

An abstract painting with a vibrant, multi-colored background. The colors include shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink, blended together in a textured, painterly style. In the center-right of the image, there is a vertical, textured form that resembles a stylized figure or a plant, rendered in shades of blue and green. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive.

# TURNING TIME BACKWARDS

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**Turning time backwards**

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The events take place in 2198. Julia Wexler from the School of Magic in  $\varepsilon$ -galaxy is to have her internship in  $\omega$ -galaxy. The events take a new twist when Julia is sent to the Earth as a participant of a teleportation program into the past. Who is Julia Wexler? Why is the school management after her and how does she win the support of the teenagers and make friends with them?

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# Turning time backwards

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## CHAPTER ONE JULIA

2198. The scene is set in dwarf  $\varepsilon$ -galaxy somewhere between  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,...  $\omega$ -galaxies, in the School of Magic.

– Elizabeth Smith, you start your internship tomorrow in  $\beta$ -galaxy. Steward Larkin will escort you.

– Margaret Kenning. You are leaving for  $\gamma$ -galaxy with Kurt Koch.

– Boney Zimmerman. Your internship destination is  $\alpha$ -galaxy. Lesley Ziemer will take you there.

“When will my turn come? Where will they assign me?” Julia was thinking to herself listening to Madame Groysman’s crisp monotonous voice and having all these questions flicker unanswered through her head like the stars in the sky. Suddenly all the important events in her life came live before her eyes.

The girl was an orphan at a very early age. Both her parents and brothers died on the same day and she was brought up by foster parents. They were aged, of modest means and childless. Though Julia had known all her life that Maggie and John were not her real parents, she did not feel deprived of a real family. Maggie and John loved Julia and always treated her with care and respect, which created a kind of distance between them and embarrassed Julia even more.

She was seven, when they sent her to the boarding School of Magic for girls where she studied for 10 years. Hardly had she entered school, when there came an unexpected turn of events. First she had a narrow escape from the fire when she stepped on Jane’s foot by accident. Jane showed her anger by giving Julia a fiery look which instantly set her uniform on fire. Julia did not have time to feel scared, as two security guards turned up next to her and extinguished the fire. In the classroom, there was a loud bickering between Kasey and Linda. Kasey had lost her textbooks and was thinking Linda had taken them.

– Why would I need your textbooks? I’ve got mine. – Linda was saying, trying to reason with her.

– They were here a minute ago, – Kasey was screaming.

Tempers flared and everyone got involved. Suddenly all metallic items started falling from the stands. Carla had them magnetized with her look, while the others were trying to push her out of the classroom in skirmish. The next moment the people and the things in the room froze in the air. Julia stopped them with her look. God knows what would happen if not for the bell. Madam Groysman and Andrea Livandovskaya, the class head, entered the room.

– What’s going on in here?

The steel in school principal’s voice was unmistakable and scared them more than the falling items. Everyone froze and the room fell silent.

The school was located in a huge majestic building that inspired awe and respect. The school management had been very strict about the established order since the start of the school

The school program was the same for everyone during the first three years. Every student had a special gift. The school’s mission was to develop the students’ gifts. All the girls studied hard but the most important outcome of the primary school was to learn to exercise control over one’s thoughts, emotions and actions. This was a real challenge and most learners had to leave school after the third grade. Not everyone was able to control themselves and use their gift when required. The greatest takeaway for those who survived was to value what they had.

Starting from the fourth grade, students were to take their majors along with compulsory subjects like telepathy, telekinesis and the simplest forms of teleportation. At the same time, they could control other people not only through their gift but also their intellect.

Julia excelled at school. She was well-mannered and boasted such unique abilities, as eidetic memory, mental arithmetic skills, an ability to locate the required information very fast, find her way in an unfamiliar setting, recognize codes, symbols, signs and translate them into any language, ranging from the language of Ancient Runes to dialects spoken by small nations. She also had the gift of controlling others. The School of Magic helped her develop these gifts. Julia was in friendly terms with the girls in the school but her best friend was Jack. He was the best pilot at school. As they didn't have the chance to meet very often, each meeting was unforgettable.

Julia introduced Jack to Maggie and John during one of the parental meetings. She could see that they seemed to like him but didn't want her to be close friends with him, though they wouldn't acknowledge this.

All the official events at school were attended by students and pilots. Today was one of the events. A group of graduating students was leaving for other galaxies to have their internships in different schools of magic.

