

Time Trials- An ENF Story by Makoto (Incomplete)

I don't usually dream a lot. But as I lay asleep on a particularly gloomy Sunday night with school the next day, I began to notice my mind wander. I felt like I was floating... yet somehow falling at the same time. I could see myself floating suspended in a field of endless white. My cute Hello Kitty pajamas- don't judge me- were nowhere to be found.

The white began to fade out and a small grassy village started to fill in the gaps. Thatch huts dotting the plains and people walking around wearing thick wool garments. I started to hear the clamour of people and the bleating of sheep as I felt my consciousness returning.

I've never been one to think too hard on the meaning of dreams. I was completely ready to dismiss what had just happened as inconsequential.

But as I rubbed my eyes awake the sound of sheep hadn't ceased. I could smell the scents of wheat and what I hoped wasn't manure. And I could feel blades of grass on my bare bottom.

Any drowsiness I had quickly dissipated the moment I realized I was laying naked in some shepherd's village who knows where.

I instinctively cover myself and take in my surroundings.

It was the same as my dream. If I didn't know better I'd say I was in some Mongol village - I didn't even know there WERE still villages like this anywhere. I shiver in the cold and try to find a place to hide my naked body.

Covering my breasts as best I can with one arm and my flower with the other hand, I dart awkwardly behind one of the huts. I feel my nipples press against my arm reminding me that it's freezing cold, explaining the villagers' heavy outfits. Unfortunately the village doesn't have any kind of arrangement to it, there was no defined center or outskirts, just different huts in different spots with different orientations.

I pretend, as hard, as I can, that I didn't just step in sheep poo as I ran. "it's just mud" I promise myself.

How I evade the gaze of the villagers is a mystery to me. a pale naked girl in a sea of tan dark-haired folk wearing thick dyed wool outfits. luckily the village is not very large. there can't be more than 20 people, 40 sheep, and 10 horses total.

Praying no one sees me in my completely inadequate hiding spot, I try to figure out what's going on.

I was asleep. I had that weird dream. and now I'm here. naked.

I poke my head around the corner of the hut I've chosen as a hiding spot. I carefully determine no one is inside, and then duck in for cover.

There's a pile of hay with wool bedding, and sparse furnishings made mostly of leather and some wood. I open a chest at the foot of the bedding and bless my luck to find a wool coat inside.

I don the coat. it's itchy. My shivering nipples itch as they brush against the wool. but at least I was covered.

No longer feeling exposed, curiosity overcomes my helplessness and trepidation as I step outside to take in my surroundings.

As I step outside, every step and minor movement of my body causes me to itch. The scratchy wool hadn't been treated in any way. Grandma's itchyb knit sweaters have nothing on these.

Dark faces pass me as I take in the sights of the village. they seemed to take notice of me, but disregard me. Funny how far the local threads can get you. I wondered what they thought of me.

It seems I'm free to roam around. No one's giving me the evil eye, and it's not so much cold anymore as it is itchy.

Do I walk around the village, or think back to home?

As I stared at the unfamiliar faces I thought about how different this was from home. How did I get here? The last thing I remember I was in my cute Hello Kitty pajamas in my nice soft bed... looking over at my alarm clock...

As my mind mapped out the details of my room I started to feel like I was nodding off. My body felt light and I started falling backwards; but slowly, as if I was weightless. The wool coat started to feel heavier on me until it felt like it was falling straight through me. And the rural village started to blur into a cloud of white.

I feel like for an entire moment all my consciousness had stopped.

When I came to, my bare bottom bounced onto my bed as I landed from my slow-motion fall.

I was back in my room. The familiar sights and smells of a normal bedroom. Everything was as it should be. No nomads or sheep or Yurts.

I appeared to be sitting on something and gave it a little tug to see what it was. The Hello Kitty shorts I wore to bed last night slid out from underneath my bottom. After looking around I found the top too.

Was it a dream? I don't smell... "Mud." anymore. And there's nothing on my feet. But how did I land in my bed? And I know I wore pajamas to bed last night... did I take them off in my sleep? If it was a dream what did it mean? If it wasn't... what WAS it?

My train of thought grinds to an abrupt stop as I look at my alarm clock. 35 minutes later than I normally wake up. "OH MY GOD, I'm going to be late!" I shrieked. I threw on a uniform and bolted out the door. Skipping my shower, my breakfast, brushing my teeth, and worst of all my coffee.

"Great way to start a monday Makoto..."

After showing up barely on time, the rest of the school day went off without a hitch. By Monday's standards anyway.

