

Every month, just like clockwork, Yve Matthews time travelled back five days. It was highly inconvenient.

It started when she was about fifteen, her stomach cramped uncomfortably, and all of a sudden it was Tuesday morning and she was lying in her bed, a bright red patch staining the sheets. It was traumatic enough having to live through getting your first period once, let alone reliving it for a second time.

Understandably Yve had a lot of questions, but no matter how much she scoured the internet and flipped through the hastily purchased books on womanhood bought by her dad, she couldn't find an answer as to why this was happening to her every month. Sure, she was now an expert on the shedding of her uterine wall, but the mechanics of time travel? She was still figuring it out.

As a late bloomer, she had to suffer watching all the baby year 7s swapping tampons under the toilet stalls while she apologised for not having anything on her. She felt like she was the last girl in her school to get her period. From the start of high school there was a clear divide, an invisible line that only a few girls were able to cross, but by the time Yve was fifteen it was like she was on an island with no way to get across and join the others. She used to stay up late at night and worry there was something wrong with her, wishing that she would wake every morning and miraculously be changed into a new woman. Little did she know that things were only going to get more complicated.

Yve thought about her mum a lot in those first months. She wasn't ever far from her mind, but this time was when she really comprehended not just the loss of her, but the loss of her guidance and knowledge. Other girls could turn to their mums and ask how you were meant to get through a swim carnival when you were on your period, or have them explain that the sticky side of a pad is meant to go downwards - not up - onto your underwear, or just give you a heads up that your concept of time would fundamentally shift once you got your period. All this she had to figure out for herself though, painfully and embarrassingly.

Six months into her new found status as a woman and time traveller, Yve was struggling to keep it together. She had bled through onto her dress twice, resulting in her having to tie her school jumper around her waist for the rest of the day, and had also unintentionally spoiled someone's surprise birthday as well as being accused of cheating after getting a perfect score in what was normally her worst subject. Her initial excitement at getting her period had quickly morphed into dread, and with every approaching month she became more convinced that she was in fact cursed. Why else was she being forced to deliver an oral presentation on the causes of World War I twice? She resented how her life had changed without any say on her end. She had never asked to have the power of time travel, and where most people wanted to fast forward through the trauma of high school, she got to repeat every pulsating pimple, the overpowering smell of BO, and worst of all, her fumbling attempts to talk to class captain and secret crush, Michael Wu.

Having the chance to re-do an embarrassing interaction with a crush should be a good thing, but for Yve it was only an opportunity to find a new way to humiliate herself. It was almost impressive how she was able to find new inventive ways to screw up the answer to 'good weekend?'. The once quirky and sometimes too loud version of Yve slowly began to shrink, pulling away from the limelight and retreating in on herself. It was easier to get through the five days if she kept a low profile and avoided interacting with friends and other teachers,

lest she reveal her freakish ability to predict the future. What she wished for most was the power of invisibility instead of time manipulation.

That's how she was trying to behave as she suffered through her second time of P.E. She was keeping to herself, expertly placed out the back on the cricket field, just far enough to the side that she wouldn't be made to run after the ball when it was hit by Darren's strong arm and end up embarrassing herself in front of Michael when she tried to throw it back. That's what had happened the first go around, and now that she was re-doing it, she was going to make sure she stayed under the radar. Sure enough, the loud 'crack' of the bat connecting with the ball was soon heard, and she watched as it whizzed past her and rolled out past the oval field, closer to her fellow fieldman on the right who was just as reluctant to get involved. From the midfield, Michael shouted encouragingly to him, pushing him to run and pick up the ball. From this distance, Yve had the advantage of watching Michael without having to get involved. The sleeves of his white cotton t-shirt fit nicely around his arms and she admired them safely from her outfield post.

"Do you do that a lot?"

Yve jumped at the sudden voice. Turning around, she saw an intimidatingly older girl watching her from behind the metal bars encircling the oval. She wore a year 12 jumper. In their high school hierarchy, it might as well have been a decade separating them. Yve watched her, wary. This had not happened last time.

"Do what?" Yve asked.

The girl pointed with her chin to the classmate running after the ball. "Cut yourself out." Yve looked at her confused. She didn't understand, and she definitely didn't understand why this was happening now. She had learnt through trial and error that it was hard for the same events to play out exactly the same each time - sometimes her not doing something could have just as big of a repercussion as her doing it, which is why she tried to do as little as possible when she was at school, but she couldn't see how her deciding to leave the ball should have produced the appearance of this student.

