

The Time Keeper Review



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Cover Art
by
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Eucalyptus Midnight

by Savannah Harris

Unstill Life - 1971

That fleeting, all too familiar scent of crisp, misty air in the sweet, smoggy haze of mid-August tingles Abbott's button nose and perks up his benevolent need to cause mischief and stir up the steady flow of this typical, mundane, day-to-day crawl of bumbling and humming Portland, Oregon. His heavy eyelids lower as that emerald green gaze of his passes from face to face. Characters of all kinds-businessmen, prostitutes, outcast kids in gangs, drug dealers, models, veterans, jazz musicians, and hippies-wander these full streets. All of them know him.

Abbott doesn't care.

He threads himself through the crowd until he is parallel to the apartment buildings lining the crumbling sidewalks. One more corner to round, and he'll be slipping into the urban haven of huge, sparkling skyscrapers that Portland's scum-rich folk and classless classists live and look down upon the poor slums below, but that's just how things are. The gravelly driveways wide and long enough to fit half of a beat up car that line that horrifically busy sidewalk sometimes happen to have a few sad wildflowers sprouting from dead, overgrown grass. And then, there are the dirt poor city goers that plant flower bushes next to their crumbling buildings, and Abbot envies them for the sheer need to bring something living and beautiful, so simple and wholesome, into this sick and twisted world.

Something that every single one of these broken drones know is that Abbott Winter is filthy rich and doesn't need to steal magnolia's from a broke soul's dying yard to have enough

wit and will to keep himself from slitting his wrists in the grand bathtub of his private restroom, bubble jets at the ready. That boy could easily pay a florist to grow him a whole damn magnolia field and supply him for the rest of his dismal, painfully well-catered life of everything he could ever dream of desiring because that's just who and what Abbott is.

He is the essence of privilege and beauty. He is Abbott Winter, son of Portland's chief of police, Vynne Winter, and one of the most well-respected and known psychiatrists in the Pacific Northwest, Coralie Winter. He is the ruler of the 1970s. And, he wants those precious, silky blossoms that are elegantly growing from a drug pusher's sad excuse for a three by four front yard, whiter than his platinum blonde, shaggy waves that fall above his eyes.

The schoolbag slung over one shoulder and nestled against his hip is torn open upon first premonition of the petty crime he's about to commit. Abbott slips into the alcove of grass, just out of reach of the omnipresent walkers, and plucks every bud off with his intricate fingers, nestling them next to his physics textbook and gunmetal lighter that sparks his Benson & Hedges cigarettes to life when the lights go out at night.

All of a sudden, the shredded screen door to the raggedy apartment opens with a roaring thunder, and a woman with blue and black, greasy locks of stringy hair stumbles into the yard with a joint in one hand and peppermint vodka in the other, eyeing Abbott down.

"Elwood, the Winter boy is stealing my damn daisies! Elwood, don't let him get away!" she slurs, dropping her plastic bottle of cheap alcohol in the process.

That sure won't allow the solemn flora to thrive.

"Actually, ma'am, they are magnolias," Abbott interjects, buttoning his premium

schoolbag up with the flowers tucked safely inside. "I'd pay you for them, but I'm afraid I've gotta run."

A man the size of a hunched over gorilla barrels from the apartment in a wife beater, his sleeves of poorly drawn tattoos bleeding into track marks making Abbott snicker before his feet skitter back onto the pavement.

"Get back here, you little bastard!" roars Elwood, diving into the crowd.

"Give your sleazy squeeze a kiss for me!"

Abbott grins from ear to ear while pushing the pedestrians in his path out of his way to escape the wild animal in pursuit of his pampered skin. He's faster, nimbler, thinner, and younger than the junkie known as Elwood. After all, Abbott doesn't dedicate hours upon hours every week to living the life of a teen gymnast not to outrun every city slugger he dares to inflict his cruelty upon.

