

THE TIME CAPSULE

WILLIAM LIN

Kai pushed his spade into the backyard dirt. The wind tugged on his hair, making him feel relaxed. Kai was weeding for Mum, but he was thinking about Sam, his friend from school. Sam's texts were on his phone. Kai was bisexual, but he hadn't told anyone. His parents always went on about getting a girl. Telling them felt too scary.

His spade hit something. Kai dug up a metal box. A note was stuck on it: Time Capsule, 1985. Kai looked at the house—Mum and Dad were inside watching TV—and ran to his room with the box.

Inside was a plastic bag with three letters and a small rainbow flag. A photo showed a teen with messy hair, smiling outside Kai's house. The flag was bright. Kai, who kept lots of secrets, felt excited. He opened the first letter. It seemed ripped out of a diary.

June 15, 1985: I'm Alex, 14, and bi. Nobody knows. My friends would tease me, and Dad would be mad.

Kai became more excited. Alex was like him—hiding, afraid. His parents' questions about girls made him nervous, especially when he thought about Sam, who was funny and kind. Kai put the badge on his backpack and read the next letter.

July 20, 1985: I told my friend Lisa I was bi. I was so scared, but she hugged me and kept it secret. I have at least one person to count on now.

Kai wanted to be brave like that. He texted Sam: Can we talk tomorrow? His hands shook, but he sent it. He opened the last letter.

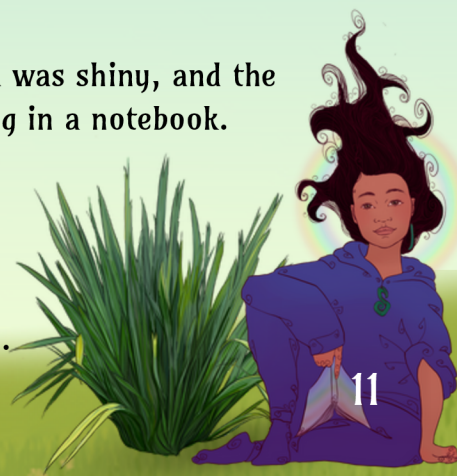
August 10, 1985. I'm going to a new school. I don't know if I'll tell people I'm queer, but I will try. You always have friends out there.

Kai held the photo. Alex's smile was happy, even if he was scared. Kai felt like Alex was a friend from long ago, helping him be brave.

The next day, Kai met Sam at the park by the waterfront. The sea was shiny, and the wind messed up Sam's red hair. They sat on a bench, Sam drawing in a notebook.

"Hey," Kai said. "Thanks for coming."

"Want ice cream?" Sam asked, smiling. Kai nodded. They brought some from a shop and ate quietly. While eating, Kai spoke quietly. "I'm bi. I haven't told anyone. My parents wouldn't understand."



Sam was kind. “My sister told me she was bi last year – it was scary, but she’s cool now. You’re not alone, Kai.”

Kai told Sam about the capsule, Alex’s letters, and the flag. Sam grinned. “That’s awesome! I wish I had someone to support me!”

Sam talked about a youth club at the community centre. “It’s fun, just kids like us. You should come.”

Kai was nervous. Meeting new people was hard, especially when he was a pretty shy kid, but Alex’s letter helped. “You have friends.”

“Okay,” he said.

That week, Kai kept the flag on his bag. His mum saw it once.

“What’s that?” she asked, her voice serious.

“Just something I found,” Kai said nervously. He switched subjects, but he was scared.

On Saturday, Kai went with Sam to the youth club. It had snacks and soft chairs. Six kids were there, eating chips and laughing. An adult saw them and smiled. “New here? Just have fun.”

Kai sat quietly. A girl talked about her experiences. A boy shared about making a rainbow poster. When the adult asked if anyone wanted to talk, Kai, trembling, raised his hand.

“I found a time capsule from 1985,” he said, nervously. “It was Alex’s, a queer kid like me. His letters make me feel better.” He said he was bi and scared to tell his parents.” Everyone clapped, and he surprisingly laughed.

Afterwards, Kai felt happy, like he fit in. After, he and Sam got hot chocolate.

Kai went to the youth club again. He made friends—a girl who liked drawing, a boy who knew about stars. One night, he told his big sister, Mia. “I’m bi,” he said, holding the flag.

Mia hugged him. “That’s awesome, Kai. I love you.” One evening, Kai sat outside, looking at the Southern Cross. He held Alex’s photo and letters. He didn’t know where Alex was now, but he hoped Alex was happy. Kai had friends now, Sam, Mia, the club. He wasn’t ready to tell his parents, but he wasn’t embarrassed anymore. He was ready to face any challenge ahead.