"I bet you're wondering how come I'm here this time."

That made Yve widen her eyes in surprise. "How -", she asked before managing to stop herself.

"Because you told me on my last cycle."

Yve stared at her, dumbstruck. Unconsciously she stepped closer, but just at that moment there was a familiar whack and then a panicked shout of 'look out!' from a voice behind her. With a thump, Yve touched her head.

"Oh," she said softly before crumpling to the ground.

Coming to in the muscular arms she had only recently been admiring, Yve was quite content until her brain caught onto who those arms were attached to. Michael smiled sympathetically down at her, carrying her in the direction of the nurse's office. His arms were under her shoulders and thighs, and she squirmed at the thought that he could tell she was wearing a pad. Rolling out of his grasp, she landed awkwardly on the ground, righting herself with a hand on his chest. They both looked at it before she whipped it away, using it to rub her head instead.

"Are you okay?" He asked, trying to catch her eye.

"I'm allergic to polyester," Yve responded, looking at his t-shirt sleeves. After that was received as well as expected, she moved her gaze to staring directly into the sun. She nodded like what she said made complete sense.

"Okay," Michael said, no doubt writing off her answer as a cricket related brain injury and not par for the course for how Yve's first interactions with him usually went. "Ms Diaz told me to take you to the nurse's office. She's worried you might have a concussion." Their previous interaction made it clear his stance on that likelihood.

"Thanks," Yve confidently told the gap over his shoulder, walking randomly to the left, "I can do the rest on my own."

"The nurse's office is that way," he said, pointing in the opposite direction. They were still outside the school's main building, under a narrow sheltered pathway that protected them from the direct power of the sun. Yve felt a bead of sweat roll uncomfortably down her back. She gave a short laugh, which he did not join in with her for, instead looking concerned. Yve grimaced, sweating more.

"I can take it from here, kid," a voice said confidently, a firm arm gripping her shoulder. Yve looked up to see it was the same year 12 girl from before. She had a row of studs covering one ear. A clear violation against school regulations. Michael looked to Yve, unsure.

"Do you know her?" He asked.

"Are you her boyfriend or something?" She asked back, slightly annoyed.

"What?" Both Yve and Michael blurted out, their faces matching shades of red. "No, of course not," Yve added, mortified that her secret desire was apparently that obvious. Michael looked down at his feet, still flushed and shoulders up high.

"I'll head back to class then," he mumbled to the ground.

Before Yve could say anything else, he had turned back to the oval, head down. She felt like she had once again said the wrong thing, but she wouldn't have the opportunity this time to try and fix it. She directed all her frustration on the mysterious girl next to her.

"Who are you?" She demanded.

"I'm Clem," she answered evenly, letting go of her hold on Yve and indicating for her to follow her around the side of the sports shed, "and I can time travel. Just like you."

Panic rising, Yve rushed after her. Behind the walls, she checked that no one else was around.

"Be careful," she hissed, "you can't just go shouting that out loud."

Clem shrugged. "You're the one who asked for my help."

"I don't know what you're talking about. We've never met."

"That's kinda how it works, isn't it? It happened on my cycle, not yours."

Yve studied her, fear barely contained. While she was desperate for answers, she had never told anyone about her abilities. No one else had mentioned it before, and being the last one in her year level, she assumed she was a freak. Abnormal. Instinctively, she had hidden it from everyone, scared of what would happen if people found it. She was ashamed, but now there was another girl saying she could do the same thing, and what's more, she didn't seem all that concerned about who knew. The smallest flicker of hope started to push back against her terror.

"What did I say?" Yve asked.

"It's not so much what you said, but how you reacted," Clem gave her a side long glance before continuing, "you really embarrassed yourself, and in front of that same guy."

Yve put a hand over her face with a groan.

"After it happened, I saw you get out your phone and pull up your period tracker app. A bit of an unusual reaction to choking on a sausage, especially when it only happened because you saw him watching you eat it. He had to rush over and give you the heimlich manoeuvre."

"That really happened?" Yve managed to get out faintly.

"Well, not in the end. The next time around I cut in front of you in line and made sure to buy the last sausage, saving you from your future phallic misadventure," Yve did choke at that, but Clem kept talking, "I had a hunch from that point on, and now you've confirmed it." Yve let that sink in. Finally, there was someone else.

