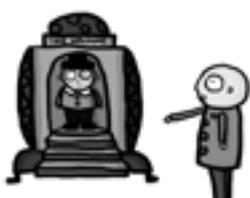


Middle Schools create a supportive environment to reach all adolescent learners. Students at Titusville Middle School celebrate learning achievements AND nurture their "inner authors" through...

MIDDLE MATTERS

Originally printed in The Titusville Herald



Time Traveling Grandson

by: Audrey Herman



I had been doing homework in my backyard when it happened.

The boy was not much older than I was, fifteen or sixteen at the most. Unsure and cautious, he shuffled out of Miller's General Store and marveled in wonder at the dirty, unkempt mess that was Reidville, South Carolina. He rubbed wormy, dry dirt on his face as if it was the finest moisturizer at a fancy French boutique. "Probably a city slicker," I scoffed. We had too many of those here, from Ms. Angela Green, who didn't know that corn grew on a cob, to Mr. Joseph Hill, who had never seen anything beyond the dark abyss of his office. They were just too gullible. Have you ever seen a person like them operate a tractor, own a farm, get a life? I didn't think so. And so that was why I looked back at my English when the skinny boy stumbled into the street. I didn't know he would tap me on the shoulder, causing me to go tumbling down the hill and into the ice-cold rapids in a fit of surprise.

"What was that for?" I shouted as I dragged myself out of the water. "You could have killed me!"

"Right, because we're not immortal..." he spoke nervously.

"Well, obviously! What were you thinking?"

"I...I don't know." He was shy now, like a turtle wanting to be in its shell. I sighed.

"Listen, we started out wrong. What's your name?"

"Jax Beckett, son of

Remy Beckett," he smiled proudly.

I felt numb. Did he just say... Remy? I always had wanted to name my daughter Remy.

"Hey, uh, Jax.. what's your grandmother's name? On your mom's side, I mean?" I twisted my hair around my finger.

"Oh. Eva Montgomery. She's... she's gone, I'm afraid."

Oh my gosh. My name was Eva Montgomery.

"Jax. Eva.. that's my name." His eyes lit up.

"Grandma! It's so nice to meet you!" He hugged me and buried himself in my dark hair. "I'm from the future! They sent me..they sent me to test out the new time machine prototype, and it worked!"

"Hold up... what?" I squealed. "The future? For real? You? My grandson? Woah. Awkward."

"That's why I asked if we were immortal... because in 3268, no one can die. The Russians discovered a way to make us live forever. We had a war over it." Jax blushed.

"And the dirt, here.. it's just like I imagined it. We don't have real dirt, because half of the population lives on Mars. Earth is too polluted." There was a silence.

"They said not to go anywhere else other than 2016.. but... do you want to...?"

"Yes...grandson."

It wasn't like science fiction movies. There wasn't a gigantic, hulking time machine full of buttons, levers, and knick-knacks. Instead, it was a small remote the size of Jax's palm. All he

had to do was scan his finger on the tiny pad. Finally, a green light was visible, indicating we had travelled through time. I looked around, but I couldn't tell. Nothing had happened. There wasn't any swirling light or an impact that made us fall to the ground. Nothing.

"Jax?" I nervously, looked back at him, but he was gone. I hadn't noticed, too obsessed with the abnormality of a time machine. Poor Jax. Who was I to tell him to take me back in time, then kill him in the process? Guilt pounded at my heart. Suddenly, a rough voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Why you down, pretty lady? You're at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair!"

A scruffy man in a jacket and trousers grabbed hold of my shoulder. I whacked him off. "Get off me, you creep!" The man scurried away, disgusted, but the more I looked around, the more I saw he was right. Thousands of booths and stages were set around me, boasting products of the future. Meat sizzled in copper pans, and delicious smells filled the air. Colors flashed everywhere, from colorful feathers on women's hats, to signs advertising products I couldn't even say. Jingle-knack, Grew-wk, Telecube. We really did time-travel. I decided to take advantage and explore. After all, it isn't every day that you travel back in time.

"Step right up, right, ter witness the one and only Cochrane Dishwasher!" The audience oohed and aahed as I

stared, dumbfounded, at a bulky, circular object that apparently washed dishes. I hastily pushed my way through. I had to see more.

"The bleedin' long wait is over, and yer lucky folks will be the first ter spot this ingenious invention do its magic." Cheers erupted from the crowd, then a steady chant of "Dishwasher! Dishwasher! Dishwasher!"

"Now, now, don't be so restless," he chuckled, and started to slowly turn a crank on the side of the machine. It howled and complained, but after the man haggled with it a bit, it started to squirt water and soap on the beautiful china. It was unnerving. They didn't even realize that in the future, dishwashers were a fact of life.

The mob broke away until there was just me, standing there with starry eyes.

"You did good, Frank." A woman's voice cut through the silence.

"Thank yer kindly, Josephine. I'm proud ter be yor partner in business." Frank set down his large top hat on a nearby table. After a few seconds, he noticed me gawking at the dishwasher. He frowned.

"I'm sorry, sir, it's just... just..." I couldn't conjure up anything to say. Come on, Eva, say something!

