

Text from Unknown Number

by Jessica Johns

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My girl,

I write to you from the future. I know, I know, a text is a weird way to get a message from the future. Maybe I should have just showed up all ghost-like, or appeared like one of those holograms. But those are moments that end (like all moments do), at least a text you can read over and over again to make sure it's real.

I'm writing because, well, I need your help. Isn't that why anyone from the future visits the past? That was the whole premise for *Back to the Future*. You kids used to love that movie. You used to try and get your hair real static-y and then run around the trailer and pretend you were Christopher Lloyd. It wasn't as much as you loved *The Secret of Nimh* though. The owl part really scared you, and I didn't want to make it worse by telling you ôhô means something bad for nehiyawak, so I said to imagine him as an Elder. It didn't help, you were still quite scared. You never hid your feelings behind anything, either, which I think is a real strength.

Anyways, where was I. Oh yes, I need your help. I need you to pass on a message to your mother. Tell her the bread recipe is in the top cupboard by the oven, behind a bunch of old spices. She's been looking for it for months and it's really starting to piss me off. She had the wherewithal to write down my recipes before I died, but then just left them all loose! I told her, put them in a proper book or you'll lose them. And then look what happened.

Don't tell her that last part. She was yelled at by me enough, I don't need to do it from the future too. Don't mention that you heard from me, either. Not yet. Just get her the recipe, she's going to need it soon.

Love is bigger in the future, and I'm sending it all to you,

kokum

Reply to Unknown Number

I write this with a hell of a lot of trepidation, which I'm sure you can understand. If this is a joke, whoever is doing it is messed up. Sending me messages from my dead kokum? That's real sick.

The only reason I'm writing back is because I checked the cupboard and the recipe was there, pretty well hidden, too. So then I thought, well, it must be kokum then. Who else would know that?

Which leads me to my next question. How are you writing to me from the future when you've already died? If I'm your past, and your death was my past, then how does that work? Is it like a loop situation? Am I in some kind of matrix (another movie we watched a lot at your house, at which point I was older and much less scared of cartoon owls).

Also, why wouldn't you just text mom directly? Not that I'm not happy to hear from you, if it is you. It just seems like a roundabout way of telling her where to find something. Why not go straight to the source?

I have many more questions related to the future, but I suppose I'll save them, because I don't even know if you'll write back. And if they are going to someone pulling a very distasteful joke then I don't want them to have the satisfaction of knowing I thought so hard about all this.

Look, if this is kokum, prove it. Tell me something only you would know. If this isn't kokum, fuck off and die.

My girl,

Thank you for getting that recipe to your mom. For listening to my message, despite your (rightful) reservations.

Let me answer your questions the best that I can. I suppose you could look at the past and future like a “loop situation,” but it’s more simple than that. It could also be considered similar to *The Matrix* (honestly, I never really cared much for that movie, but it might be a useful comparison here).

After death, I didn’t really go anywhere. I was still there, living, just in another form, or realm. Like how the matrix exists at the same time as the desert of the real (except, in this case, neither one is a simulation). And time isn’t linear like all that past-present-future bullshit, you already know that. Ancestors have abilities, like Neo, but instead of bending bullets we can travel, we can see. Which is how I can text you now and know things about what will come to be. Actually, you have these abilities too, but sometimes you don’t pay attention.

Anyways, that’s enough lessons for one letter, this isn’t a goddamn Ted Talk.

As for not texting your mom directly, well, that’s harder to explain than death and time. Simply put, I think it would make her quite sad to hear from me. I think she’d be happy, too, because she misses me and all that, but on a scale it would be outweighed by the sadness. I know I’m your kokum, but I was her mom. And she’s a lot more sensitive than she lets on.

Creator, after all I’ve already told you, you need more proof? Fine, here you go then:

When you were about eleven, you and I were collecting eggs from the chicken coop one morning. It was summertime and so early the sun was barely awake. As I reached into one of the nests, I asked if you believed in magic. You said you didn’t, you were too big for make-believe (or some such nonsense). I shook my head and said that was the silliest thing to ever come out of your mouth. I said

that magic was real, and I'd prove it to you. I held out an egg in my palm for you to see, then I covered it with my other hand. When I lifted that hand again, there were two eggs in my palm. Do you remember? Anyways, I told you not to tell anyone because it was something very personal to me, and I had only ever told one other person in my life. I'll never forget the look on your face when you promised me you'd keep my secret. So earnest, proud to share this truth with me.

Look, I hope that's enough for you. And if it isn't, well, the only other creatures that witnessed this were the chickens and you think pahpahahkwanak could figure out texting, and then pretend to be me messaging you, just for a laugh? Yeah right, chickens aren't that smart and they definitely aren't that funny.

I love you, my girl. I know this is early (for you, anyways), but happy birthday. I know it'll be a beautiful day.

Reply to Unknown Number

Dear kokum,

Okay, okay, I believe it's you. Sorry for that fuck off part in my last message.

Thanks for indulging me and trying to use my suggested comparisons, but it sounds like time is actually nothing like a loop, and definitely nothing like The Matrix.

I also think you're right about mom. I used to think she was quite untouchable, kind of like you, but I've noticed a lot more through the years. I may not see everything, but I saw the small ways things affected her. Besides, I'm glad you messaged me. Rarely anything is ever just one thing, but this definitely has me feeling more joy than sadness. And a bit of relief, too, though I don't know why.

I said I had more questions about the future. They were ones like "where do I end up in five years?" and "what are the winning lottery numbers?" and "do I ever stop feeling this sad?" But I thought hard

about it and I don't really want to know. If time is always, then I'm already living that future. Am I getting this right?

Besides, with regards to sadness, I think it's only relieved in small moments. For example, yesterday was my birthday (as you know). We spent it just me and Mom, because I didn't want a whole fanfare about it, and you know the other reason. Mom told me this story, though, to cheer me up. She said that one time when she was a kid, you and her were in the chicken coop collecting eggs. You asked her if she believed in magic, and she said she wasn't sure. And then, before her eyes, you turned one egg into two. You asked her to keep it a secret, but she didn't think you'd mind me knowing. As she told the story, she didn't tell it like you did a trick. It was as real to her as anything else in the world. That's how I remember it too.

Anyways, it's getting late, I should go. I hope we keep messaging. We don't have to talk about the future or lessons or any of that. We can just bullshit. We can just be boring together. I can update you on all the new shows I've been watching. And in the meantime, I'll also try to be better at paying attention.

P.s. Mom made me your bread buns for my birthday. She said you always made them for her on hers, and when she was going through a bad time. Thank you for that gift.

Love is still pretty big in the past, and I'm sending it to you.

xx