Elwood keeps up the pace as the two round the corner into the rich part of Portland, but he's huffing as Abbott is laughing and running faster, forcefully shoving all kinds of people and muttering half-true apologies between giggles in his wake. He's just more determined, or perhaps not determined at all, and the panting, higher than a kite ruffian needs to be put down. Abbott dashes across a busy intersection, gracefully dodging oncoming vehicles and narrowly avoiding death.

"Daddy can't protect you forever, boy! Someday, your pretty, little world will come crashing down too!" shouts Elwood, as Abbott disappears into the lobby of one of the most extravagant, refined, richest buildings filled sky high with penthouses. "You'll see."

And, life has never been better.

The Angel of Death

by Dalton Rueter

The Land of the Dead floated away from the vast ship as a fleeting memory for all except Odysseus. The crew had their soul set on returning to the alluring island from which they came. Hades, however, had not forgotten of Odysseus' exploration of his home. He schemed to make a malevolent being greater than any Odysseus had ever faced. Hades poured all of his anger and destruction into one character. As it became animated Hades told it the mission and pronounced it the Angel of Death. The Angel set out on its demented mission to kill Odysseus and gain revenge for Hades.

The salty air of the ocean breathed over Odysseus' face and he felt that his wondrous home was nearing.

“Men! Are you ready to return to our long lost home?”

The crew enthusiastically shouted back a reply, “Of course! We could not have wished for a better captain than you, Odysseus!”

He, however, could not see the looming shadow dancing across the ship watching and waiting for the precise moment to strike. They sailed all day and were never disturbed once by the suspicious mist.

The moment the sun raced to shrink under the horizon and darkness began to overcome the world, the Angel took its opportunity and plummeted forebodingly onto the ship.

The being of death screeched, “Beware all those who cannot hide, for I will be your demise!”

Odysseus glared up and saw a hooded figure as dark as the night sky surrounding them. He decided to wail back at the foul thing. “Give me all you’ve got, I’ve seen it all!” Under his desolate hood he could see two gleaming red lights that must have been its eyes. He carried a scythe sharper than his own sword. In that instant Odysseus knew that Hades had sent a demon to destroy him for trespassing.

Odysseus peered around at his apprehensive crew and shouted, “Avert your eyes from the monstrous being!”

While Odysseus’ men were desperately running for a secure place to hide, they frantically responded, “We have no place to go!”

Time was creeping up on the men. Then, without hesitation, the Angel of Death pounced down with a surge of anger and quickly captured one of the strongest men. He held onto him for a moment, taunting Odysseus. He then fiercely forced the man to look him in his gleaming, devilish eyes. In one brief moment, Odysseus was bereft of his finest crew member. Odysseus cried out in misery as his friend’s lifeless body slumped onto the deck. The crew mourned for their fallen brother but continued to try to stay alive.

As the Angel inflicted havoc on the crew, a creature from a nearby island heard their cries. She was named a siren and she could cause agony at astronomical levels. She decided that she would leave her sisters to discover what was causing more wretchedness than she ever could.

She leaned to her sisters and spoke in a quiet voice, “I must search for this destructive being and bestow a gift upon it.”

Her sisters begged her to stay by saying, "Please don't risk it...we will miss you dearly; don't abandon us!"

She dove into the ocean off of the little archipelago she called home and swam as fast as she could. She came upon a ship that was surrounded by a circle of gloom. The men aboard were screaming and crying like they were meeting Hades himself. She rose onto the ship and saw what was causing such chaos. It was an Angel, whom she fell in love with the second she laid her eyes on the gown of silk, but could not see his face.

The men listened and heard a beautiful song and glanced at the Siren mutilating the men that stood in her way. She was an arrow shooting through the men to find her love. The Angel could hear the mayhem behind him and looked over to find the most beautiful creature that he had ever seen in his short existence and fell in love as well. While his heart filled with love, his brain filled with the realization that he could not look at her. He drifted away and ignored his true feelings that were running through him like a horse in a race. He snatched Odysseus off of his feet and held him up to his dim face.

Odysseus shouted at the beast, "I'll never look such an abhorrent beast in the eyes!"