"It's just wot?" Frank's accent grew stronger the more angry he grew. I was speechless.

"Wotcher think yor doin', anyway? To come 'ere, right, at the grand-

est spot in the world, and not even give it a gouter dress up, isit? That's just leftover sail cloth stitched together, i'n it?" He tugged at my cotton t-shirt, disgusted. I hoped and prayed he would stop, but he kept going with a vengeance.

"'ow did yer even afford ter get in, eh, mate? I bet yer didn't even pay."

All right. Enough was enough. I was going to have serious talk with-"Eva?" a familiar voice whimpered from beside Josephine.

"Jax!" I burst out laughing with joy, and he did too. I ran up to him and we embraced. I could have lost him.

"Did you see this place?" he asked me.

"Yeah, what a dump!" Passerby glared.

"Errr... I mean... a dump to an utter fool!" The attention then died away, and a smile crept its way across my face.

"Oh, so this is yor mucker, eh?" Frank didn't look as intimidating now, with the most playful eyes I had seen in my young life.

"Yep. Anyway, Josephine here took me in when I said I was looking for you. She was a bit confused, but I worked it out." Josephine glanced at her pocketwatch.

"The fair's almost over for the day," she remarked. "Would you like to come home for dinner?"

"Done."

I went to bed with a full stomach of fresh-cut pork and homemade mashed potatoes. It almost made me want to stay, forever. But I couldn't. I bid my

farewells the next day, and not just to Frank and Josephine. I had to leave Jax.

"Jax, I... I..." Neither of us wanted to admit that we had to leave. He finally spoke up, voice barely audible.

"Goodbyes hurt... but memories hurt more. I'll miss you so much, Grandma."

And that was the last I ever saw of him for a very, very, long time.

The little boy giggled. "Mommy, stop the tickle, ha, ha, ha! Oh! Make it stop, mommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Remy, can't you see you're hurting him? Put him down."

"But Mum!"

"Now." He immediately gasped for air after the iron grip was released.

"You know Mum, I just don't understand. You have such a soft spot for Jax. You could be fawning over Evan's kids right now. Why?" There was a pause.

"You see... it may be hard to believe, but long after I die, they'll come up with a time machine." My eyes sparkled, like they did when I was young.

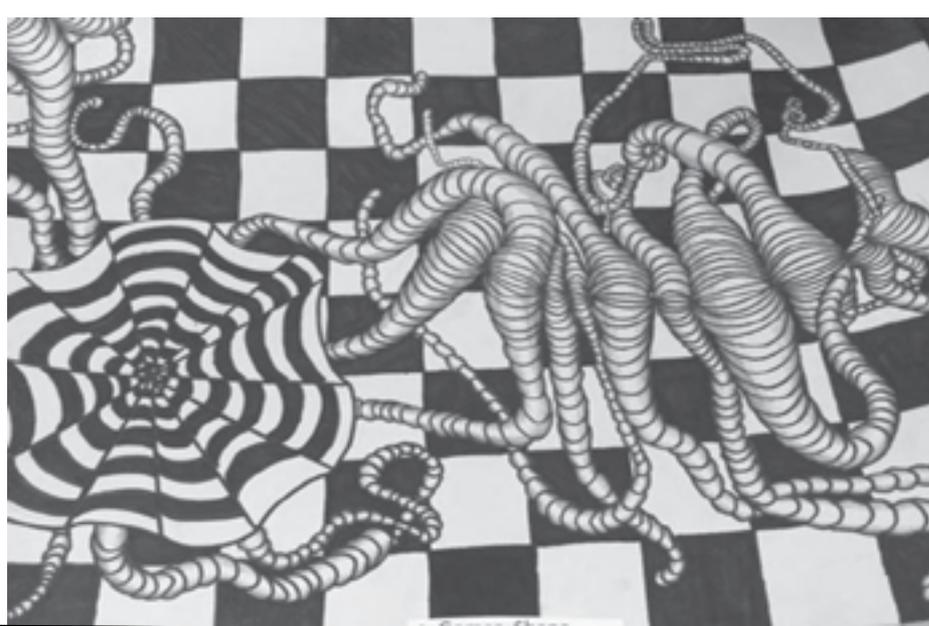
"And you, my cutest little grandson, you will become my best friend... and maybe something a little bit more." His eyes were fireflies, flickering, flickering.

"Jax, you're the reason I've been up at night for eighty years, and it will be that way until I die..."

"...and when I'm in heaven, you'll be the reason I'll stay there."

Artist's Corner

This artwork was submitted by Titusville Middle School teacher, Jessica Salapek. Eighth grade students studied Op Artists from the 60's and then practiced making their own. The picture below was created by Shana Gomez.



Student Author Audrey Herman Speaks Out

I have loved to write for a really long time. Since the time I could speak, I was always telling stories of any manner. To this day I am constantly writing. Right now I am working on an online community called **Wattpad**. My user name is -libro-cubicularist there. I find it very fun to tell a story no one else can tell, or create universes on paper. I got the idea for "Grandson" when I wondered, "What if relatives met each other in the future?" Grandson was born. And with it, a whole lot of ideas swarming in my head. I enjoyed writing this short story, and I hope you enjoyed reading it.

