***Inspiration***

*By Samantha Ramsay*

Monica stared in frustration at the empty canvas in front of her, trying to see the image hiding underneath. She was usually good at art class, but today she was having a hard time finding inspiration. *Think,* she told herself, but to no avail. Fed up, she put down her paint brush and left the room. Just as she did so, she heard her mother’s voice calling from upstairs.

“Monica! Where are you!”

“I’m right here, Mom!” she replied

“Where’s here?”

“Not there!” she sarcastically responded before going outside.

As soon as she left the house she breathed a sigh of relief. She could *think* here. Inside there was too much noise, too much clutter (despite their usually clean house). Somehow, it was different out here, and she could just relax.

Suddenly a girl’s voice sounded behind her. “Hello”

Monica spun around. In front of her stood a girl who appeared to be about twelve or so years old. She had shoulder length brown hair and intense green eyes. “Umm... Hello” Monica said. “Can I help you?”

The girl shook her head. “I don’t think so” she appeared distracted, and bent down to look at a flower in the grass. She examined it, and then stood up, shaking her head.

Monica looked at her. “What are you doing here?” people didn’t often wander into her yard.

The girl appeared confused. “I don’t know. Do I have to be doing something?” she enquired.

Monica was taken by surprise. “Well... I guess not. I just don’t usually see people in our yard” She paused. “What’s your name?”

“Oh, my name...” the girl paused, as if thinking. “You can call me Moment. It’s short for ‘A Moment Lasts Forever. I think I had another name once, but I don’t know what it is” She shook her head vigorously, as if shaking off a bad memory. “What is your name?”

“Monica”

“Hello Monica” Moment smiled. “do you mind if I stay here for a while and look around?”

Monica shook her head. “Of course not” Curiously, she asked “Where are you from?”

“I... I... I don’t know. South America, I think” The girl responded slowly. “Please don’t ask questions about the past.”

Monica nodded. The girl had a Spanish accent, so South American origins made sense, but she couldn’t help but wonder why Moment had such a hard time talking about her past.

Monica sat down on the ground and watched as Moment looked around, examining various objects. She was a natural model, bending down to pick something up, and suddenly Monica had an idea. “Hey, do you mind if I draw you?”

Moment shook her head. “No, not at all”

“Okay, I’ll be right back. Monica left, rushing inside to get her sketch pad and a pencil, and then returned. “Do you mind if I pose you?” Moment shook her head and soon Monica was busy posing her, moving various limbs and casting a critical eye over the lighting. When she was satisfied, she stepped back and began to draw.

“Moment, why don’t you like talking about your past?” Monica knew that asking probably wasn’t a good idea, but she couldn’t help it. Her mother had always said she was too nosy for her own good, and it was true. Still, Moment didn’t seem bothered.

“I can’t remember most of it” She replied softly. “I don’t even remember where I was yesterday”

Monica stopped for a moment before speaking. “you have amnesia? Shouldn’t you go to the doctor?”

Moment shook her head. “No. I don’t trust them. Besides, I have more than amnesia”

“What do you mean?” Monica looked again at the girl in front of her, but she couldn’t see anything that would indicate an illness. “You look healthy”

Moment smiled. “I know. I look like your average twelve year old, don’t I?”

Monica nodded, “Yeah, you do”

“The thing is,” Moment told her “I’m not twelve years old, and I haven’t been twelve years old for a long, long time.” As if she knew what Monica was about to ask, she answered “No, I don’t think it’s one of those growth conditions. It’s too much of a coincidence for that. It’s as if time doesn’t have an effect on me. I can’t remember it, and I don’t follow the normal patterns of aging” She smiled. “do you want to know what else I can do?”

Suddenly the world *shifted* somehow, and Monica felt the distinct sense that something was *wrong*. She felt dizzy for a moment, then came back to her senses. Looking around, she realised the world looked different. There were still trees in front of her, but they didn’t look the same. When she shifted her head one way, she swore they changed into tiny saplings, and her house unbuilt itself. If she moved her head the other way, everything went back to the way it was. She looked at Moment, and found that she was the only thing that didn’t change, no matter how Monica looked at her.

“See?” she smiled. “It’s as though time can’t effect me”

Monica was starting to feel a little panicked. “how are you doing this?”

Moment sighed, and for an instant, although physically nothing changed, Monica could see a presence in her that felt as old as time itself.

“I don’t know” she whispered, and Monica saw a tear slide down her cheek. “I don’t *know* what’s wrong with me! How am I the only one that is separate from the continuum of space and time?” she sobbed, and suddenly looked very vulnerable.

Monica thought about it, and then, although she didn’t really know why, said “It’s almost as if you were time itself”

Moment thought about this, and then lit up. She barely had time to respond “I think you’re right...” before she suddenly began to disintegrate. Monica panicked. Moment was dissolving in front of her, a smile on her face, and suddenly Monica felt the complete and utter power of something she didn’t understand. She felt as if there were days and months and years and *eons* pressing down on her, and just when she was about to break, the pressure lifted.

Monica looked around. “Moment?” a quick glance around the yard told her what she had suspected – Moment was gone.

Monica picked up her canvas and went inside. When she checked the time, she discovered to her surprise that it was exactly the same time it had been when she headed out. “weird...”

It was hard to remember what had happened when she was outside, except that Monica had the vague sense that there was a girl, and that she had been talking to her. Suddenly, she glanced down at her canvas, and saw the drawing she had done. Slowly, it all came back to her, and Monica felt for a moment that same presence, only without as much pressure. She smiled. “I guess that’s what you call a once in a lifetime experience, huh?” walking over to her easel, she placed the canvas upon it, murmuring to herself

“So I’ll never forget”