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TIME MAIL

Written by

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QIANG
I need some time alone.

Qiang runs off.

JIAOSHOU
We have to work on this together.

INT. ICNOTUS LOBBY- DAY.

The elevators are crowded, so Qiang goes down the stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL- DAY.

Qiang slips by some SMOKING REPORTERS. At the midsection of the stairs he sits in a pose of despair.

Qiang's phone buzzes, but he ignores it.

Moments later shouting breaks him from his thoughts.

SMOKING CAMERAMAN
Check this out!

SMOKING REPORTER
This is big!

SMOKING CAMERAMAN
Strange messages...from the future?

SMOKING REPORTER
No way. The future, it's a hoax.

Qiang looks up, hearing the Smokers run off. He then checks his message.

From Tu Qiang 3/12/2059

Qiang is surprised.

QIANG
(To Seli)
Twenty-fifty-nine?

He opens the message.

Everything's going to be okay, you can quit later, but right now you have to help her. Go to the address below, you don't have much time. Please Qiang, it means everything to us.

A 3D map projects out from the message. Qiang gets up, shocked, he hesitates, flustered, before running downstairs.

INT. IGNOTUS ELEVATORS- DAY.

Qiang comes out on the floor below where there are reporters.

REPORTER #3
...after a rocky start, the Fate app is up and running, and users are reporting that they are receiving messages from the future...

Qiang squeezes into the elevator.

INT. IGNOTUS LOBBY- DAY.

Qiang runs from the elevator into an even busier lobby filled with PRESS. The lobby is decorated in a way that feels high tech, with large displays and holograms, but something is cold and metallic about the interior structure. Pieces of it are designed to resemble the Hub, with light fixture resembling the chandelier structure of the quantum computer.

FLUSTERED REPORTER
It sounds like a hoax to me.
Netizens are quick to question what game Ignotus is...

Qiang listens a moment, catches his breath, then he's off.

EXT. IGNOTUS- DAY (SUNSET).

Outside is the bustling ShenZhen Luohu district, transformed by years of economic development, its neon lights glimmer in the coming twilight. Looming tall behind Qiang is the Ignotus building, a complex structure with folds of glass and metal melding into a seamless vortex.

Crowds of PEOPLE, NEWS VANS, and GUARDS hustle the common area and streets. Qiang rushes through them.

EXT. LUOHU STREETS- DAY (SUNSET)

Qiang raises his hand to hail a taxi, but the wide streets are packed with traffic, in total deadlock.

He finds a lone electric Rent-a-Bike hooked up to a solar panel structure and unlocks it with his Silver Scroll. He's on his way, following his phone's G.P.S. through warren alleys and expansive highways.

EXT. COASTAL HILL- NIGHT (SUNSET).

The last shade of light is leaving the sky as Qiang pedals his now dead electric bike up a mercilessly steep hill. Each heave moves him a foot forward, where he wobbles a moment before the next pedal pushes him up a bit more.

He jumps off the bike, huffing, and picks it up, carrying it as he runs up the hill.

EXT. COASTLINE- NIGHT (TWILIGHT).

LED street lamps snap on as Qiang checks his GPS, he's almost to the point on the map. Drenched in sweat, he looks around, but the area is empty- it seems a meaningless path along the inky, black ocean.

In the distance, unseen by Qiang, is a GIRL standing on the edge of the cliff, she is looking out at the dark ocean, a look of quiet dread upon her face.

Qiang gets closer, startled when he notices her. She has her eyes closed, a tear runs down her cheek, as she opens her arm wide. She tips forward into a fall. Qiang dashes towards her, just as she goes over the edge he grabs her.

The weight of her plunge tugs his grip lose and she slides out of his arm, but he manages to hold on to her hand. She looks up at him.

QIANG

Help me.

He tries to pull her up, but he's tired and she isn't helping.

GIRL

(Calmly)

You can let go. It's alright.

QIANG

I'm too tired to hold on. You have to climb up.

GIRL

I said it's okay to let go. I have no future.

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a Silver Scroll.

GIRL (CONT'D)

There's nothing for me. I had no message.

She tosses the Silver Scroll behind her, it shatters on the rocks below.

QIANG
Please, I can't let you go. I
can't...

GIRL
No one cares if I die.

QIANG
I do. I got a message, it sent me here. Right here. Right now, for you.

The Girl can't believe it, she mulls it over.

Suddenly, her hand slips and she snaps out of it. She grabs the ledge, and finds footing on the rocks to kick off of. They both come crashing over the side.

Qiang lays there exhausted. She's unnaturally excited.

GIRL
Show me. Show me the message.

With unsteady hands he takes out his scroll and opens it.

The future message is still open, she reads and begins to giggle. Emboldened, she looks bravely out at the dark ocean.

GIRL (CONT'D)
Unbelievable. How did it know?

QIANG
I don't know, yet.

The Girl takes a deep breath and sits.

GIRL
I'm so relieved.

QIANG
Why?

GIRL
I was ready to go, I had no future.
I felt I had nothing...

She begins to tear up, a bit ashamed of her emotional outburst, she wipes them away and steps away from Qiang.

QIANG
Who are you? What's your name?

GIRL

Jin XueYuan. Jin... just call me Jin.

QIANG

I'm Tu Qiang. I'm a coder at Ignotus.

JIN

Really?

Jin helps him up.

JIN (CONT'D)

So you worked on this?

Jin hands the Silver Scroll back to him.

QIANG

Yes.

She is suspicious of something.

QIANG (CONT'D)

I'm too thirsty to think. Is there anywhere to grab a drink nearby?

JIN

There are no stores way up here.
But I know a place if we head back to town.

Jin leads the way.

INT. JIN'S LIVING ROOM- NIGHT.

The view out the window is amazing, overlooking the ocean, but the place is a huge mess, littered with boxes and a blanket of delivery food trays. Qiang doesn't step in, remaining a statue at the front door.

JIN

Out of the way, I need to close the door.

Jin pulls on his shirt and he steps aside.

JIN (CONT'D)

What's wrong.

Qiang comes in and plops down on some boxes that might have a couch somewhere underneath them.