. You always were good. Now, I’ve got all this experience. And your colleagues are all dead.

Sign a DNR. Please. The ten years were fine.

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**Please Text Us Back**

Oh dear me. We’re sixty-four and the clock’s running. At the end of this sentence, you realise that you shouldn’t have been so smug: there were more questions on the other side of the paper, so to speak. See? Told you so. But don’t sweat it; there’s no point getting in a tizzy now. What you could do though is message us last week and ask us to message us the week before that, and before that, and so forth. There wasn’t a pivotal moment, but maybe we can stop the drift. See you next week.

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**Story:**

To be honest, it’s a bit bland here, but they let you bring a couple of things to make it feel more like home. I chose the Victorian mug from Broughty Ferry that we bought in that curio shop in the West End. It looks beautiful now with its colours restored and all the cracks magically vanished. And, actually, we’re not supposed to try and send messages but there’s a woman in the holding bay who’s getting CPR right now and I’m going to slip this into her hand. If you’re reading this she made it...

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**Avery Mathers**

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**Max Scratchmann**