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STREET CLOCK

By Clint Hall

He awoke with intense pain in the back of his head. He was so cold, . . . must be below freezing. God did his head pound. Like a jackhammer. Was there a jackhammer? There was something noisy somewhere close. Could've been a jackhammer.

It wasn't a jackhammer at all. He pushed himself up and looked down the shadowed alley he was lying in. The sun was out in full force, but it didn't want to touch this alley. The noise was the sound of flesh upon flesh, bone crashing into bone. Two men were breaking each other's knuckles and skulls over something that must have been severely important. One man was wearing an expensive jacket and the other a brown housecoat full of rips, holes and stains.

The man in the expensive jacket swung and kicked like a jackrabbit and had obviously won many fights before. The jacket he wore must have been some poor rich sucker's.

The fight ended quickly and the jackrabbit removed the ragged coat from the unconscious soul and turned to face his watcher. The jackrabbit smiled, strutted over to the mess of magazines and broken boxes where he lay, reached into the jacket to remove a small bag and offered the coat.

"See, Guy, I told you I'd get you one."

Guy? Yeah, that was his name. Guy realized he was shirtless and accepted.

"Thanks. I'm sorry, but I forgot your name."

The man gave an icy glare that chilled Guy's bones far worse than the freezing weather did his half-naked body.

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“I told you before my name’s Jack,” he said curtly. “Did you do it again?”

“Do what?”

“Time Travel. That’s what you told me when you first stumbled into this hellhole.”

“I did? I don’t remember anything. Not about my life, not anything.” He frowned, pensive.

“I know what you said. Now go away, I’ve got things to do.”

Guy got to his feet and looked around for traces of his identity, not willing to believe that he was in a sci-fi movie. Maybe Jack was an escaped mental patient. Come to think of it, maybe Guy was. He pressed his bruised palm to the side of his head and winced in pain, almost falling over.

“Got the headache again? I guess that means you are going back to your own time, right?” Jack was bent over an old piece of cardboard and was carefully scraping together a white powder to form a line.

The sun had retreated and so had the fallen man, it was just them and the dark now.

“If I’m from the future why the hell would I travel to this dark alley? Study wildlife?” Guy said, frustrated.

Jack stared blindly at Guy, the wind teasing his perfect line of powder. He stood up slowly, his face reddening with rage. Guy took a discreet step back and Jack followed with one forward and the two stood motionless for what felt like many tense minutes.

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“I won’t try convincing *you* of what you tried to convince *me* of,” he said finally. “You are in my debt, don’t push my charity.” He bent down and pressed his nose to the powder on the cardboard.

Guy walked out of the alley and looked up into the amber glow of a flickering street lamp leaning over him. The streets were stained with oil and riddled with potholes. Whores and hobos walked the corners like they owned the city and a gunshot sounded nearby. Guy didn’t know whether the streets or the alleys were the safest place to be.

On the side of this street sat a brand new Cadillac truck on wooden blocks, shimmering black by the light of the street, virtually untouched by vagrants. He momentarily puzzled over how he knew the make of it.

Guy stumbled over to it, his head throbbing, and dug his fingers into the belt moulding as he peered through his reflection on the glass. He found the handle and the heavy door clicked open, a chime binged as the light faded on.

He searched every corner of the vehicle and found a wallet wedged between the seats. He flipped it open and stared into a photograph of himself on a driver’s license.

This truck was his! It must be. Guy read the name on the driver’s license. Gary Ingledon.

G.I.

Had Jack been calling him G.I. all this time, or Guy? Jack Lusep was his name! They were friends in high school for years, but they lost track of each other afterwards. All Guy’s memories were pounding back into his head, making the pain worse.

Jack had ripped Guy from this truck and beat him to within an inch of his life, but before he took that last inch he remembered their long lost friendship. Maybe all the

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drugs Jack did on the street made him believe Guy was a time traveller not from the future, but from the past – from *his* past.

Guy looked up from the driver's license and the memories to see Jack highlighted in the spotlight of the street lamp, walking towards the truck, casting a dark, menacing shadow on the rough pavement. Guy tucked his legs into the truck one at a time, the pain in his head nagging at him. Jack ran and lunged for the closing door as Guy hit the auto-lock, the door clicking in place just as Jack's fingers touched black plastic.

Jack pressed his hands against the window and smiled wide.

Guy wished there were tires to travel somewhere, anywhere. His head felt like it was going to burst; his eyes were getting heavy, his vision blurring.

Jack slammed his fist into the window. It bounced off, ineffective, and he threw his elbow in another attempt. He smiled again, head butted the glass, and fell on the ground. Jack got to his feet, ran, jumped and finally kicked through the window. Before the shower of glass finished raining on Guy he was snatched, pulled, dragged out of the truck and flung onto the ground in a dizzying display of violence.

Guy was panting hard, dazed, scared, and on the verge of tears.

“G.I., I'm not going to hurt you again. We're friends – FRIENDS! You don't look good. I'm gonna take you to the hospital, . . . but I'll need some money. For a cab.”

The world grew hazy for Guy and he blacked out.

Guy woke in an uncomfortable hospital bed that was admittedly more comfortable than crumpled newspaper. He must have had a concussion. This time his past didn't return. His past didn't need to. His past had his wallet, or so he thought.

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On the nightstand beside the hospital bed was Guy's wallet – cards and cash inside. Jack wasn't the man Guy had known, but there was a part of him buried beneath the drug abuse that would always be his friend.