

# The Games Played Only Lead to Ruin

By Ian Marcus

I lay on my back in the grass of my backyard. The day has settled into a myriad complexion of light purple mixed with orange and yellow. If I un-focus my eyes and look up to the sky, what comes to my mind is a vast pond sprinkled with white light. I feel like I'm entering another world, but the smell of grilled steak pulls me out of this fantasy.

"Dinner is ready, honey!" I hear it coming from the kitchen window.

The fun I'm having right now, though, is not enough to make me want to go. I really want to just stay here; live in the world I've created.

"Garrett—come now," says mom keenly.

I yell back to Mom, "I'm coming now. I just need to wash up!" But my real intent is to simply stretch the time I have being taken away from me rather than sit it out with my mom for Friday night dinner. I get up slowly lifting myself up with elbows first and then the final push with the hands off the ground. I see Miss Grimaldi wave to me from over the fence, she usually eats later, but tonight is her "shindig." I have no idea what this means, so I wave back and head to the patio door; the heat is strong, like a full, thick blanket on a cold night.

Mom turns her neck to look at me wiping my shoes and taking them off — her arched eyebrow and slight smirk means that while I may have to clean up after myself when I come in from outside, I at least know now to do it without her saying.

"I'll be back okay," I say quickly. I take the hall down to the bathroom.

The bathroom is across from my mom's room, and the door is open. I can see that the curtains are pulled with Floretta Street stretched across the edges of the screen. Without the full skylight the colors are eclipsed by the dipping sun that is sinking below the houses and trees. Something attracts my attention, and it seems to come off to the right of the room window, Mom's closet. The door is shut, but that doesn't stop it from compressing in and out, as if the door is a living being waiting while rest.

"Weird," I think, but again, I feel compelled to see what is going on.

I move soundlessly while crouched over to the closet over the bedroom carpet. While it is a soft and quiet floor, I still want to be careful. I reach the door and still notice

that the wood warps in this strange manner. I open the door quickly and see that on the floor, in the corner is a gold pocket watch. Except this one is thicker in the sides and heavy in my hands. I open it and the colors from outside intensify in a vibrancy of saturation. My eyes feel glazed over in a purplish gel. I run to the kitchen, and Mom isn't moving, bent over the dinner table, adding salt to the steak, but the salt is suspended in the air. "Completely still," I say aloud. Mom doesn't look up or do anything for that matter.

I run outside and the white lights have formed into much larger, milky spheres. Floating in and out of the air with a buoyancy like a bubble except opaque. I jump over the fence and head to Miss Grimaldi's terrace through her lawn. I peek into the living room and the guests pose in strange, bent movements. Some raise glasses while another is suspended in a fall that has no resolution. Looking at the lights they flicker with intensity with a spinning motion as if both moving and still, fighting against their conflicting actions.

"I guess my time can last," I think eagerly.

The purplish gel is darker now, and my eyes are hurting from the constant barrage of lights that bounce off Miss Grimaldi's walls. The guests are still unmoving, and it's very eerie to think about. I walk up to the man falling in the air, I remove his tray that would eventually hit his face. Holding the full plate in my hands is as if it were a piece of paper. This is surprising since there is a large ham sandwich with small pieces of vegetables to the side. I almost want to throw it all at a wall and see what sticks, but I notice the lights again, and it makes me feel slightly dizzy. "But something must be able to stop it," I realize.

I ran back across the lawn back to my house with the golden watch in my pocket. I reach the kitchen screen door and go through, taking my shoes off and standing near my mom. I take out the watch to open the cover, and soon mom begins instantly to move again. She doesn't notice me at first, but then her eyes get wide when she sees what is in my hands.

"Garret what have you done?" she asks.

"I was just...wanting to have more time. I don't know," I say to her.

She immediately snatches the watch out of my hand and strides down the hallway to put it back in its original location. "I'm shocked," is what runs through my head. I could be the kid with all the time in the world, but if only I could get it back.

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