Kristabel slammed sideways into the concrete wall, leaving a crack in it with her half-built robotic arm. A loose screw fell out of her arm and dropped to the floor with a *clink*. No time to retrieve it. She’d find another screw somewhere else. She held onto the rest of her arm with her right hand and resumed her escape down a different hall.

*No worries, your arm will be fine,* she thought to herself. *Just another stupid decision to add to the pile of decisions you’ll regret for the rest of your life.*

The red exit doors were blocked by a couple of soldiers pointing their glowing swords at her. Another regret Kristabel had was not moving to a faraway normal country where the army had guns. At this point, dodging bullets was easier than dodging their time-dilating blades. Luckily, neither of these guys looked familiar. All the soldiers had heard about her abilities, but few had seen them up close.

Kristabel kept up a steady jog toward the soldiers. “Hey guys! Sorry I don’t have time to play with you but—”

The soldiers charged at her, swords held parallel at different heights. *Okay, no time to make fun of the low-skill guards.* With their sluggish reaction times of a few milliseconds, Kristabel had enough relative time to move maybe a hundred times faster than that. Ugh, why was she thinking of numbers right now? If she was lucky she’d never participate in another physics experiment again.

The soldiers slowed down to a turtle’s pace. Not a snail’s pace (which was always ideal) but good enough. She leapt up onto one of the soldiers’ raised arms, pushed her other foot off his shoulder, and took a flying jump over him.

There was no time to look back, but Kristabel knew by the time she’d reached the door, the soldiers’ robot limbs had forced them to spin around and rush at her again. She flung the door open and stomped out into the pouring rain on the roof. *Crap, how much energy am I using right now? I haven’t been keeping track.* Unlike with fractions of seconds, she was never done tracking of the feeling of fatigue that filled her body way sooner than expected every time she strained her time-warping powers.

Kristabel stopped before the crushed fence at the roof’s edge. She turned to face the soldiers who had chosen a new slow but steady approach. Their swords in defensive stances, one of them spoke up.

“Kristabel Bouras! By trying to escape, you’re only endangering yourself and everyone else here! Please come with us and we’ll keep you safe!”
“You’re all lying!” Kristabel screamed back through the roar of the rain. “You had your chances to see what worked in this war! My decisions have all been stuck inside this hellhole of a building!”

Once again, no extra time. No time to think of some potential memorable last words. Kristabel warped herself backward off the building’s edge.
Lightning struck her on the way to the ground.

Kristabel woke up with a headache that radiated through her whole skull. She struggled to lift her head as she looked around.

“Oh, you’re awake,” said a girl sitting in a chair next to her. “Read that.”
There was a piece of paper lying on Kristabel’s stomach. With shaky hands, she held it above her face.

Dear Kristabel,

Hi, I’m your 13-year-old self. You’ve time-traveled back to your past one way or another, and you’re apparently here to help me fix my future with your powers. This keeps happening with my possible future selves of different ages from alternate futures. I’m just figuring out those time-warping powers myself. Yes, this has become a routine for me. I can explain anything else you need me to. I look forward to helping you improve our lives.

Love,
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P.S. Let’s just call each other by our ages. How old are you?

Kristabel let the paper fall onto her face. So much for regrets.