

One Mistake

Pete was exploring and caught sight of an abandoned museum. He peered around the door, then stepped inside. He gazed at the dirty walls, full of cobwebs and grit. The paint was peeling and there was a poorly cared for counter that he supposed was for the staff who sold tickets.

Just then, the floorboards creaked, making him tense and alert. The sound came closer and closer from inside of the exhibition hall. It made its way around the wall, and Pete dove behind the counter, peeking out.

An old lady hobbled into the lobby. She wore a white, collared shirt that barely showed under her pink sweater and was inspecting a watch.

Fine pieces of gold were embedded in the marble of the watch carefully to resemble numbers and was covered by a smooth piece of glass. Encrusted rubies sparkled in the gold that lined the marble, and the silver hands moved ever so slightly as the slow minutes passed. "Hello," the old lady greeted. "Why don't you come closer, my child?"

He looked around, wondering if there could be anyone else around, and then got up uneasily. She took a few steps toward him, then inspected him. "The mark of Benjamin," she whispered. She stroked the small mole on his right earlobe as he froze confused and horrified.

Then she cleared her throat, changing the topic. "Do you like this beautiful watch?"

He squinted suspiciously at her but saw the watch and nodded. She slipped it on his hand and instructed, "Turn the minute hand back one minute."

He did as she said, and colors whirled around him. Finally, everything stopped.

He saw the old lady approaching him, and when he spun around, confused, he saw himself, crouching behind the counter! He had traveled back in time. He frantically fumbled around with the minute hand, turning it back. The colors flew around him once more. The old lady was standing there, waiting. "I-I went back in time," he stammered. She clapped her hands in delight. "My child, you must transport me back 50 years from now."

"Why?" he asked.

"I made a mistake and I need to go back in time to fix it. However, it is designed so that only a descendant of the man who invented this watch can activate it. And you are one of them."

Pete wanted nothing to do with her. He saw cunning in her cold eyes. But he also saw regret. So he reluctantly agreed. "Maybe if I ask the watch..." he trailed off. The old lady looked at him expectantly. "O watch," he tried. "Bring me and... um, this lady back 50 years ago."

Colors whirled around them, and suddenly, they were in a new and cleaner version of the lobby of the museum. Outside was a gigantic plain that stretched for miles, flowers waving with them in the soft breeze. Willow trees stood outside dotted the field. "The name is Grace," she said, irritated. "Now, come with me," And with that, she skittered away, Pete following closely behind.

After a few steps, Grace ducked behind a tree, watching a girl who was standing at a door of a quirky cottage. Wilted flowers stood sleepily all around the cottage in the ground where the grass had faded into rocky sand. The girl had long, dark hair, which seemed impossibly smooth. It rested on her shoulders, where a sleeveless dress hung. She was, however, incredibly ugly. The girl knocked on the door.

An old hag stepped out. She had a black robe with a hood that was pulled tightly over her wild, gray hair. Wrinkles appeared around her eyes as she cracked a cold smile. "Customers?" she cried. "You must come inside, yes, yes." She ushered the girl in. Grace crept up and peered in a window. Pete tiptoed behind her and peeked in another. The girl was seated in the middle of shelves full of concoctions of all sorts of colors. The old hag stepped behind a counter near the back of the room. It had a beautifully polished crystal ball quietly standing on it. "What do you want, my dear?" she asked.

"I want to be beautiful," the girl said. "I can do nothing to hide my ugliness. But one day while I was in the park, an old man I met told me that you can give me what I desire most. "

"Yes, yes," the old hag said, obviously very pleased with herself.

"So I came to you. If you can make me beautiful, I will give you the last ten years of my life."

"Deal!" The old hag said. She peered in her crystal ball, and her pupils grew abnormally large. "You will die in 2016." she said in a raspy voice that didn't belong to her. Then she looked up and her pupils shrank. She pulled a green bottle off the shelf behind her and handed it to her.

"Stop!" Grace cried, rushing in. She turned to the girl. "Give her the bottle back, Grace." Pete gasped. The girl was Grace's past self! The girl gave Grace an up and down look. "Get lost! Who are you anyway, and why do you know my name?" Then she turned back to the hag. "Continue what you were doing! We will *not* let this woman disturb us."

"Please! It's not worth it!" Grace pestered. The girl glared at Grace. Then, with a swift movement, she drained the entire potion down her throat. "No!" Grace cried, but it was too late. The girl had made her choice.

"It's no use," Grace said quietly as she trudged out. "Bring me back." Pete nodded sympathetically, and said, "O watch, bring me and Grace back to the present." He once again found himself in the midst colors. Suddenly, they stumbled into the old museum.

Grace coughed and sat down. "Life is not a thing to be trifled with. Remember that, my child." she said. Then she laid down, and didn't move again.

