

The Present of the Past
by Michael Amato

Childhood

Reid's parents died when he was six years old in a house fire. Reid happened to be at the movies with his uncle Aaron, who took on the responsibility of raising Reid after the incident. Reid overheard his uncle and the police saying that there was a gas main leak in the house which led to the fire. The two of them were devastated.

At the age of nine, Reid was on his way to school when a man wearing a long brown coat bumped into him. Reid couldn't see his face, as it was hidden behind the brim of a fedora. This man dropped a button pin. Reid examined the pin which read, "Time is relative" and picked it up to give it back, but the man was nowhere to be seen. He thought the pin was cool, so he slipped it into his pocket.

The realization

Reid was in his high school chemistry class. Today he was partnered up with the girl of his dreams, Joanne. They were doing experiments with dangerous acidic chemicals. Despite being extremely shy and nervous, he was doing really well talking to her. They shared a few laughs, smiles, and awkward glances into each other's eyes. Unfortunately, the great time wouldn't last. There was another boy in the class, Timothy, who always picked on Reid. Timothy saw how Reid was enjoying himself and knocked the beaker in Reid's hands towards Joanne. She died within seconds. The class was in an uproar. The teacher was screaming at Timothy as the other students were crying and screaming in fear.

Then all of a sudden, Reid had a pain in his chest. He thought it might have been his heart literally breaking from Joanne's death, but he looked down and saw a couple drips of blood on his shirt. The pin he had found all those years ago would always prick him, but he was always compelled to hold it in his breast pocket every day. He took the pin out of his chest and glanced down at it and saw the text had changed.

"Speak the words once on this pin and thou shalt understand the truth"

Reid silently uttered the words, "Time is relative."

All of a sudden, the room was silent. Reid gazed around the room and saw his fellow students and the teacher were frozen in their position. The man in the brown coat walked through the door.

"10:24 a.m., right on time, Reid," he said as he tilted his fedora.

Reid panicked. "Who are you? How do you know my name? Why is everyone frozen?"

“That pin of mine you picked up can stop and rewind time. The only people who will not be frozen in time will be people who have touched it or pins like it,” explained the man in brown.

Reid looked back down at the pin in disbelief. When he looked up again, the man was gone. He decided to give it a shot. He closed his eyes and imagined the moment when Timothy hit the chemicals. He then imagined using his notebook to cover the beaker. He would lose all his chemistry notes from that semester, but that was small price to pay for saving a human life. Timothy never came back to school after that day.

The mission

One day after school, Reid and Joanne, who was now his girlfriend, took a longer route home than they usually did. They walked by a shop that had countless clocks and watches displayed in the window. Joanne commented on how one of the watches was pretty, so they went in to look at it.

Behind the counter was an old man. He had long locks of silvery hair flowing out from the toque he wore on his head. He turned around and was shocked to see customers in his store. Reid noticed he was wearing an eye patch.

“Do you have anything that needs to be repaired?” the old man bluntly asked.

“Oh, do these all belong to customers? I saw a very pretty watch and just wanted to ask about it,” Joanne replied.

“Yes they do, except this one. This one is mine,” the old man said as he swiped the pocket watch from the counter. “Now, if you’ll excuse me. I have to get back to work. The watch repairman is running out of time.”

When Reid and Joanne left the shop, they saw a little girl crying in the street. Upon further inspection, it appeared that her dog had been hit by a car. It was still alive and in immense pain. Reid realized he had to use the pin to rewrite the past.

“Time is relative!”

He then closed his eyes and turned back time so that he and Joanne were on the same side of the street as the girl was, and they were petting the dog as the car passed by so it wasn’t hit. As they were walking away, Reid noticed the man in the shop had stopped working and was staring out the window.

Later that night, Reid was talking to his uncle Aaron about his parents. His uncle was never good at communicating his emotions with words, but definitely showed how much he cared for Reid through his actions. Reid had often wondered how the fire had happened, and he asked Aaron about what he thought.

“Listen Reid, you were very young when it all happened and I swore never to tell you this, but there’s something you should know. The police determined that the fire wasn’t an accident, it was arson.”

Reid was shocked. He then felt the pin prick him in the chest as it often had done. He then made it his mission to save his parents.

Ten years ago

Reid was standing outside his house. A window was open and he heard voices screaming for help. He went to the window and saw his parents tied to chairs and a shadow cast along the wall. It looked as if the person’s shadow was about to strike a match.

Reid banged his hand as hard as he could on the window and after a couple hits, he broke the glass. He jumped into the house through the window then took one of the shards and stabbed the man holding the matches in the eye. The man ran away. Reid had saved his parents. They were so thankful to him, and he was thankful that they didn’t figure out it was their son from the future.

He went back to the present and his parents were still alive, Joanne was still his girlfriend, and his Uncle Aaron was still the same caring uncle he used to be.

The Present (and the Gift)

Reid was on his way home from school and noticed that the door to his house had been kicked in violently. He rushed into the house to see his father tied to a chair and his mother being held with a knife to her throat.

“Come in Reid,” said the man wielding the knife. Reid couldn’t see who it was, as the man was hiding his face behind Reid’s mother, “I thought I was crazy until I saw your parents come back to life.”

Reid’s parents looked very confused but were both gagged so they couldn’t be heard.

“That’s right, I learned from my mistakes Reid.”

“Who are you and why are you doing this?” Reid asked the man while holding his pin in his hand.

The man then tilted his head upwards, revealing his face to Reid. It was the old man from the watch repair shop. Reid then realized that the man was wearing the eye patch because Reid had stabbed him ten years ago.

“You know who I am Reid. In my time it’s been about sixty years since I’ve seen you, but then again, time is relative wouldn’t you say?”

All of a sudden, Reid recognized this man. It was Timothy. Timothy grabbed the pocket watch and showed it to Reid.

“That one day in chemistry class, you froze time. I stood still in shock, not knowing what was happening. After that man came into the class and explained your stupid pin, I realized that I had touched it once in elementary school when I stole a couple bucks from you.”

“I told the story to my parents but they thought I was crazy, and they took me to an asylum. I spent thirty years in an asylum when I got a visit from a strange old man who gave me this pocket watch. It too has the ability to turn back time!”

Timothy then all of a sudden gasped for air. He had been stabbed. Aaron was hiding in the living room with a knife, waiting for the right moment to come in and save Reid’s parents.

Reid then explained the pin to his parents and to Aaron. His parents were very confused but couldn’t come up with any words to explain what they were thinking.

Aaron however said, “Well, that makes sense. Some guy told me it was very important that I hide in the living room today with a knife and that it was for your safety. I was skeptical at first but he also mentioned that Reid would need these someday, though he didn’t mention why.”

And So It Began

Many years later, Reid was walking down a street wearing the brown coat and fedora his uncle had given him years ago. He saw his younger self walking to school. With a glint in his eye, he bumped into the young Reid and dropped his pin. He then vanished using his pocket watch to go back to his own timeline. He had to go back to his wife, Joanne, and their two sons Aaron and Timothy, and wait for the next time he needed to make an appearance.