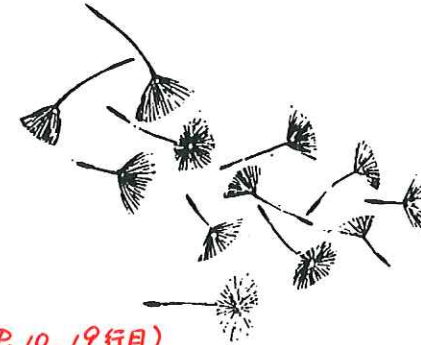


PROLOGUE

The Addition of Time



訳文課題 (～P.10.19行目)



In 1972, two seconds were added to time. Britain agreed to join the Common Market, and 'Beg, Steal Or Borrow' by the New Seekers was the entry for Eurovision. The seconds were added because it was a leap year and time was out of joint with the movement of the Earth. The New Seekers did not win the Eurovision Song Contest but that had nothing to do with the Earth's movement and nothing to do with the two seconds either.

The addition of time terrified Byron Hemmings. At eleven years old he was an imaginative boy. He lay awake, picturing it happen, and his heart flapped like a bird. He watched the clocks, trying to catch them at it. 'When will they do it?' he asked his mother.

She stood at the new breakfast counter, dicing quarters of apple. The morning sun spilled through the French windows in such clean squares he could stand in them.

'Probably when we're asleep,' she said.

*課題提出メド = 10/5(月) 15時まで
「洋書の森」宛にメールで
お送り下さい。

但し、返却・添削は
いたしません。(当日、資料
として匿名・使用お場
合がございませう。)

講座当日はご自分の訳文
をお持ちいただき、聴講
するをお勧めいたします。

'Asleep?' Things were even worse than he thought.

'Or maybe when we're awake.'

He got the impression she didn't actually know. 'Two seconds are nothing,' she smiled. 'Please drink up your Sunquick.' Her eyes were bright, her skirt pressed, her hair blow-dried.

Byron had heard about the extra seconds from his friend, James Lowe. James was the cleverest boy Byron knew and every day he read *The Times*. The addition of two seconds was extremely exciting, said James. First, man had put a man on the moon. Now they were going to alter time. But how could two seconds exist where two seconds had not existed before? It was like adding something that wasn't there. It wasn't safe. When Byron pointed this out, James smiled. That was progress, he said.

Byron wrote four letters, one to his local MP, one to NASA, another to the editors of *The Guinness Book of Records* and the last to Mr Roy Castle, courtesy of the BBC. He gave them to his mother to post, assuring her they were important.

He received a signed photograph of Roy Castle and a fully illustrated brochure about the Apollo 15 moon landing, but there was no reference to the two seconds.

Within months, everything had changed and the changes could never be put right. All over the house, clocks that his mother had once meticulously wound now marked different hours. The children slept when they were tired and ate when they were hungry and whole days might pass, each looking the same. So if two seconds had been added to a year in which a mistake was made – a mistake so sudden that without the two seconds it might not have happened at all – how could his mother be to blame? Wasn't the addition of time the bigger crime?

'It wasn't your fault,' he would say to his mother. By late summer she was often by the pond, down in the meadow. These days it was Byron

making the breakfast; maybe a foil triangle of cheese squished between two slices of bread. His mother sat in a chair, chinking the ice in her glass, and slipping the seeds from a plume of grass. In the distance the moor glowed beneath a veil of lemon-sherbet light; the meadow was threaded with flowers. 'Did you hear?' he would repeat because she was inclined to forget she was not alone. 'It was because they added time. It was an accident.'

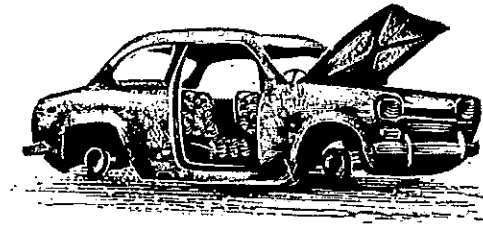
She would put up her chin. She would smile. 'You're a good boy. Thank you.'

It was all because of a small slip in time, the whole story. The repercussions were felt for years and years. Of the two boys, James and Byron, only one kept on course. Sometimes Byron gazed at the sky above the moor, pulsing so heavily with stars the darkness seemed alive, and he would ache – ache for the removal of those two extra seconds. Ache for the sanctity of time as it should be.

If only James had never told him.

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Something Terrible



JAMES LOWE AND Byron Hemmings attended Winston House School because it was private. There was another junior school that was closer but it was not private; it was for everyone. The children who went there came from the council estate on Digby Road. They flicked orange peel and cigarette butts at the caps of the Winston House boys from the top windows of the bus. The Winston House boys did not travel on the bus. They had lifts with their mothers because they had so far to travel.