– Julia Wexler, your destination is  $\omega$ -galaxy and Jack Black will escort you there.

The principal's voice brought Julia back down to reality. Hardly had she realized the significance of her assignment, when all her friends started to hug and congratulate her. That was indeed a dream assignment. Throughout school history, only one graduate had the honor of visiting that galaxy. This was not merely by a stroke of luck that Julia had got that assignment. She had the best grades at school. Over the past three years, her name had topped the list of the best candidates at school, which happened quite rarely.

Jack, who was a pilot in command, had never escorted anyone during their internship. “May tomorrow start today for me to spend a few hours with Jack.”

The departure was scheduled at six a.m. Julia couldn't sleep; she was hyper excited. What was there for her? There was nothing new there to be explored about galaxies. Or almost nothing. She had learned at school of magic that  $\omega$ -galaxy had been explored less than other galaxies but differed from the others only by being located further and having a larger size. Why was she worried then?

“This feeling of uncertainty is scary.” Julia thought to herself. She had never left her own galaxy, nor had she traveled outside her school of magic. Maggie and John would visit her but they would not take her home for holidays. Why wouldn't she ever give it a thought?.

“It 's already past midnight. At five she has to be in the departure zone. She has to rest for a couple of hours. Who needs your goddamn gift when you can't even help yourself to sleep. Just don't fret. Lie down, close your eyes and count until ten. Good girl!” Soon she was fast asleep. In her dream she was racing into an abyss at a great speed. She was about to fall into a huge crater, when someone pulled her out of the waves of turbulence that were about to destroy her.

The alarm went off. It was half past four and time to get up. She fixed her hair and clothes, touched the sensor units to open the door and went into the corridor. She could hardly walk. “Not enough sleep. The flight is long, though. Will get some.”

Julia went to the dispatcher's board of inter-galaxy flights (DBIF), which worked non-stop. She entered the departures hall, where some of the interns were already waiting. It had never crossed her mind that there was such a powerful system behind the School of Magic.

The warehouse was nearby. Everyone went into their cubicle to get their special gear. At six o'clock sharp, the crews were ready for departure. Julia's flight was the last one on the schedule and she was watching the spaceships take off through the bulletproof glass wall on the dispatcher's board. The view was fascinating.

Julia listened to the flight instructions. Jack had already checked all the gear and the navigation system and was looking through the flight variables that he had received in an envelope right before boarding the spaceship. Though everything seemed to be going in its usual way, Julia felt anxious for some reason.

The conversations were recorded during the flight and Jack turned on the system that could create noise in signals. This was his own invention, and nobody knew about it.

– Calm down, Julia. Everything's fine. Try to go to sleep. I'll wake you up when needed. We'll admire the sky together. Have to work.

– What's up? We can't hear you. There's no connection.

Jack took his seat, turned off the noise and contacted the dispatcher's board.

“He's right. Anyway I can't talk to him now.” Julia thought. She curled up in the armchair, closed her eyes and was soon asleep.

Leaving the superspace, Jack looked into the side window. He loved looking at the star-strewn sky, which always seemed to be so near. He found it still hard to get used to this view. Suddenly, something got his attention. He went through the itinerary again. Jack was an experienced pilot. He couldn't be mistaken. What he had been given were not the coordinates for  $\omega$ -galaxy. “Where are we headed?”

Julia, wake up, – she heard Jack say.

After years of training, her response was quick and she opened her eyes right away.

– We've got a problem, – Jack said after a long hesitation.

– What do you mean? – Julia asked glancing at him.

– I can't understand anything, Julia. Someone must have changed  $\omega$ -galaxy coordinates. Our destination has changed.

– How is this ever possible?

– Don't know.

– How about DBIF, why don't they respond? They can hear us, can't they?

– I have contact noise on.

– Why?

– Am not sure yet...

– Jack, don't take any independent initiatives. Just let me know what you think.

– Are you sure?

– So, where do you think we are headed? – Julia asked with a smile.

Jack answered after a pause.

– I think we are flying to the Earth.

– What makes you think that?

– See these globular clusters? I've been to  $\omega$ -galaxy for about 50 times and to low-earth orbit for about 5 times. And I can assure you that our destination is the Earth. We are in one of the arms of Spiral Galaxy, the Milky Way. We are not very far from the solar system and the Earth, the only planet known to harbor life in the Universe.

Despite Julia's playful humor, Jack was getting anxious, as he knew his gut instinct was always right.

Julia was just smiling.