The Angel bellowed back saying, "To kill you is my only purpose in my impending life."

Knowing that the Angel would not spare her a fleeting glance, she started screaming at him. "Please just look at me so I can know that you feel the same way that I do!"

The Angel had Odysseus in his grasp and replied a very sorrowful cry. "I do feel the same way, but if I even connect with your eyes for a moment you would be erased from the face of this calamitous earth."

All she could feel was the surge of feelings trampling her heart like Charybdis submerging all the men's ships on the turbulent sea. The angel then felt the surging feeling of the pain of love stabbing into him, looking back to see what was causing so much anger and pain the physical embodiment of death itself. Looking back to see why he was feeling such confusion, he saw the siren, making eye contact with her, and within an instant, she dropped dead like a marionette that a puppeteer dropped down.

The depression that he felt was fleeting and he grew enraged. Odysseus knew that opportunity was passing him by. In the moment of the Angel being distracted, he pulled out his sword and sliced the Angel's head off. All of the cloth and mist of the Angel slammed into the deck and changed into dust. The crew moved out onto the cold wood to learn of what their captain had done to save them. They all felt such joy that they had a small celebration but also mourned for their fallen brother. Their wondrous captain believed that he had killed the Angel and defeated death itself. He knew not that no one can triumph over death.

The Angel returned to the place of his birth, the underworld. He plotted on how best he could destroy the man that unwillingly made him kill his love. The Angel believed that Odysseus was to blame for the Siren's death. Hades mourned for his creation as well and told his brothers of the agony that Odysseus can cause. The gods all began to grow cold to Odysseus and from that point of his journey he was cursed. The ship that was sure to sink sailed on through this everlasting torture.

A Pretty Common Thing

by Hannah Krutsinger

A pretty common thing to occur when driving is the act of running over leaves with your car.

You do this mindlessly, not thinking twice about this action; you simply continue pressing on the gas.

This action does not hurt the leaf. The leaf is not sentient and never was, and the leaf is no longer alive.

The leaf came from a tree, a tree that grew and prospered throughout the year and then as winter came the tree lost all of its leaves and went into a sort of hibernation state.

The leaf fell off of the tree, hit the ground, and was blown onto the road by the wind.

When the leaf fell off it died, and therefore does not feel anything when run over by your car.

This upsets me, because I greatly wish the leaf had been alive when hit by your car. I wish the leaf had nerves and those nerves provided it with pain, and I wish it had felt pain when run over by your car.

I'm not generally a woman that believes in revenge.

I don't generally think the way to fight fire is with more fire.

I don't normally think this, but when the life of your daughter is the reasoning, I'll make an exception.

I want the leaf from the tree to feel the pain from your car, because maybe that tree the leaf came from will feel the pain from the car too, and then maybe that tree will understand.

Maybe the tree will understand what my daughter felt.

You could argue that my daughter was drunk, that it was her fault.

Even if this is true, I need something to blame and I need some way to cope.

I can't cope by blaming her, and no one else was involved.

So I blame the tree.

Therefore, every time I pass that tree on my way to work, and I see the dent in its side, the bark that's been scrapped from it.

Therefore, every time I run over a leaf with my car, I hope the tree felt it.

I hope the tree understood.

The Way the Beach Dances

by Raye Hollinshead

The dancing waves crashed against the beautiful shore. The dying sun started to rest among the horizon, the moon coming out to play. Adults and kids make their way home in colorful, eye-catching swimming suits as the teenagers get dressed for the bonfire. The singing shore drones on, wailing out its loneliness to the quiet city.

A huge fire reflects its lovely choreography into the splashing waves. A chilling wind swirls the girls' long hair and a slight sea mist stick to their faces. The cute couples cuddle into each other for warmth as a group plays music on their acoustic guitars.

They feel the grains of sand in between their toes.

The sand still held heat from the summer day.

