

# *Back to the Past*

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TEEN SHORT STORY WRITING CONTEST: FIRST PLACE – GRADE 10 TO 12

Twelve-year old James trudges home from a long day at school. His backpack feels heavier than a boulder as he kicks a small rock down the street. It skids off of the sidewalk and onto the other side of the street. James makes no move to get it, but that doesn't mean he doesn't look across the small-town street with regret.

He turns away from the pebble and continues walking. He slides his feet on the ground scratching off the grips of his blue sneakers in a weak attempt to imitate kicking the pebble.

James's eyes are so focused on the ground that he doesn't notice when a man walks past him and slides a folded piece of paper into James's open palm.

The sudden weight in his hand, no matter how small, startles James out of his thoughts. He lifts his head and looks down the street at the man willing him to turn around so James can see his face. He doesn't. All he knows is that the man had dark skin like James's own, and he was around six feet tall, according to James's estimation.

James squints after the man as he walks away. It didn't dawn on James to follow the man until he was too far away. He looks down at the note as he unfolds it and brings it closer to his face to read.

**James, if you want the world you know to have a future, you need to make sure Grace Miller doesn't graduate highschool or kill her before it's too late. She will get involved with the government, and start a war between the aliens and us that will doom society as you know it.**

James's eyes widen as he reads. He scoffs at no one when he finishes. Did that man actually think that James would believe it?

He folds the note again and tucks it into the pocket of his jeans. He looks down at the ground as he walks. His upside down *Back to the Future* shirt stares back at him.

Sixteen year old James walks into math class on the first day of school reluctantly. Math is his favourite subject. He weaves his way around the desks to the back of the room where the seating chart on the board told him to sit. He sits down and opens his backpack to take out his binder when a girl sits down next to him to do the same.

James looks at her. He knows everyone in his grade, and he definitely doesn't know her. "Are you a new student this year?" He says.

"Yeah. I'm Grace Miller." She replies, placing her binder onto her desk with a thud. "Nice to meet you. I'm James." He smiles, covering up his unease. He never forgot about the note he received from the stranger four years earlier. .

Eighteen year old James laughs at the joke that Grace Miller told. Shortly after they met in math class they started dating.

He never forgot about the note.

James looks out at the field squinting against the bright summer sun. He's graduating in a month. It seems to James like it was yesterday when he got the note warning him. Since then James brushed it off, but he couldn't ignore the coincidences anymore. How could that

man have known that he would meet someone named Grace Miller who wanted to work in the government when she graduated college?

It was a good thing that James was planning on majoring in Computer Science in university. He knew what to do. James excuses himself from his group of friends and enters the school, walking in the direction of the library.

If that note was right, James has to do something about it. He can't live the rest of his life knowing that he killed a human being, but if he makes sure that Grace doesn't graduate he could save the world, and if the note was a joke, Grace could get her grades up again. She was smart.

James enters the quiet of the school library. It's a sharp contrast to the roaring hallways. He walks over to the computers and logs in as one of his friends. If what he's about to do can be traced back, he doesn't want it to be traced to him.

He opens a browser and types in the URL that will lead him to the website the teachers publish their grades on. Over the last year he has purposely put himself in situations that would allow him to see the passwords of many of the teachers that Grace has. He memorized all of them.

He quickly changes all of Grace's grades to failing ones before logging off of the computer. He shoulders his backpack and walks out of the library heading to his next class just as the bell rings.

Three weeks later James hugs Grace as she tries to figure out why she won't be graduating with the rest of their friend group. James gives her possible reasons as to why it could've happened.

She refuses to believe James's explanation of it being a mistake.

Forty year old James walks down the street of his old town, clutching a folded letter in his hand. Dark circles line his eyes from days without sleep. He blames Grace and the war. The last thing he was able to do before the aliens wiped out the human race was test the time machine he started building years prior. It worked.

As James passes a twelve year old boy, who goes by the name of James, he slips the note into his hand and scurries away. James recites the note in his head.

**You need to make sure Grace Miller doesn't graduate highschool. It's not enough to change her grades in your senior year. You need to kill her, otherwise she will doom the entire world.**

Hopefully his younger self will listen.