– Jack, it's great to see you don't want us to be apart. Come on, this might not be a very good joke, as I already feel worried. I won't be gone long though.

– I know you don't believe me, Julia. Let me contact the dispatcher's board.

As he was doing that, Julia started having her reservations. “Jack was too serious. He doesn't seem to be joking. What if it's real? No need for guesses. Everything will be clear in a couple of hours, maybe she should open the envelope? No, the instructions stated clearly that it should be opened upon her arrival.”

Before she had boarded her flight, Julia was given a sealed envelope that contained her internship task. As if reading her mind, Jack said:

– Maybe you should open the envelope to see the task.

– Are you reading my mind or what? Don't you tell me what I should do, – she said not very confidently.

Her stubbornness made Jack angry.

– Do you get how serious this is? I'm in charge of your safety. Let me do my work.

Julia had never seen him so excited and she gave up.

As she opened the envelope, Julia read the task. “We are flying to the Earth. The internship task is to take part in the program on deporting people to the past.”

“Jack is being overcautious. He just hit the panic button.” The very next minute she knew she was not right. “He realized at once that we were not travelling to  $\omega$ -galaxy. Why so much secrecy when the program itself doesn't envision that?”

– Jack, don't you find it strange that it was me who was given this task? I am not a teleportation major in time. I don't have the skills. The whole department worked on that. I just know the basics after having taken some classes.

– Julia, please try to tell me what you know about this program.

Julia cast her mind back to the course she had covered earlier.

– The galaxy lords wanted the terrestrials to inhabit only the Earth. It would be great if they could succeed in their plan. In case of failure, they had a special program developed on the teleportation of terrestrials in time. As the volunteers are not wizards and there are a lot of alternate worlds that are similar to each other both in the present and the past, it is highly likely that upon their return to the past, they will find themselves in one of the alternate worlds and can somehow change the future of the Earth or even destroy it.

– And even if they can return to their own world in the past, the conflict between their own world and the new one is inevitable, as it's hard not to make a mistake and mistakes can be programmed to change the future of the Earth as they may think fit. And you will be the only one responsible for that. A fabulous plan. There you go. – Jack said in fake admiration.

– You know, back then I already had tons of questions. Say, how can we control the present by changing the past? I thought it was impossible. Besides, is it possible to control the real world through an alternate one? Seems to be impossible unless one is versed in magic. The research itself was in its initial stage then.

– So you voiced your opinion.

– Of course I did. Listen, the research in the field of teleportation was conducted with a rare kind of isotope of plutonium, if I'm not mistaken  $^{239}\text{m}^{1}\text{Pu}$ . This is an artificially synthesized radioactive element with a short life span and in small quantity. This element is used to fuel the time machine. It makes teleportation in time possible in proportion to the given mass.

Research in teleportation in time was conducted technically to accumulate stocks of isotope of plutonium for the time machine and to provide a teleportation training course for the staff. It's important not to make mistakes. One shouldn't worry about teleportation that is for one or two days or even for a month. However, with the term extension there appears to be a greater exponential impact on the present, past and the future. In this respect, it is important that students know what they should do in case there's a need to substitute the future.

Psychological training also does matter. Imagine the uncertainty and emptiness you experience after teleportation. The machine is your only protection. In case of even a minor mistake, you don't know which present and time dimension you will be returning to if you can return at all.

– Did you share these thoughts with anyone? – Jack wondered.

– I certainly did. Why are you asking?

– God, Julia, how can you be so naive? Do you think you are smarter than others? Did anyone else have the same questions?

– Not really. We also learned how to create a force field that is invisible to others. This is also crucial to teleportation in time not to frighten people around you and to be able to observe how things

were a month or a year ago. By the way, the teleporting magician can choose either to be visible or invisible to those surrounding him. In the latter instance, he should use a kind of protective screen, a shellproof cover, which we learned to design during another class. That's it.

– So you think that you learned all these things over a couple of classes?

– I have a good memory.

– Can you create that screen then?

– The thing is that I can't. It's not my field. We studied it only in theory. Moreover, I don't know a single person, who has teleported in the past for a certain period of time. The department management did not approve my decision to take extracurricular classes and I thought I should raise this issue later. You know, I am even grateful to them, as I don't have any doubts what I will be doing over the next three years in the School of Magic.

– This means trouble. Do you realize what you've got yourself into? Do you realize how much money might be involved?

– I know this is all very strange, – Julia answered..

– And that's not the only strange thing.

Jack drifted into thoughts.