The future for the Winston House boys was mapped out. Theirs was a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The following year, they would take the Common Entrance exam for the college. The cleverest boys would win scholarships and at thirteen they would board. They would speak with the right accent and learn the right things and meet the right people. After that it would be Oxford or Cambridge. James's parents were thinking St Peter's; Byron's were thinking Oriel. They would pursue careers in law or the City, the Church or the armed forces, like their fathers. One

day they would have private rooms in London and a large house in the country, where they would spend weekends with their wives and children.

It was the beginning of June in 1972. A trim of morning light slid beneath Byron's blue curtains and picked out his neatly ordered possessions. There were his *Look and Learn* annuals, his stamp album, his torch, his new Abracadabra magic box and the chemistry set with its own magnifying glass that he had received for Christmas. His school uniform had been washed and pressed by his mother the night before and was arranged in a flattened boy shape on a chair. Byron checked both his watch and his alarm clock. The second hands were moving steadily. Crossing the hall in silence, he eased open the door of his mother's room and took up his place on the edge of her bed.

She lay very still. Her hair was a gold frill on the pillow and her face trembled with each breath as if she were made of water. Through her skin he could see the purple of her veins. Byron's hands were soft and plump like the flesh of a peach but James already had veins, faint threads that ran from his knuckles and would one day become ridges like a man's.

At half past six, the alarm clock rang into the silence and his mother's eyes flashed open, a shimmer of blue.

'Hello, sweetheart.'

'I'm worried,' said Byron.

'It isn't time again?' She reached for her glass and her pill and took a sip of water.

'Suppose they are going to add the extra seconds today?'

'Is James worried too?'

'He seems to have forgotten.'

She wiped her mouth and he saw she was smiling. Two dimples had appeared like tiny punctures in her cheeks. 'We've been through this. We keep doing it. When they add the seconds, they'll say something about it first in *The Times*. They'll talk about it on *Nationwide*.'

'It's giving me a headache,' he said.

'When it happens you won't notice. Two seconds are nothing.'

Byron felt his blood heat. He almost stood but sat back again. 'That's what nobody realizes. Two seconds are huge. It's the difference between something happening and something not happening. You could take one step too many and fall over the edge of a cliff. It's very dangerous.' The words came out in a rush.

She gazed back at him with her face crumpled the way she did when she was trying to work out a sum. 'We really must get up,' she said.

His mother pulled back the curtains at the bay window and stared out. A summer mist was pouring in from Cranham Moor, so thick that the hills beyond the garden looked in danger of being washed away. She glanced at her wrist.

'Twenty-four minutes to seven,' she said, as if she were informing her watch of the correct time. Lifting her pink dressing gown from its hook, she went to wake Lucy.

When Byron pictured the inside of his mother's head, he imagined a series of tiny inlaid drawers with jewelled handles so delicate his fingers would struggle to get a grip. The other mothers were not like her. They wore crochet tank tops and layered skirts and some of them even had the new wedge shoes. Byron's father preferred his wife to dress more formally. With her slim skirts and pointy heels, her matching handbag and her notebook, Diana made other women look both oversized and under-prepared. Andrea Lowe, who was James's mother, towered over her like a dark-haired giant. Diana's notebook contained articles she had snipped and glued from the pages of *Good Housekeeping* and *Family Circle*. She wrote down birthdays she had to remember, important dates for the school term, as well as recipes, needlecraft instructions, planting ideas, hair styling tips, and words she had not heard before. Her notebook bulged with suggestions for

improvement: '22 new hairdos to make you even prettier this summer.' 'Tissue paper gifts for every occasion.' 'Cooking with offal.' 'i before e except after c.'

'Elle est la plus belle mère,' James sometimes said. And when he did he blushed and fell silent, as if in contemplation of something sacred.

Byron dressed in his grey flannel shorts and summer vest. He had to tug to fasten the buttons on his shirt and this one was almost new. Securing his knee-length socks with homemade garters, he headed downstairs. The wood-panelled walls shone dark as conkers.

'I'm not talking to anyone but you, darling,' sang his mother's voice.

She stood at the opposite end of the hallway at her telephone table, already dressed. Beside her, Lucy waited for her plaits to be tied with ribbon. The air was thick with Vim and Pledge polish and it was a reassuring smell in the way that fresh air was reassuring. As Byron passed, his mother kissed her fingertips and pressed them to his forehead. She was only a fraction taller.

'It's just me and the children,' she said into the mouthpiece. The windows behind her were opaque white.

In the kitchen Byron sat at the breakfast bar and unfolded a clean napkin. His mother was talking to his father. He rang at the same time every morning and every morning she told him she was listening.

'Oh, today I'll do the usual. The house, the weeding. Tidying after the weekend. It's supposed to get hot.'