"You ever have a dream you think is real?" I asked my friend Saki as she took a bite of her fast food burger.

"Totally. This one time I dreamed I was dreaming about a dream where this guy... um... there was a thing. And he rode in a Zeppelin... and I think I was an Airline Steward... I forget the rest. Why?" She replied candidly.

"I had a really realistic one last night." I responded before taking a sip of my soda. "I was spirited away to some Nomad village. Then I woke up naked in my bed."

"Sounds like rape to me. YUP. That'll do it." This is why I loved Saki. Her sense of humor always cheers me up.

"Oh stop!" I teased back, "if that counts as rape than what YOU did to me over Winter Break would land you in jail."

"Pssht. You were asking for it and you know it. You little slut." Saki winked, and we both laughed at our inappropriate sense of humor.

When the laughter died down I stole a glance at the store's clock, making sure I had enough time to make it home before cram school.

Before I could even process the location of the hands I started to feel fuzzy. My mind started going black and everything I could see started glowing and shimmering like brilliant white diamonds. I started falling backwards, but somehow the chair didn't topple over with me. My mind went totally blank.

Only a few seconds later, I open my eyes.

VR0000000M!

"Kyay!" The deafening sound rocked my body to it's core, and I ducked as a car drove right past me. I looked around, and found myself standing on top of some kind of skyscraper.

But... the car... how did the car get here?

I shivered. It was windy up here. I go to tug at the sleeves of my uniform to hide my hands from the wind to find the sleeves absent. With the rest of the uniform with them. I was once again naked.

I stand up, recovered from my brush with near-death at the hands of a drunk driver who nearly ran me over atop a skyscraper.

I wrap my chilly breasts in my arms and take in the view. I stood atop one of thousands of shimmering Skyscrapers in an endless sea of chrome.

Overhead I could see more cars like the one that nearly killed me criss-cross across the sky. Along with giant floating structures suspended from the sky as if by wire.

I look down and can't even see the ground.

"This is getting out of hand." I say to myself. I can't even hear the words reach my ears, the sound of wind tears past me. "I've got to get inside... I'll catch cold and die up here. If I don't get ran over first."

I trudge to the access stairway at the center of my skyscraper. The wind makes it hard to walk, but I make it there with time. I was lucky no one else was up here, besides from the driver I don't think anyone's seen me.

An even greater stroke of luck is that the access stairway door wasn't locked. In fact it slides open as I draw near, and slides close after I pass. "Weird..."

As I descend I read the signs for the floors. 192-B: Cybernetic Implants, Cyber-Therapy, Gene Therapy.

191-B: Laser Diagnostics, Nano-Surgery, L-17N Treatment.

I was in some kind of cutting-edge hospital.

I stop to think about my situation. The simplest egress would be straight down the stairwell. But then I'd be on the ground level naked. Maybe I could slip onto one of the floors and steal a pair of scrubs or a lab coat, then make my escape. Maybe I should just wait it out. Last time I wound up somewhere strange I just... "fell" back where I was supposed to be after half an hour.

If I go down the ladder, I leave naked.

If I try to hold out until I return home... if it even works like that, I go home

naked.

The only option that gets me any chance of my naked body going unseen would be to grab an outfit from some of the staff.

Granted, when I do find myself whisked home-again, IF it works like that- then I still return home naked... but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

I choose a floor at random. I must look like an idiot trying to peer through the access door to see if anyone's on the other side.

It looks clear... but I can barely see at all.

Well, I thought to myself as I approached the automatic door, here goes nothing. And I stepped through the door.

I keep low to the ground, holding my breasts in my arm and my womanhood in my hand. Unfortunately I don't get very far.

VRRN. A soft synthesized voice reads an alarm. [Contamination_detected. Floor_188-B. Fire_escape_door. Commencing_Lockdown_of_Contaminated_Area.] Green lights fill dart across the hallway, and somehow the light itself is impermeable, it's as if it's a solid object. I can't get past, I'm trapped here. [Security_is_en_route. Decontamination_unit_en_route.]

"Oh my god Sirri, shut up!" I curse. I find myself shaking. They're going to find me here naked and there's nothing I can do.

I expect to see a swat team. Maybe I'll get blasted by a firehose, arrested, interrogated, and then admitted to the mental ward. I shake, feeling completely helpless, expecting the worst.

"Acknowledge." I hear a woman's voice

[Decontamination_Detected_in---] the alarm continues going off.

"Acknowledge alarm! UGH, why do I always have to yell at this thing, I thought the ITs fixed voice recognition in this ward."

