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### Luck

As the 7:42 train pulled up to the station, the crowd on the platform pushed towards the arriving doors. A sea of people arriving and departing, each only focused on their own lives. There were two individuals of particular interest in the crowd, two individuals of which our story revolves around. They had never met before and did not know the other even existed. A clash of fate, or maybe a random coincidence is what brought these two together, and neither of their lives will ever be the same.

The 7:42 train was running three minutes late. At 7:45, he began to hear the rumble of the subway on the tracks, and its lights illuminated the tunnel. Mr. Robert Watson checked his watch impatiently and pushed to the front of the crowd. He wished for more space; the people around him were wrinkling his freshly pressed suit, and he did not want to arrive to work wrinkled and unkept. The rumbling got louder as the train arrived, and the crowd pushed towards the opening doors. A few got out, but it was no match to the number getting on. He pushed his way towards a seat, not willing to spend his twelve-minute commute standing. He plopped down and smoothed the sleeves of his fresh black suit. He opened his newspaper and turned to the first story, scowling at anyone who tried to sit too close to him.

At the back of the crowd, a young boy named Joey squeezed his way onto the subway while the doors slid shut behind him. He had managed to sneak out of his house while his mom and siblings slept and his dad was out looking for work. He almost disappeared into the crowd, small enough to not be noticed by most. He blended in with the parents taking their kids to daycare or the teenagers going to school. He managed to find a seat when a woman in a long skirt stood up, and he sat down next to an irritable looking businessman. He sat on his left side and a gleam on the man's wrist caught his eye. It was a shiny silver watch, obviously expensive, and the man was proud to wear it on his arm. Joey was intrigued. He knew the watch was worth at least \$1,000- enough money to provide his family with good food and new clothes for at least six months. The grumpy man was absorbed in his paper, unnoticed Joey glanced at the page he was reading, and caught a glimpse of the title: "WALL STREET IN PANIC AS STOCKS CRASH" Joey did not really understand stocks, it was something his dad complained about to his mom on those really bad days when he came home sad and dirty and went straight to bed. After scanning the page, Joey returned to stealing glances at that watch. He wished he had a watch like that. He imagined the life the man might lead: Going home to a family within a large house, surrounded by the images of wealth to a young boy: food and working lights and heat and that pretty watch. His hand inched closer and closer to it, controlled by its own mind, carrying out a desire the boy kept deeply hidden within his consciousness.

Mr. Watson folded his newspaper, picked up his briefcase, strode out past the subway doors, up the stairs and out onto the street. He glanced down at his wrist to check how long he had to get to work, but the spot on his wrist was empty. The new watch he had bought down at

the pawn shop on Fifth Avenue no longer shone on his arm and a pang of anxiety rattled in his stomach. He thought back to his subway ride and the suspicious boy who sat down next to him at the 12th street station. He had seen the kid looking at what he was reading in the newspaper, and had just thought that he was curious. Now he was sure that that rascal of a boy was the one who stole it. He glanced around frantically, searching for a glimpse of a small, dirty-haired boy scrambling through the crowd. He had never realized this before, but the number of people on their morning commute was overwhelming. He was surrounded by thousands, searching for one, unlucky in his pursuit.

Joey tried to maintain a reasonable pace on his walk home. The sharp weight in the pocket of his ratty gray windbreaker made him want to speed up, and his head turned back frequently to see if that grumpy man was following him. He expected to see the man pushing his way through the pedestrian, yelling and screaming for him to stop, but all he saw was people unknowing of his crime. When he reached the apartment his family shared with another, he found his mother awake.

“Joey!” She cried out, reaching for him from her immobilized place on the worn and creaky mattress. “Where were you? I told you not to leave the house without your father. Did you try and steal food? Oh Joey, please don’t do that.”

Joey stayed around the edge of the room. He glanced around, looking at the little trinkets that rested on the shelf over her bed. He did not want to make eye contact.

“No mom, I just wanted some fresh air. I felt nauseous,” he lied. He knew she could tell when he was lying. His hand shifted nervously to his pocket and he felt relieved to feel the watch still sitting safely in there.