Banding Together

by Addy Hagy

the inferno

struggle, rage,

attitude, ignorance,

frustration, hateful,

insolence, pain,

separated,

time,

but,

skill, care, helpful,

late nights, laughs,

early mornings,

inside jokes,

together,

family,

love,

and

Redemption

banding together

The Fighting Inside Me

by AshLee Erickson

The real me loves the stars,

but hates the dark.

The real me is not good with feelings.

I have a side that likes the dark,

music screaming through my earbuds,

as I walk,

I forget,

I forget the pain, heartbreak, the memories.

All I can remember is the advice you gave,

“Trust no one,

Let no one see,

Don't fall for someone,

It will make you weak.”

As I am relearning,
And trying to forget,
Sadly I can't forget,
I remember.

The old and new rules are fighting in my head,
The new rules say "Just let them in,
it is not that bad.
They will be there till the end."

The old rules say,
As they ring through my head,
"Don't let them through.
They won't like you.
It is all an act.
You have to do your part."

When I sleep they stop fighting.

Then they enter my dreams,

turn them to nightmares.

Then when I wake up,

I remember that was not a nightmare,

it was a memory,

of how I was raised.

How I was supposed to be.

Stuck in My Head

by Raye Hollinshead

You feel like music.

You know the feeling,

the feeling of comfort

the feeling of taking over my world.

I get you stuck in my head like my favorite tune.

But when you're gone I long for you.

You run through my head still,

like that pesky, annoying beat

but that beat doesn't change the music.

And the yearning just makes me love you more.

All That Remains of Normality

by Savannah Harris

Precious sin and godforsaken daydreams;
that is what you are to me, my darling comet.

Your warmth runs deep throughout the inner sanctums of my humbled veins,
longing for a miniscule taste of your fingertips and
how they know just when to collide.

Honeysuckle lips and eyes like the midnight raven,
you are everything that is beautiful and far too gentle for my tainted hands to caress.

I await the day the songbirds call out to me in their mournful choir,
beckoning you forth and granting me one, true wish.

The wish that, no matter how much normality shatters
and crumbles into glistening stardust,
ready to be carried off in the snow-kissed sea breeze,
up to the heaven-esque beyond of infinite omnipotence,
you will always remain.

I Am Not Unlovable

by Elizabeth Meinhart

I seclude myself and think I am unlovable.

I am not unlovable.

I am blind.

I cannot see my own self-worth.

I believe I am not worthy of the dust beneath my feet.

I tell myself I don't deserve,

I don't need,

I don't have.

I cannot see my own beauty.

I look in the mirror

until I don't recognize what I see.

I see a mess,

a monster,

a hopeless.

I do not understand how I am loved.

By my friends,

by the trees, by the moon

by the sun, by the earth.

I am loved by the world around me

yet I tell myself I am loveless.

I am of great worth.

I have compassion in my heart and a golden brain.

I am beautiful.

I have been pieced together from the stars and it shines in my eyes.

I am loved.

The universe is my mother and every bit of life showers me with affection.

I get caught up in my head and believe I am unlovable

I am not unlovable.

I just don't believe it yet.

Danger

by Cayte Schultz

You took a knife and stabbed it through my heart,

but now I'm captivated, intoxicated, scared.

All of my focus is on that one stab wound that keeps getting deeper...

drilling and drilling, deeper and deeper

the more I fall in love.

It's a frightening feeling to not feel it go out the other end

but to be buried into my chest and stay there.

It doesn't hurt, doesn't sting, and it doesn't stop

And... I don't feel it leave

And... I don't want it to.

But why do I feel so warm?

Even with the blade through my shallow, empty chest

I just feel... alive

10:59 P.M.

by Emilee Ross

A smile.

No pearly whites,

No, nothing like that,

More like a reassurance,

That our world won't fall flat,

Not yet, At least,

Or so we hope,

Just something to grasp,

So you don't fall down the slope,

The slope of life,

That is...

What?

You haven't heard?

It's hard, to be human,

And I know it sounds a little absurd.

But with all these standards,

What do you expect?

This may be a little cheesy,

And you might not be able to connect,

All these thoughts I'm having together,

But we'll deal, I guess.