Released from their mother's hands, Lucy skipped to the kitchen and hoicked herself up on to her stool. She tipped the box of Sugar Stars over her Peter Rabbit bowl. 'Steady,' said Byron as she reached for the blue jug. He watched the splashy flow of milk in the rough vicinity of her cereal. 'You might spill it, Lucy,' he said, although he was being polite. She already had.

'I know what I'm doing, Byron. I don't need help.' Every word of Lucy's sounded like a neat little attack on the air. She replaced the jug on the

table. It was vast in her hands. Then she slotted a wall of cereal packets around her bowl. He could see only the flaxen crest of her head.

From the hall came their mother's voice. 'Yes, Seymour. She's all polished.' Byron assumed they were discussing the new Jaguar.

'Please could I have the Sugar Stars, Lucy?'

'You are not supposed to have Sugar Stars. You must have your fruit salad and your healthy Alpen.'

'I'd like to read the packet. I'd like to look at the picture of Sooty.'

'I am reading the packets.'

'You don't need all of them at once,' he said gently. 'And anyway you can't read, Luce.'

'Everything's as it should be,' sang his mother's voice from the hallway. She gave a fluttery laugh.

Byron felt a notch of something hot in his stomach. He tried to remove a cereal box, just one, before Lucy could stop him but her hand flew up as he was sliding it away. The milk jug shot sideways, there was a resounding smash, and the new floor was suddenly a wash of white milk and blue pins of china. The children stared, aghast. It was almost time to clean their teeth.

Diana was in the room within moments. 'No one move!' she called. She held up her hands as if she were halting traffic. 'You could get hurt!' Byron sat so still his neck felt stiff. As she made her way to the cleaning cupboard, balancing on tiptoes, with her arms stretched out and her fingers pointed, the floor swished and snapped beneath her feet.

'That was your fault, Byron,' said Lucy.

Diana rushed back with the mop and bucket, and the dustpan and brush. She twisted the mop in soapy water and dragged it through the pool of liquid. With a glance at her watch, she swept the broken pieces into a dry patch and scooped them into the dustpan. The last splinters she scraped up with her fingers and shook out over the bin. 'All done,' she said

brightly. It was then that she noticed her left palm. It was cut with crimson, like spilling stripes.

'Now you've got blood,' said Lucy, who was both appalled and delighted by physical injury.

'It's nothing,' insisted their mother but it was slithering down her wrist and, despite her bib apron, had made several spots on the hem of her skirt. 'Nobody move!' she called again, turning on her heels and rushing out.

'We'll be late,' said Lucy.

'We're never late,' said Byron. It was a rule of their father's. An Englishman should always be punctual.

When Diana reappeared she had changed into a mint-green dress and matching lambswool cardigan. She had wound her hand with a bandage so that it looked like a small paw and applied her strawberry-red lipstick.

'Why are you still sitting there?' she cried.

'You told us not to move,' said Lucy.

Clip, clip, echoed her heels across the hallway as the children raced after her. Their blazers and school hats hung from hooks above their school shoes. Diana scooped their satchels and PE bags into her arms.

'Come along,' she called.

'But we haven't cleaned our teeth.'

Their mother failed to answer. Swinging open the front door, she ran into the shroud of mist. Byron and Lucy had to rush outside to find her.

There she stood, a slight silhouette against the garage door. She studied her watch, her left wrist clamped between the thumb and fingers of her right hand, as if time were a small cell and she was examining it through a microscope.

'It's going to be all right,' she said. 'If we hurry, we can make up time.'

Cranham House was a Georgian building of pale stone that shone bone-white in full summer sun and pink as flesh on a winter morning. There was

no village. There was only the house and the garden and then the moor. The building sat with its back resolutely set against the mass of wind, sky and earth that loomed behind, and made Byron think of a home that wished it had been built elsewhere, in acres of flat English parkland, for instance, or on the gentle banks of a stream. The advantage of the setting, his father said, was that it was private. This was what James called an understatement. You had to drive at least three miles to find a neighbour. Between the gardens and the first slopes of the moor, there was a meadow with a large pond, and then a belt of ash trees. A year ago the water had been fenced in and the children were forbidden to play there.

The gravel drive popped beneath the wheels of the Jaguar. The mist was like a hood over Byron's eyes. It stole the colour and edges from even the closest things. The top lawn, the herbaceous borders and rose pagodas, the fruit trees, the beech hedging, the vegetable plot, the cutting beds and picket gate, they were all gone. The car turned left and carved its path towards the upper peaks. No one spoke. His mother sat straining forward over the wheel.

Up on the moor, conditions were even worse. It covered over ten miles in each direction, although that morning there was no dividing line between hills and sky. The car headlamps bored shallow holes into the blanket of white. Occasionally a watery group of cattle or a protruding branch took shape and Byron's heart gave a bounce as his mother swerved to overtake. Once Byron had told James the trees were so scary on the moor they could be ghosts and James had frowned. That was like poetry, James had said, but it was not real, just as a talking detective dog was not real on the television. They passed the iron gates to Besley Hill where the mad people lived. As the wheels of the Jaguar rumbled over the cattle grid, Byron breathed a sigh of relief. Then, approaching the town, they turned a corner and braked hard.