“Hmm. Ok. I want you to stay inside for the rest of the day. There is a can of soup left in the closet in the hallway you can have for lunch.” Joey was relieved to know that she was not going to act on her suspicion.

“Ok, I will stay here today. I can read you a story later if you want. You need anything?”

“No, but thank you- I would like it if you read.” His mother smiled weakly at him, and Joey felt a pang of sadness. It felt as if his mother’s sickness was causing her to disintegrate before his eyes and she soon would be a pile of dust. He turned away to leave so his mother could not see his face.

As soon as he made it through the landmine that was telling his mother where he was, Joey locked himself in the bathroom. He gingerly shut the creaky door, worried that it may just fall off its squeaky hinges, and flipped the lock. Once he was safely inside the bathroom, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his prize from that morning. It sparkled in his hand. He ran his fingers lightly over the face of the watch, staring at the delicate hands as it ticked the seconds past. He knew that he should sell it. It would bring his family enough money to support them until his father could get a job and they could all finally stop worrying where their next meal was coming from. But an urge stopped him from finding someone on the street to sell it to. An urge that made him clasp the watch around his wrist and hold it into the light. It captivated him, the way the light glistened on it and the luxury he felt while wearing it. He looked into the

filthy mirror, enamored with the way he looked with it fastened on his wrist. He told himself he would sell it soon, but he could not bear to give it up yet.

Mr. Robert Watson had a foul morning. He had burnt his hand on the stove when he was cooking his routine eggs for breakfast, he stepped in dog poop on his way to work, and then on the train, some hoodlum kid stole the watch he bought yesterday. He was frustrated. When he arrived at the office, he made sure everyone knew just what kind of mood he was in.

“Cheryl! I hope you called the accountant about the numbers for this quarter!” He yelled at his assistant as he stomped in, shoving his coat on the rack and slamming his hand on her desk. He gave her a death stare, demanding the proper answer from her.

“Oh um yes sir I did yesterday before I left sir sorry sir I-” Cheryl whimpered, his anger not unusual to her but still frightening. She did not make eye contact but could feel his eyes boring into her skull as she shrunk away from him.

“Finally you did something right,” Watson rolled his eyes. “Better have my coffee on my desk in five minutes!”

“Yes sir, I will have it ready, sir,” She said timidly, standing up and rushing to the coffee maker. Mr. Robert Watson crossed the carpeted room and slammed the door to his office. He did not want to be bothered.

He sat down at his big oak desk, plopping into the cushy seat. He felt his anger finally reduce to just a lurking simmer, with boiling spikes when he tried to check the time and remembered his watch was no longer there. He aggressively pulled out papers from his briefcase

and spread them across the dark wood. As he pulled out a pen to begin writing, the door to his office peaked open.

“Hey Boss, staff meeting in fifteen minutes still?” John, Mr. Robert Watson’s other assistant asked. Watson was not in the mood for a damn staff meeting. No one listened to him anyways. If he had the ability to, he would fire them all today.

“No John, cancel it. Make sure everyone out there is doing what they are supposed to. And ask Cheryl where my goddamn cup of coffee is.”

“Of course, boss. Let me know if you need anything else.” John closed the door softly and left the boss alone. From years of experience, he knew when to back off. Mr. Robert Watson returned to his work, trying to focus in spite of his anger at the whole world, for how it had crossed him that day.

Joey picked up his mother’s favorite story and sat down next to her bed to read. Every day she seemed to get worse, and today it looked as if her bed was going to swallow her whole. It hurt Joey’s heart. He had watched his mother’s condition deteriorate over the past months, her hair falling out, eyes sinking in, and slowly losing more and more weight. He could cry, but he would not force her to bear that burden. As he cracked open the well-used book, he heard a creak above him. He ignored it at first, thinking it was just one of the usual creaks of their old apartment, but it happened again. He glanced up, and as his eyes rested on the shelf the hung above him and his sick mother, he heard a final, loud creak and it and all its inhabitants crashed down upon them.