[Alarm_Acknowledged. Have_a_pleasant_day_Dr._Ackerman.] Whrr.

"Hello there." The doctor said to me calmly. "What's your story? Dressed like that... let me guess, escaped from mental?"

"Um... no." I respond.

"No, not you," the Doctor mused, "you look more... adventurous than that. Let me guess, gender reassignment surgery, got cold feet at the last minute and booked it?" Was she joking? The doctor seemed completely unphased by my nudity, if anything it was just a clue for this little game she was playing. Or was this the "Gallows humor" I had heard about in Hospitals.

"Um, not exactly..." I want to tell her everything. About how I don't know where I am or how I got here. But somehow I don't find the words. She wouldn't believe me and have me put in the looney ward.

"Well, I love a good guessing game as much as the next girl," the doctor started, "but I have to be in surgery in forty five minutes, so as much as I'd like to stay and chat I need to wrap this up and get you to where you need to be."

The doctor's eyes met mine. Her eyes were brown. But I could see tiny green letters dart across her pupils. Lines and graphs, like she was scanning me.

"Huh. I don't have your chart here. I have to ask, how did you get here?"

I feel like this is the pivotal moment. I could tell her the truth. Tell her I'm not from this country--world--wherever I am. Would she even believe me?

I could bluff like mad. I'm sure there's SOMETHING I could say to her that would land me on the ground floor in a new set of threads.

Maybe there's a way I could escape. I could try to sweet talk her just long enough until she drops the containment field.

The green glow returns to her eyes as she scans me a second time. "Well?" She asks.

The feeling in my gut tells me that if I tell her the truth she'll have me strapped up and taken to the psyche ward. But somehow I draw a massive blank. No clever schemes or plausible explanations come to mind. I decide to go with the afterschool special, and tell Dr. Ackerman the truth.

I explain that I had no idea where I was or how I got here, mentioning that the only reason I was here was to steal something to wear.

She nods as I explain my story. I can see the disbelief on her face. When the story catches up to reality her possibly-cybernetic eye lights up with green lettering as it did before.

"Well," Dr. Ackerman explains, "I would not have guessed that." What's with this girl and guessing games? Maybe I could have used that to escape. "But, according this, you aren't showing any physiological signs associated with fabrication, omission, or otherwise misinformation. So, I'm going to believe you."

"Thank goodness!" I sigh. No loony bin for me.

"That being said," the space-age Doctor began, "there's valuable research that can be done here. You wouldn't happen to be from before the common era would you? No... of course you aren't, your dialect is dated but I just noticed my translator never switched on." She sighed. "Pity."

Oh dear. It's back to her guessing games. "Um... I'm from... modern times." I explain. "It's not like I was frozen or anything, I just showed up here." Then again, maybe I wasn't. I've never seen force fields or bionic eyes, or buildings so technologically advanced before.

"But you sound like you're from the stone age!" The doctor pouted. "And stop trying to tell me where you're from, it's not fun unless I get to guess... or extract the answer scientifically." Dr. Ackerman's voice sang a little as she ended her sentence. The idea of satisfying her curiosity seems to have piqued her interest.

"I think that's what I'll do!" She beamed. "VX4!"

The Hospital's robotic voice answered.

[Yes_Dr._Ackerman?]

"Cancel my next appointment!" Dr. Ackerman seemed excited.

[Acknowledged_Dr._Ackerman.]

"Have Jane Doe transported to Examinations, and enable soundproofing, I don't want any spoilers!"

[Commencing_Patient_Transportation] the robot voice replied.

Before I could object, where there were once merely bars of light, I found myself encased in a cube. The light was completely impassible, I might as well be a Mime in a box. I pound on the light, forgetting to cover my naked body, while testing how sound-proof it was.

"LET ME OUT!!" I beat on the light. I feel my breasts sway as I pummel my prison walls, causing me to regain my embarrassment and recoil from my offensive.

Dr. Ackerman smiles, and her mouth moves, but I can't hear what she says.

My prison of light starts to move across the hallway, with me still inside it. I try to resist, but when the back end of my cube catches up to me, the back wall pushes against my back and bottom.

I have no choice but to proceed along this corridor, following my cage and the curious Doctor.

I cover myself, and I can feel the glare coming from the medical staff and patients

as I pass. This wasn't happening.

I watched the doctor schmooze with the medical staff as we went by. Occasionally she'd stop the convoy to catch up with a coworker. I could see her gesture to me showing off her new-found curiosity.

Mercifully, we eventually make it to examinations, and the doctor drops all the containment fields except the one on the door.

