# Chresmographion

*by* J.A. Pak

Meeting the past an inevitable outcome (this inside a future fortune cookie). Shame pierces her like a sudden migraine.

Hesitation. If she'd been quick, her face would have become a pixel in a fluctuating crowd and he wouldn't be standing, smiling, saying her name (Olivia), his hug, his familiar smell steeping a kind of protective love into her.

Too hard to speak; drops of coffee for words.

At the cafe, face to face, she stares past him; he stares right into her. Gently, his hand covers hers.

The past is stored like a compressed spring, the subject within the subject. First, there is the fact that Oliver is adrift. Comfortably adrift, moving in and out of cities and lives, a fact that makes Olivia gasp.

He begins sleeping on her sofa, finds a job bartending. It's his fallback skill, mixing drinks of fire and brimstone. Olivia doesn't drink. She doesn't like alcohol, the alchemy. Mixing drinks is mixing memories and those memories are frozen behind a dam she doesn't know exists.

She asks Oliver if he ever dreams about the Contessa.

No. He doesn't remember dreams.

First memories then. She's eleven (he's thirteen) and in the room, the Contessa. There's also a boy (girl), Oliver (Olivia), and a couple who must be his (her) parents. Family of three in duplicate. A mirror-image surprise. The Contessa's first lesson.

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