His head hurt, and the glass piece that had caused him that pain was lying broken on the ground, just waiting to be stepped on. He glanced at the mess around him, the debris on his pants, and felt a shock of worry about his mother. Joey looked over, expecting to see her covered in splintered wood and broken trinkets, but there was not a speck of dust on her. Somehow, everything had only fallen onto him.

“Joey, Joey! Are you okay, are you hurt?” His mom called frantically, trying to sit up in her bed.

“Yes mom, I think I am okay. Don’t sit up, please, I’m not hurt,” he reassured her. After clearing some of the leftover debris off himself, he felt the weight that remained in his pocket and nervously felt for it, hoping it was not broken. Through his pants, it felt okay, and he thought to remind himself later to check it in the bathroom.

“What happened? How did it fall? Are you sure that you are okay?” She asked again, and Joey wondered how it did happen. How did everything fall on only him? Maybe, he thought, it was just bad luck.

“I’m not sure. I’m going to get a broom to clean this up, maybe there are some things we can salvage.” He exited the room, heading for the broom in the kitchen, but stopped at the bathroom first to check the watch. He pulled it out of his pocket gingerly, worried that he may see cracks all over the beautiful face, but the watch gleamed at him as usual, undamaged. He heaved a sigh of relief and lowered it back into the pocket of his old khakis.

When Mr. Robert Watson returned home from work, he expected to have dinner ready when he got there. He had spent the hours of eight a.m. to five p.m. in a building full of idiots, and the least his wife could do was have a hot meal waiting for him, after all, that was her job. Luckily, tonight, dinner was on the table when he walked in the door. His two children, eleven-year-old Elizabeth, and nine-year-old Thomas greeted him.

“Daddy, Daddy! How was work today?” Elizabeth asked, smiling.

“Not great, honey, not even good.” He sighed, “You are lucky you will never have to deal with dumb employees as I do.”

“Why will I not have too?”

“Because it will be your job to take care of the house and children while your husband does the real job, just like your mother and I.” He responded to his daughter while sitting down at the polished table.

“Well, she could maybe get a job when she’s older if she wanted too,” Mr. Robert Watson’s wife chimed in as she served them pork roast and mashed potatoes. Both Elizabeth and Thomas thanked her, while her husband did not.

“Don’t be ridiculous Jeannette. The workforce is no place for a woman, she wouldn’t be able to handle the stress.” He exclaimed. “And besides, I am not letting my daughter be some kind of secretary. Its a useless job filled by useless women.”

When she was done serving, Jeanette sat down at the table. The whole family knew not to bother him when he was in a bad mood. They ate in silence except for the occasional “please” or “thank-you” from the children.



Joey pulled up a chair for his younger sister before sitting down himself for dinner. They ate in his mother's room, so she could enjoy the conversation as well. The whole family sat around her bed, the floor clean after the catastrophe of the morning. Joey sat on his mother's right, and his two younger siblings, Ellie and Ben occupied the seats next to him. His father was on the other side, holding his wife's hand.

"Joey, will you say grace, please?" His father asked gently, and Joey nodded while interlacing his fingers with his sister's and mother's. He bowed his head and closed his eyes, thanking the Lord for the meager food his father had provided them with. After the prayer, Joey looked up and smiled at his family, grateful that they had the chance to all be together. He took a slice of the thick bread, spread some cheese on top and handed it to his mother, and proceeded to serve the rest of the family. Everyone responded with a gracious thank you, and Joey took food for himself last. The whole family ate and talked and giggled together, and when they had finished the loaf and the last of the cheese, their stomachs were still not full, but their hearts were.

After the small dinner had ended, and the sky began to darken outside, Joey and his father worked on repairing the shelf that had almost given Joey a concussion earlier that day. The shelf had remained intact, but the nails had been pulled out of the walls and bent, and need to be replaced. His father asked him if he could run to the hardware store that night before it closed. Joey agreed and grabbed his coat, making sure the watch was safely tucked in his pocket before closing their door.

