

THE TIME TRAVELER'S TWIN

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FADE IN:

EXT. STARLIGHT DINER - NIGHT

A neon sign buzzes in the rain. A quiet, late-night haven.

INT. STARLIGHT DINER - NIGHT

GRETCHEN (20s) sits in a vinyl booth, staring anxiously at her phone. A text on screen reads: *"Are you coming to the party or what?"*

She types: *"On my way."*

A shadow falls over the table. Gretchen looks up.

Standing there is an EXACT REPLICANT of Gretchen. Same hair, same face, same jacket.

Gretchen blinks. A slow smile creeps onto her face.

GRETCHEN

Wow. Okay. They really weren't kidding about the universal twin thing.

The woman, GRETCHEN 2 (30s), looks exhausted. Her eyes are heavy, rimmed with dark circles. She doesn't smile.

GRETCHEN 2

Can I sit?

GRETCHEN

Uh, yeah. Please. This is wild. I'm Gretchen.

GRETCHEN 2

I know.

Gretchen 2 sits across from her. She stares at Gretchen, her eyes tracing a face she hasn't seen in the mirror for years. A look heavy with a decades-old sorrow.

GRETCHEN

Is it weird that I feel like I'm looking in a mirror? Where are you from? I'm originally from Chicago, moved here for--

GRETCHEN 2

-- For the graphic design job. You have a birthmark shaped like a crescent moon on your left hip. You still check under the bed for monsters when the closet door is open.

Gretchen draws back, her smile fading.

GRETCHEN

Who the hell are you? Did my roommate hire you? Is this a prank?

GRETCHEN 2

Look at my hands, Gretchen.

Gretchen is skeptical.

Gretchen 2 places her hands on the table. On her left wrist is a thick, jagged white scar.

Gretchen examines her own bare wrist.

GRETCHEN

I don't have that.

GRETCHEN 2

Not yet. You get it in three years, trying to clear broken glass out of a prison window.

Gretchen looks around the diner. The cook flips burgers. The waitress pours coffee. Normalcy everywhere, except here.

GRETCHEN

You're... me. From the future.

GRETCHEN 2

The law says everyone has a stranger-twin out there. The time-monitoring bureaus don't flag two identical faces sitting in a diner. It's the perfect camouflage.

GRETCHEN

Why are you here?

Gretchen 2 reaches out, her hand hovering over Gretchen's, but she stops herself and pulls back.

GRETCHEN 2

In exactly ten minutes, you are going to leave this diner. You are going to drive down Oak Street to go to that party. At 11:42 PM, your phone will buzz. You will look down for two seconds to read a text from your ex. In those two seconds, a man named David Collins will step off the curb.

This piques Gretchen's interest, then -

GRETCHEN 2

You will hit him. You will hear the thud against your bumper. And instead of stopping... you will hit the gas. You will run.

GRETCHEN

Seriously? No. I wouldn't do that. I'm a good person.

GRETCHEN 2

Panic makes monsters out of good people. You hide the car. You live in agony for two weeks. Then the police knock on your door. David dies. You go to prison for ten years. It destroys Mom. It destroys us.

GRETCHEN

Okay. Okay! I won't go to the party. I'll stay right here. I'll turn off my phone. Timeline fixed, right? You can go back.

Gretchen 2 looks out the window. She shakes her head, her gaze distant.

GRETCHEN 2

No. The universe requires the event to happen. If David doesn't get hit, the paradox collapses both of our timelines. He has to be hit.

GRETCHEN

Then what am I supposed to do?!

Gretchen 2 slides a set of car keys across the table. They are identical to the keys in Gretchen's hand.

GRETCHEN 2

Give me your coat. You are staying here to finish your coffee. I am driving your car down Oak Street tonight.

GRETCHEN

You're going to hit him? On purpose?

GRETCHEN 2

I am going to hit him. But unlike you... I am going to step out of the car. I am going to call 911. I am going to hold his hand until the ambulance arrives. David Vance will live. And I will go to prison for it. I will serve the time.

Gretchen looks ashen, staring at Gretchen 2.

Her future-self looks bone-tired. But her eyes are sharp, focused, softening only as she looks back at her younger self.

GRETCHEN 2

But as Macbeth said: "come what come may, time and the hour runs through the roughest day." We will survive it. But you get to stay clean. Give me the jacket, Gretchen. Let me save us.

Gretchen eyes the keys, tears welling in her eyes. She nods.

Slowly, Gretchen unbuttons her raincoat, shrugs it off, and hands it across the table.

Gretchen 2 takes it and puts it on. She looks exactly like Gretchen did five minutes ago.

GRETCHEN 2

Thank you.

GRETCHEN

What happens to you now? After the prison sentence? Where do you go?

Gretchen 2 slides the keys off the table and slips them into her pocket.

She looks back one last time.

GRETCHEN 2

I come back here. To give you your jacket.

Gretchen 2 walks out, pushing through the door into more THUNDER, and a sudden DOWNPOUR.

Gretchen eyes her phone. The clock reads: 11:38 PM.

The WAITRESS appears, holding a pot of coffee.

She looks at Gretchen, then out the window into the dark rain, confused.

WAITRESS

Huh. Swear I just saw you walk out the door. Crazy how much people look alike these days.

Gretchen just says, "Mmm."

WAITRESS

More coffee, hon?

GRETCHEN

Yes, please.

The Waitress re-fills Gretchen's mug and goes.

Gretchen grips the mug with both hands, staring at her phone. The screen changes: 11:42 PM.

Silence. The rain beats against the glass window.

And then, from a few blocks away, cutting through the sound of the storm... the faint, rising WAIL of a siren.

With Gretchen for a beat -- her eyes deep, maybe sad.

She shuts them as a single tear cuts down her cheek.

FADE OUT.