

Time Travel by Frances Lynch

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My cousin Stanley lives in the future. He posts tweets proving he is ahead of me. His words fly enthusiastically across the screen of my phone. *2018 is starting out not so badly; I'm seeing just a few wiggly clouds in the distance.* I am grateful for his insight since I am still in 2017. Stanley lives in New Zealand, on the other side of the International Date Line.

The time travel thing is our private prank. I text: *Hi, how are you? How are things in the future?* He answers back: *Things in the future are abundant and dazzling!* I realize we have created this fiction. Nevertheless, it is an enormous comfort each time I read these messages.

When we were kids, our dads drove us to the beach on Long Island one blistering hot summer day. Stanley and I were excited to see the sand and the waves. We laughed and hooted in the car as the wind from the open windows blasted our hair. Our legs, dripping with sweat, stuck to the vinyl seats. On the way, we stopped at a gas station and our dads bought two twelve packs of Michelob. When we got to the beach, there was a sign which read “No Alcohol” so they opened one twelve pack and instructed us to bury the other. We were happy to be digging in the warm sand by the cool ocean. We rapidly created a hole, covered up the beer, and marked the spot with a special shell. We then scampered off to play in the water.

About an hour later, our dads wanted the beer back, and told us to dig it up. The tide had changed and every shell resembled our special shell. We tried one location, then another, with intoxicated fathers shouting orders at us and growing angrier by the minute.

At one point, Stanley and I were facing each other on our knees, digging up an area as we had been instructed. Our eyes met, and I could see that he was thinking the same thing I was, which was that I hope we find this beer, but I also hope even more that we don't. We never did locate the buried twelve-pack. We were put in the car without seatbelts, as always, and driven back to Stanley's house in a haphazard manner. Neither of us spoke as we went seemingly at the speed of light along the turnpike, ours dads complaining about our lack of beer finding abilities.

I visited Stanley's New Zealand recently. The land there is pristine, boasting deserted rocky shorelines with deafeningly ocean sprays. On beaches far from Long Island that could have been the backdrop for a dystopia film, the rain and wind rushed at us. At times, laughing and teeth chattering, we took refuge in the car. Other places, the wind was no trouble, but pesky sandflies attacked, chasing us off the beach until a Kiwi in a roadside coffee truck sold us a natural sand-fly remedy.

On the calmer, more protected parts of the coast, albatrosses soared overhead and sea lions barked to one another. The sea lions were wrinkly, enormous creatures, four times the size of me. No barriers separated us. They were less that a stone's throw away. I was instructed that if one charged, not to retreat to the grassy knoll area behind the beach, as other sea lions might be sleeping there. Stanley and I made ourselves quiet and tiptoed around the snarly fiends. *Careful*, Stanley warned softly. *They'll be asking us to dig up their beer in a minute.*

Our fathers have long since passed away. Mine from lung cancer and Stanley's from Alzheimer's, but on that Long Island beach years ago, Stanley and I became forever bonded. We became co-conspirators in life such that distance and time would never be allowed to separate us. As adults, we have journeyed and met each other on various continents. I've heard it said that cousins are your first friends. They can also travel with you in a way that no one else quite can, through expanses of plains, cities, mountains and shoreline, but also through time and history where certain stories connect and circle back within themselves.

BIO: Frances Lynch's writing has appearing in Flash Fiction Magazine, Notable American Black Women and is a teacher with the New York based Writers Studio founded by Phillip Schultz.



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