"You can really..." She couldn't help but steel herself before saying the words, "time travel?" Clem nodded, and Yve felt relief flood her body, making her almost giddy. She hadn't realised the level of stress and fear she had been operating under until this moment.

"So, how do we stop it?"

"Stop it?" Clem looked in confusion at Yve's shining face, "why would we do that?"

"Because," Yve spluttered, equally as confused, "it's awful. I hate it."

Clem softened. Awkwardly she put a hand on Yve's shoulder, attempting to inexpertly comfort her.

"This is still pretty new to you, huh?"

"I always knew there was something wrong with me, so it figures I would be cursed like this." Unable to stop the tears, Yve brushed them roughly aside. Clem clicked her tongue, standing up straighter.

"Listen, there's nothing wrong with you, okay? Enough talk about it being a 'curse'." She shook her head. "You sound like my great aunt."

"But..." Yve struggled to find the words. "Why is it happening to us?"

"Why do some people have red hair? It's just a part of nature," she shrugged. "You don't need to be ashamed about it. More importantly, why are you hiding yourself away?"

"I...it's easier," Yve tried to explain, "if no one notices me, that means I didn't embarrass myself."

"Like with that boy?"

Yve immediately flushed.

"You know he likes you, don't you? You're so focused on keeping your head down, you can't see what else is going on. You have the gift to live life twice, but you're not living at all."

"Michael likes me?"

Clem rolled her eyes. "Trust that was the main thing you took away. Well, if you like him back, then you might need to stop avoiding life."

"I feel so uncomfortable though, like I'm not connected to my body. Like every day is a trap I have to carefully avoid from falling in. I'm confused and tired all the time."

"I'm going to let you in on a little secret," Clem said, leaning in closer, "that's totally normal. Everyone feels like that in high school."

Yve's eyes widened at this revelation.

"Not me, of course," Clem clarified, leaning back against the wall, "I've gotten over all that shit."

Yve studied her hands, processing everything she had been told. There was so much more she wanted to know, and despite Clem's assurances, she still had a hard time believing everything. This whole time she had viewed her abilities as wrong and it wasn't easy to suddenly change that, but she wanted to. She felt it in her chest.

She opened her mouth to ask another question, but it was cut off by the loud ringing of the school bell. Lunch time. Clem kicked off from the wall, brushing the dust off her hands. Just as she was about to round the corner, she hung back.

"It's going to be okay," she said, "You'll see. There's nothing to be ashamed of."

She gave one last smile before slipping into the stream of students rushing out for lunch.

Still lost in thought, Yve walked slowly back into school with no real direction in mind. It was only when she felt a sharp pain low in her stomach that she connected back to reality. With dread, she checked out her butt in the reflection of a classroom window. Not good.

Everything that Clem had told her flew out of her head and she picked up her pace, rushing to her locker and her supplies. She was almost there when, of all people, Michael appeared next to the row of lockers. He raced to her as soon as he saw her through the crowd as Yve cursed under her breath. She moved her body so she was in front of him.

"Are you okay?" He asked, "you weren't at the nurse's office."

"Uh huh," she answered quickly, looking desperately at her locker that he was blocking.

Unconsciously her hands moved protectively over her stomach as she felt another pang.

"Are you hurt?" His eyes followed her hands, even as she shook her head. He noticed something behind her, and his face shifted in understanding. Silently, he began to pull off his school jumper. Disoriented, Yve briefly wondered if she had been knocked out again and was experiencing one of her regular fantasies, especially when she caught a glimpse of his stomach before he pulled his shirt back down. He swiftly looped the jumper around her waist, moving into her space. Closer than they had ever been, she watched as he efficiently tied the sleeves around her front. Their eyes briefly met and Yve felt her heart stutter.

Stepping back, Michael reviewed his handiwork while Yve felt herself burn in a mixture of shame and desire. He saw. He *knew*. She wanted to erase the events from existence, but it wasn't possible. She couldn't bring herself to look at him.

"I have two sisters, you know," he said casually.

Yve looked up, and he was smiling at her, like it wasn't a big deal.

"Do you..." He started, but this time he was blushing, "do you want to eat lunch together?"

The tips of his ears were red and Yve thought it was the cutest thing she had seen.

"Okay," she said, taking a breath and gathering her confidence, "let me just sort out my period first."

He nodded, stepping out of her way. They shared a soft smile.