Ya know,

At

10:59

there are A lot

of syllables I need to tether,

All

These

Words

and

Verbs,

and

I'm

Reaching

for a line,

But

Sometimes

I question,

Is this

L I F E

really,

Mine?

Ramsey

by Josie Forbes

April's brisk weather seeped through the open sun roof. The road my friend and I travelled down was held above the golden fields resting peacefully below. The trees welcomed us, despite their lack of color in the early spring. I spotted a mysterious path through the trees as it arrived to our right. A lackluster green road sign told us a cemetery was concealed behind the long winding road.

Beside us flowed a bustling blue-grey creek as we carefully travelled over the crumbling worn road. The trees loomed over head, forming a beautiful tunnel of shimmering light, as golden sun rays fluttered through the leaves. We were curious to where we were being led to as the road snaked around the rocky hills. We pulled up to the cemetery. In the grass two spots were muddy and worn, showing the ghosts of the cars that had parked here before.

We stepped out of my car, the warm afternoon sun gleaming off the hood, and noticed a large oak tree that seemed to watch over the cemetery and hills surrounding it. The soft blue sky blanketed the area as the sweet smell of spring blew past us. In front of us stood a white, worn sign stating this hidden graveyard was Ramsey Cemetery.

The most wonderful things can appear into your life when you aren't necessarily looking for them. I had no idea I would stumble upon this place, the place that has now become so sacred to me. Ramsey has been many things for me.

It's been a first date full of good anxiety, a safe place to talk through problems, a comforting hideout, a sunny and quiet ukulele practice room, a goodbye to a good thing that just wasn't meant to be, and, overall, an incredible learning experience I will take with me throughout my life.

Ramsey began my infatuation with the thought of ghosts and spirits hanging around. They even became a large part of my life away from Ramsey. They became guardian angels I looked to in hard times and invisible protectors when unthinkable situations got a little too real. I soon learned I wasn't the only one who believed there was something else there, but what others believed was there was much more sinister. Many people told me of the hauntings floating around the cemetery. Dark, menacing figures with red eyes and satanic cults were rumored to have a home in or near Ramsey.

However, the worst thing to occur was not supernatural, it was human. Many times I would visit only to see vandalism plaguing the area, from symbols spray painted onto the trees to the beaten sign with red and black painted on it. They didn't see Ramsey as a resting place for families' loved ones; they saw it as an urban legend turned joke. This heartless mistreatment has inspired protection. A community cares for this cemetery dearly. Anytime something happens, volunteers are quick to fix it the best they can.

It was hard not to draw parallels to this haven, away from the bustle of real life. For this was the first thing to make me "feel" in so long. The harsh winter months plagued me with a sense of numbness I couldn't escape from. Ramsey made me feel again. In a way, Ramsey became my mind.

The golden, rolling hills are my optimistic thoughts.

The peaceful graveyard is where my loving memories, no longer present, lie.

The dark and mysterious woods surrounding are my secrets.

The vandalism that haunts Ramsey is the hardship corrupting my life.

Thankfully, just as Ramsey has a wonderful community of caretakers, I have a community of friends and family who are there for me day and night. There will be obstacles, big and small, but we will overcome. That cemetery has shown me hope in so many ways. Even when something ends, a new beginning will come again. It may take a month or five years, but life will move on. There may still be reminders of the struggle like the faint discoloration on the tree where a symbol once was drawn, or a memorable song you can't help but cry to when you hear it, but you will make it through.

Even when it feels like there is no light at the end of your tunnel, keep walking.

Find your Ramsey, find your community, find your light.

Caterpillars

by Destiny Bryant

People see me, and my hair and my face and my outfit and my head and my questionable voice, and they ask.

They always ask “why?” not “how?” but, nevertheless they ask.

The questions bother me, but I hold no ill intent towards the asker. There is nothing wrong with asking in it of itself; however, I'm not equipped to give the best answer. Words like “identity” and “expression” get thrown around but they don't mean anything without context. However, when people who know me ask, it gets much worse.