"We're here!" She beamed. "Thanks for saving me the trouble of undressing you," she explained, "I'll just be a moment, I need to wash my hands."

I swear at her. I wasn't some guinea pig to be examined, I was a person! A lost and confused person at that.

Well. The Doctor's washing her hands. This is my one and only chance to stop to think before she gets back.

What do I do? How do I get out of this? How do I get home? Do I just take it? Maybe her tests will actually find something.

I decide to play along. I was still ostensibly caged, so unless an opportunity presented itself, I was trapped. The two minutes alone I'm getting now isn't the opportunity I need to escape. Plus... if the test isn't invasive or lethal, maybe I can learn something about why I'm here.

Dr. Ackerman returns minutes later, and stops outside of the diagnostics room.

"What are you going to do to me?" I ask. How she answered would determine whether or not I fight, take flight, or remain seated.

"Oh don't worry." She starts, "just some broad noninvasive procedures. If I find any abnormalities I may move on to more specific tests, like an SMRI, or a LAT-Scan."

Did she mean MRI or CAT-Scan? Regardless, it didn't sound like she was going to cut me open. Though I wouldn't hold it against her if the test results further piqued her deadly curiosity.

"Fine..." the words escape my mouth. I feel somewhat defeated. The adrenaline that had fueled me up until this point no longer applied to my situation, and I felt somewhat helpless like I had given up.

Dr. Ackerman has me lay back on the exam table. She straps my arms and legs down. What would have been red flags to me five minutes earlier I accept dejectedly.

For the next forty-five minutes I'm scanned both by various equipment in the room and by handheld medical equipment I've never seen before. Asides from my damaged pride, as countless lasers scan my naked body, the test Hippocratically does no harm.

Finally, after all the scans are over the doctor compiles the results and scans them for several minutes using her robot eye.

"Well that's boring." She seems pouty. "All tests came back negative. Although you tested positive for chicken pox. Which is kind of neat, since it was cured more than 100 years ago. Luckily it seems you had it early, the virus just doesn't go away afterwards. Don't worry, we can give you something for that and you'll no longer be a carrier." The doctor continued,

"The only other thing I found in your test results" the doctor said, her tone of voice hinting that her curiosity was disappointed, "is a very unique segment of your genome. Unfortunately, it's a segment in what the HGP has deemed useless. So you're not a biological marvel after all. At best you're just a special snowflake."

She sighed and removed my restraints. "Sorry for the straps. You know how it is, procedure."

My damaged pride, unclear test results, constant nudity, and sore wrists did little to make me sympathetic. And all I could do was grunt back at her.

Finally, came a bit of kindness, as she took off her labcoat and draped it over me. "I'm sorry." She said. "I believed your story and thought you were some kind of amazing... I don't know what I thought. I'm sorry. I'll smudge the tests so they come out of some crooked insurance company. If you want out, take the elevator to the 45th floor, from there take the Skybridge to the next Tower and you can take a Cable-Cab to the Metro Center, get wherever you need to go from there. Obviously you didn't warp here. But since you managed to pull a fast one on me, I'll let you go. It takes a lot to fool me, and even more to get my hopes up." She looked absolutely crushed. "I really thought you were something amazing..." I almost feel bad for her. I think she thought I would be her Nobel Prize.

Between the coat and her crushed spirit, despite everything I had gone through, human nature compels me to hug the poor doctor. I don't see her face, but I think it cheered her up.

As I glance over her shoulder I read a digital readout. 75:61:89 09.03.2459 It almost looked like a date, if all the numbers weren't messed up.

I find myself staring at the numbers absentmindedly, starting to lose focus. Before long I felt a familiar sensation of weightlessness and lightheadedness, until I started to fall forward through the Doctor's arms. The last thing I see is the spark of hope in her natural eye.

When I come to, I find myself back at the restaurant. Predictably, I am once again naked. I went through hell just to get a labcoat and I lose it as soon as I get it. Figures.

"MAKOTO!" Sachiko yells. She lunges towards me and wraps her arms around me. "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN! You were gone for two hours! Where are your clothes?!" Sachiko waited for me the entire time I was gone. I got to figure it was at least two hours. She takes off her school blazer and helps me into it. It's tight on me, I wasn't petite like Sachi.

She walks me home. She even takes off her skirt for me and wears her panties home. They had little cartoon kittens on them. She's such a good friend, I don't know what I did to deserve her.

I missed cram school. By the time I made it home, it was nearly dark. I return Sachiko's skirt and she braves it back to her house.

What a day... I was still no closer to figuring out where I went. Either time. It was all I could do to lay down and get some well deserved sleep.