– If they had known all this earlier, why didn't they tell us? To reach the Earth from  $\epsilon$ -galaxy, we have to stop on our way at orbital stations for fuel, food and oxygen. In this way to reach the earth from the orbital station, we need twenty-four hours. The station is in regular contact with the Earth. Every two-three hours there are commercial flights of the shuttle that transports scientists, space tourists, and cargoes to the Earth and back. The seats in the shuttle need to be booked in advance. I will book yours now but you won't board the shuttle.

– How will I get to the Earth then?

– You'll use the lander to get into the alternate world through the black crater and then you'll find your way to the real world. You are a wizard and you can do that. Remember you can't stay long in another dimension in the alternate world, as this space is well controlled by the School of Magic. In the real world, you will be less controlled on the Earth. They have their own technologies there and those who will be looking for you on the Earth are not wizards. So, this will be your advantage.

– I can't control the lander.

– You don't have to. I'll tell you now what you have to do. You will be ejected out of the crater and will be in free flight in another dimension in one of the alternate worlds. You'll find your way somehow.

– That's really comforting. Why would we need all these pre-cautions, Jack? Don't tell me stories.

– Take a mobile astroid. It can't be tracked, as it's not registered. The only number it has is mine. I've got the same astroid with your number. Here are the codes. Astroid code access is: 2198MSch, inter-galaxy WiFi code is 17 $\epsilon$ -GJV. Astroid can function both in the present and the past in the real and alternate worlds. Don't save the codes. Turn off the astroid after every session. Disconnect the line adapter to be on the safe side. It doesn't need to be charged for minimum fifty years. Make sure you don't mess up with the nuclear battery capsules. This can put you in a greater danger than the plots of your enemies.

– Jack, you might not be aware of this but I major in the most complex ways of teleportation. At the highest level, one's teleportation can be achieved through the teleportation of the digital code.

– I know everything depends on the transmission of the signal. The printer prints the signals it receives. If a text or a formula can be printed out, a person can also be printed.

– Indeed, a 3D holographic printer can be used for a basic object and inter-galaxy WiFi is the main transmission tool.

– That's great. I assume you know how to use an astroid.

Julia already had something else on her mind.

– Jack, imagine, we can transfer this code across galaxies and travel through them. There won't be any need to fly anywhere, as information can be transmitted through inter-galaxy WiFi. We can live up to our imagination. Once code problems are solved, we can make this real.

Julia always amazed Jack. They were apparently living in different dimensions. Her safety and life were at risk and she indulged in romantic dreams.

– We will have to resort to flying unless your complex teleportation works. – Jack said

– What a nuisance you are! – Julia said bitterly. —Why don't you take me seriously?

– I do, that's why I feel worried about you. Don't you realize this is a trap?

– What's the matter? What's wrong?

– Everything is wrong.

– Having seen her bewilderment, he said:

– I won't bother you with my suspicions. Just listen to me. Don't start for your destination immediately on your arrival. Walk around. Try to tell your whereabouts and keep me updated. Give me your word that you'll follow my instructions.

– Don't worry. I'll be cautious.

– What I'd like to know is their motivation. Why would they be interested in you?

– We'll figure that out. – Julia said.

– We'll get through even if we don't figure it out. You are brave, Julia. I believe in you.

The program on teleportation in the past had already been launched and there was much money involved. Everything is really wrapped up nicely. “We've polluted the Earth. It's possible to change everything.” The School of Magic did its best. Targeted zombification of mass consciousness is in progress. The earth is overflowing with announcements on a scientific experiment on deporting people to the past. Scientists, economists and politicians host round-table discussions on TV. They talk about the necessity, economic expediency and methods of program implementation. Commercial animations message the goals and scale of the experiment and even target children. Volunteers are offered large amounts of money to have their dreams come true.

There are queues of volunteers in take-off stations. Among them, there are a lot of refugees and desperate people who want to seize their chance. Teenage volunteers are in a special camp.

Julia doesn't know any of these. Nor do they know at school who Julia is, as she is studying under an assumed name. In fact, Julia is the daughter of  $\omega$ -galaxy lord toppled by his own brother, who has also killed the lord's wife and sons. Julia had a close call and was brought up by foster parents. Her patrons mean to have Julia regain her legal power when she turns eighteen. Meanwhile, they fund her school education. The school is a talent pool for controlling the galaxies. Its funding is allocated by the lords of these galaxies. Most of the funding is provided by the largest and the most powerful  $\omega$ -galaxy.

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