'Oh no,' he said, sitting tall. 'What's happened now?'

'I don't know. A traffic jam.' It was the last thing they needed. His mother lifted her fingers to her teeth and ripped off a shred of her nail.

'Is it because of the mist?'

Again, 'I don't know.' She pulled at the handbrake.

'I think the sun is up there somewhere,' he said brightly. 'It will burn this off soon.'

There were cars blocking the road as far as they could see; all the way into the veil of cloud. To their left the dull silhouette of a burnt-out vehicle marked the entrance to the Digby Road Estate. They never went that way. Byron saw his mother glance over.

'We're going to be late,' wailed Lucy.

Snapping down the handbrake, Diana pushed the car into first gear with a crunch, yanked at the wheel and accelerated towards the left. They were heading straight for Digby Road. She didn't even mirror, signal, manoeuvre.

At first the children were too stunned to speak. They passed the burnt-out car. The glass at the windows was smashed and the wheels, doors and engine were gone so that it was like a charred skeleton and Byron hummed gently because he didn't want to think about that.

'Father says we must never go this way,' said Lucy. She smothered her face with her hands.

'It's a short cut through council housing,' said their mother. 'I've been this way before.' She eased her foot down on the accelerator.

There was no time to consider what she had said; that, despite their father's rule, she had been this way before. Digby Road was worse than Byron had imagined. It wasn't even tarmacked in places. The mist was glued to the rows of houses so that they reached ahead, dull and indistinct, and then appeared to disintegrate. Pieces of rubbish choked the gutters; rubble, bags, blankets, boxes, it was hard to tell what it was. Occasionally

washing lines appeared, strung with sheets and clothes that held no colour.

'I'm not looking,' said Lucy, sliding down her seat to hide.

Byron tried to find something that wouldn't cause alarm. Something that he might recognize and feel good about in Digby Road. He worried too much; his mother had told him many times. And then suddenly there it was. One beautiful thing: a tree that glowed through the fog. It presented wide arching branches that appeared festooned with bubblegum-pink flowers, although the fruit blossom at Cranham House was long since over. Byron felt a surge of relief as if he had witnessed a small miracle, or an act of kindness, at the moment he least believed in the existence of either. Beneath the tree came a moving silhouette. It was small; the size of a child. It was spinning towards the road and had wheels. It was a girl on a red bicycle.

'What time is it?' said Lucy. 'Are we late?'

Byron glanced at his watch and then he froze. The second hand was moving backwards. His voice sliced at his throat and he realized it was a scream.

'Mummy, it's happening. Stop.' He grabbed her shoulder. He pulled hard.

He couldn't make sense of what came next. It was so fast. While he tried to poke his watch, or more specifically the adjusted second hand, in front of his mother's face, he was also aware of the miracle tree and the little girl bicycling into the road. They were all part of the same thing. All of them shooting out of nowhere, out of the dense mist, out of time. The Jaguar swerved and his hands smacked into the mahogany dashboard to brace himself. As the car slammed to a halt there was a sound like a metallic whisper, and then there was silence.

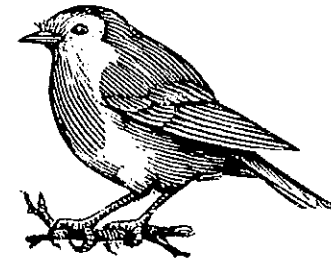
In the beats that followed, that were smaller than seconds, smaller even than flickers, where Byron sought with his eyes for the child at the roadside and did not find her, he knew something terrible had happened and

that life would never be the same. He knew it before he even had the words.

Above the moor shone a dazzling circle of white light. Byron had been right about the sun. It would burn through any moment.

2

Jim



JIM LIVES IN a campervan, on the edge of the new housing estate. Every dawn he walks across the moor and every night he walks back. He has a job at the refurbished supermarket café. There is wifi access and a facility to charge mobile phones although Jim has no use for either. When he started six months ago, he worked in the hot beverages section but after serving cappuccinos with a raspberry swirl topping and a flake he was relegated to tables. If he messes this job up, there's nothing. There isn't even Besley Hill.

The black sky is combed with trails of cloud like silver hair and the air is so cold it pares his skin. Beneath his feet the ground has frozen hard and his boots crash over the brittle stumps of grass. Already he can make out the neon glow that is Cranham Village, while far behind car headlamps make their way across the moor and they are a necklace of tiny moving lights, red and silver, stringing the dark.

In his late teens, he was found up there in only underpants and shoes.