Because I can't tell them “why?” or “how?” without failing.

I can, however, tell a different story and hope its forms a connection.

Why do we call butterflies and caterpillars different things?

It's an honest question. The insect, genetically, isn't different. It's still the same bug, and if it had memory that was substantial in any way, I bet it would be the same. Yet we call it by a different name. This change is so alarming that the caterpillar itself has become a symbol of change, not only by the term “metamorphosis,” but also in the “butterfly effect,” which suggests that even the smallest actions matter.

I wonder if caterpillars ever get tired of questions. People assume they've changed because they look different, when they've really just moved on with their lives.

Everyone changes. That used to be something celebrated and understood, but when it comes to caterpillars like me, none of that comes to mind and all that comes is questions. Like I said before, questions aren't bad, they just make me nervous.

I'm no lepidopterist, so I have to stack words very carefully and make sure not to confuse terms like "caterpillars" and "worms," because trust me, that is the last thing you want to do.

And so, the caterpillar, under all the stress of Mother Nature, decided to close herself off to the rest of the world. A lot of people look down at the cocoon like it's something to be ashamed of, and they will say things like "we used to be so close before this butterfly thing got in the way" like all teenagers don't solidify themselves growing up in one way or another. I don't see how they expect someone to answer their questions when they themselves aren't completely sure.

Like I said before and I'll say again, there is nothing wrong with questions, but there are two types of questions - the ones asked by people just trying to understand more about butterflies... and, of course, the questions that are more rhetorical in nature

Questions that seemed designed to poke holes in butterfly's wings.

Questions like "what are you?" that make me feel like I'm breathing in pesticides.

After the cocoon comes the hardest part, which is breaking out of the shell, and this is the time for me to say that not all butterflies are the same. Some butterflies have been through much tougher conditions, so they have bigger wings and they can fly away from whoever can't deal with them and they cover their wings with whatever colors they want because predators know they are poisonous so they don't have to deal with any questions because they wear the answers on their wings.

It's usually these types of butterflies that attract the most attention, not on purpose, of course, but people do say things like "I'm okay with the whole butterfly thing, if they weren't all up in my face about it" but these people are usually the same people holding binoculars and saying they are "bird watching."

Other butterflies can't be so brave, and so they go for standard browns and greens, hoping no one sees them, and, after all they have been through, you can't blame them for wanting just to blend in.

Maybe I need to be more comfortable with questions. Maybe my wings are still just a little wet and I'll get more comfortable with time.

And to everyone else - never be afraid to ask questions, as long as they are pure of heart and I'll try not to be afraid to answer them.

Just don't get me started on moths.

The Art of Writing

by Elizabeth Meinhart

Science and math may help us learn, but art helps us understand. Humans need a healthy balance between what they learn and what they feel. It's what gives writing such importance. We write what we feel and feel what we write.

Writing angst is easier for most writers, seeing that writers seem to experience more bad than good. The happy times are few and far between, but pain is constant. You will find more sad books than happy books because people aren't generally happy.

We, as a society, are becoming sick of happy. Why? Happy endings are unrealistic. There's rarely happiness found in endings. We're secretly jealous of the on screen characters with their stupid icky happiness. The average viewer craves angst not just because they're sick of happy, but because of the therapeutic beauty of worrying over problems that are not their own and essentially can't hurt them in a real sense. Books, television, movies; we crave them, we need them, they take us out of our lives into emotional adventures. Because of them we experience feelings we've never felt and may never feel in real life.

Reading good books and viewing hearty movies improves our emotional range as humans. When the viewer is exposed to sad content, their first response is to sympathize and also feel down. The viewer may feel sadness, but it's not to the same capacity as if they were to encounter a bad experience in their own life. This gives the brain a chance to toy with a feeling without letting it overwhelm the psyche. When a viewer is forced to feel, the brain develops coping skills to handle the emotion.

It's not a coincidence that well balanced people tend to be avid readers or movie critics.