It happened when Joey was halfway to the store. It was not a particularly bad area, but luck was not on his side that night. Two boys, double the size of him, jumped him. Maybe they

were upset with the cards life had dealt them or maybe they just had anger in their hearts. Either way, that night they took it out on Joey. He was left lying next to the dumpster in an alley, the world spinning before him and his arms and legs sprawled. It was like he had been hit by a truck, and his head pounded as loud as thunder. He felt around him and knew the money his dad had given him to spend on nails was gone. He stuck his hand in his left pocket and felt the weight of watch, and when he pulled it out, it was still as shiny and new as when he first saw it.

He made it home somehow that night, with blood dripping from his nose and a limp in his right leg. His whole family made a fuss over him when they saw him, but all he wanted to do was sleep, not aware of how lucky he was that he was still alive.

Mr. Robert Watson slept soundly that night. He was full and clean, and his family had not made too much trouble for him that evening. When he woke up in the morning, he was refreshed and ready to go to work, in a better mood than the day before. He had a lovely breakfast of steak and eggs, and his children thought that he may have even been humming while lacing up his shoes. He left the house with a perma-grin plastered on his face and started his cheerful morning walk to the subway station where he would catch the 7:42 train to work.

Joey had decided it was time to sell the watch. They needed the money to pay for his medical expenses, and he did not want it to be something his mother worried about. He snuck out again in the morning and hobbled along to the the subway station, planning to take the subway to a jeweler on the other side of the city who make take the watch off his hands. He arrived just in time to catch the train, hopping on at the back of the crowd of morning commuters. He felt the

watch resting in his pocket and pulled it out just so he could take another glimpse of its shiny face. While he was looking, the train lurched suddenly and the watch slipped out of his grasp and across the floor. He ran to where it slid to, slowed in his pursuit by the sheer number of people on the train. When he finally reached where it had slid to a stop on the dirty floor, he reached out for it, trying to snatch it up before anyone saw. A wrinkled hand stretching from the seat above grabbed his arm, and he looked up and made eye contact with the man he had stolen that exact watch from the day before.

“Excuse me, where did you find this watch?” The man asked aggressively, glaring down at the young boy.

“Uh um I found it on the street the other day and was going to look for the owner-” Joey stammered, caught off guard by this twist of fate

“NO, you weren’t! You damned boy stole this off me yesterday on this exact train! You are going to pay for that young man, now hand me my watch!” Joey handed over the sparkling watch, disappointed that he could no longer sell it. As he moved away from the man, he felt a sharp sting across his cheekbone that made him wince. The businessman had slapped him, and tears came to Joey’s eyes. He scrambled away through the crowd of people and hid by the doors until they opened at the next station. He ran as fast as he could on an injured leg up the stairs and into the open, scared out of his wits and only wanting to find a way home.

Mr. Robert Watson could not believe his luck. To find the boy who had stolen his watch the day before in a city of millions of people was unbelievable. He slapped the dumb kid to remind him of the crime he committed, then happily clasped the beautiful jewelry around his

wrist. He got off the train at his usual station and pushed his way through the people, checking and double checking that the watch was still there the whole time. He reached the street and began the five-minute walk to his building. As Mr. Robert Watson reached the last intersection before his office, he looked down and saw a speck of dirt on its pretty glass face. He grabbed his sleeve in his hand to clean it, keeping his head down and scrubbing as he continued to walk, not realizing that everyone around him had stopped on the sidewalk. He heard an extremely loud horn and looked up to see a passenger bus slam on its breaks directly in front of him. Unluckily for Mr. Robert Watson, the bus was unable to stop in him, and he was hit full-force by a twenty-five thousand-pound bus. When the bus stopped a few hundred feet later, Mr. Robert Watson's body laid mangled on the asphalt. His suit was torn, his briefcase smashed, his legs turned at impossible angles, and his face disfigured. But the watch shone on his arm, blindingly beautiful in the sunlight, without a scratch on it.

Joey made it home quickly, sad but with a surprising weight lifted off his shoulders. He sat down on the rickety chair next to his mother's bed and held her hand. He offered to read her a story, and she accepted. Joey picked the worn book off the end table and turned to the page he left off on. As he read, he smiled at the fact that he was here, with a loving family and a roof to live under, and something told him that his life could have been a lot worse.