Within the mass of all the good reading and consuming media can do for people, there is however a dark side to this and it's found within mentally unstable individuals. Viewers who have a hard time processing emotions in a healthy normal way should avoid indulging in plots rich with destruction. While the stories serve as a polite distraction, the hardness and tragedy can be very triggering for sensitive viewers. Where a normal person could view a melancholy scene with slight distress before moving on, a sensitive person may feel the scene more intensely and struggle to move on. This is why ratings of literature and films are a necessity. We simply cannot allow people to dive deep into emotional trauma without warning.

Literature allows for the mind to wander without being lost. Its importance to humanity is incomparable and it is believed there will never come a day in which literature isn't needed in this world. Writing is an art that must be cared for delicately and a power used only for good.

In this world, where everything is raw and unsparing, good writing will always be the knight in shining armor to save us all.

Retrospective

by Savannah Harris

October 22nd, 1998

Thursday. The train going by directly under my feet made the rickety track vibrate the ground I was lying on. The patch of grass beneath me had stopped feeling itchy roughly four hours ago. Another savory cigarette pressed against my lips.

"Seven," I muttered in my head.

Seven trains had gone by since I'd collapsed next to the railroad in the dawning hours of the new day. My left leg had fallen asleep three times, and at least two stray cats had curled up next to my body. I couldn't feel my fingertips at all, but I was becoming used to the numbness all throughout my tainted limbs. October air was unforgiving, especially as it passed through the thin sleeves of my well-worn hoodie.

Finally, the train's horn disappeared into the distance. It was the only sound that gave me the notion that I was, in fact, still alive.

Or, maybe I wasn't. I couldn't tell anymore.

"They'll be wondering where you are," I said aloud, sucking on the end of my cigarette.

"They'll be wondering where you are," I repeated.

"They'll be.."

My eyelids felt heavy.

"..wondering.."

The precious cigarette slipped from my stiff fingers and rolled down onto the track.

"Dammit.."

I quickly turned over onto my hands and knees, a few loose rocks poking into my knee-caps where my shredded jeans refused to cover. As I was about to pick up my cigarette, another freight train rolled by, nearly taking off my hand. I couldn't hear it over the roaring sounds deep within my velvety mind.

"Eight."

I dug my fingers into the dirt and hoisted myself up, nearly falling over as the vertigo set in. It took a few moments for the blood to start flowing to my feet again, but once I had regained most feeling, I began walking along the rail, heading in the direction that the trains were coming from. The events of these past couple of days fired at me like bullets. Memories formed in pieces as I put together the puzzle.

A pocket watch.

A bloody nose.

A bottle of liquor.

And sirens.

I reached into my hoodie's pocket and pulled out a circular piece of golden metal. It was chilled from being out here with me, and rather heavy. Heavier than it looked, anyways. A thin chain extended from the top of the carefully engraved watch. It wasn't mine. There was no way in hell a lowlife like me owned something as beautiful and seemingly *priceless* as this well-loved accessory.

I racked my brain for more information as I balanced on the rails. Something caught my eye in the ditch parallel to the rusty tracks, so I sped up to grab it. It was a newspaper. The first thing I noticed was a bloody thumbprint covering part of the headline. I looked at my hands, and sure enough, it was mine. The indentions in my left thumb had dried blood stuck in them.

"October 18th, 1998 - The search for fourteen-year-old Monroe Kadence has officially been called off. Two months ago today, the young boy was reported missing by his older brother in the early morning hours of July 18th when he failed to return to his home the night before. With no hope of his return and no indication of what has happened to him, police can go no further with the investigation."

Biting down on my lip, I began to shred and tear the newsprint into tiny, insignificant bits. I tossed them all in separate directions and stomped on the scraps with force that kicked up clouds of gravel dust.

Pulling the pocket watch back out from my hoodie, I gently turned the dial at the top and wearily, almost longingly, gazed at the treasure as it popped open. I'd taken it out of Monroe's hands the night I'd killed him and buried it next to the train tracks.