

A Hole in the Sand

By Robert Moore

SCENE. A bench at a bus stop sits abandoned in the early morning light. It is a quiet morning with only the occasional whoosh of a car or chirp of the morning birds to break the silence. A boy enters the scene. He is wearing a ball cap and carrying a backpack with him, which he sets down on the bench before sitting down on the old bus stop bench.

Tim: Ugh...school.

(He fidgets with his backpack and adjusts his cap before slumping back on the bench.)

Tim: Who ever decided that school was a good idea? Sleep, sleep is a good idea or video games or TV or anything but school.

(Tim rubs his eyes for a moment and doesn't notice a man who approaches the bench and leans against it while checking his phone.)

Tim: Man, so tired but that was a really good movie last night...

Older Tim: What was that?

(Tim is surprised by the man's presence and jerks to look up at him before settling back into his bored slump.)

Tim: Oh, sorry, I was just talking to myself.

Older Tim: It's all good man, but hey while I've got your attention do you know what time it is my phone's on the fritz?

Tim: Oh sure. (checks his phone) It's 7:30.

Older Tim: Thanks man. (pause) Do you have the date too?

Tim: Yeah sure. It's the 22nd.

Older Tim: Right and this is October right?

Tim: (slightly confused) Yes.

(Pause)

Older Tim: Hey, man one more thing. This is 2016 right?

Tim: (confused) uh, yeah.

Older Tim: Thanks man, Thanks man.

(Tim slides over on the bench a bit. Silence takes over again with only birds and cars making noises. Tim tries to look at the ground and mind his own business. Older Tim keeps looking down at his phone and then looking back over at Tim.)

Older Tim: Hey, time can I ask you one more thing?

Tim: Dude I don't (pauses for a moment alarmed) how do you know my name?

Older Tim: Oh, I'm sorry I just...

Tim (grabs his pack, stands up and backs away): Hey, man I'm sorry but I gotta go.

Older Tim: No wait man! I know this looks bad, but I'm not a creeper man I'm not!

(Tim begins to walk away)

Older Tim: Wait! The movie you watched last night was Gladiator and you watched it late at night because your mom doesn't approve of "R" movies yet.

(Tim stops for a moment, then begins to take another step)

Older Tim: you almost cried at the end because Maximus reminded you of your dad when he came back from the army and surprised you in your 3rd grade class with Mrs. Simmons.

(Tim stops.)

Tim: How do you...

Older Tim: That was also the year you met your best friend Skyler because you were both wearing the same Batman shirt.

Tim: Dude, how do you...

Older Tim: OK man this is gonna be a lot to take in but I'm just gonna be up front with you. (pauses) I'm you.

Tim: You're me.

Older Tim: From 20 years in the future.

Tim: OK where's the camera?

Older Tim: What?

Tim: I said where's the camera?

Older Tim: I'm not messing with you man.

Tim: Is this *Punk'd* because you really got me man.

Older Tim: Seriously dude I am you from the future.

Tim: Where are my parents man, I know you had their help on this, only they could know that stuff. Are they like observing in a van somewhere? Dad's probably laughing his head off right now.

Older Tim: I figured this would happen. I always was really skeptical.

Tim: Cut the act man you got me. I give.

Older Tim: OK I can prove that I'm really you from the future.

Tim: Alright what else did they tell you about me?

Older Tim: your parents didn't tell me anything. I can prove I'm you because we both have memories of stuff that only we did and we didn't tell anyone about it.

Tim: Fine, man but hurry up because the bus is gonna be here soon so lets wrap up the episode.

Older Tim: Alright let me think for a minute...how about wait no, not that...or no wait we told Tyler about that.

Tim: So far I'm underwhelmed dude. You really had me at first , but this is too far. Your killing the joke man.

(Older Tim's expression lights up)

Older Tim: What about the time that you killed a grey mouse in the woods outside our house?

(Tim's expression suddenly gets serious)

Older Tim: You were really sad and angry because grandpa had just died. So when the mouse came out you threw a rock at it and killed it, but then you felt really awful because you had killed the mouse. So, you decided to burry it. We even put a rock on top of the mound and carved the name we had given to mouse into it with another rock.

(After a pause Tim speaks quietly)

Tim: What was his name?

Older Tim: Austin, Grandpa's middle name.

Tim: I never told mom or dad about that.

Older Tim: Because you were ashamed that you did it, that you had killed something that had done nothing to you. We were ashamed that there had to be two funerals that day.

Tim: How?

Older Tim: It's really me, or actually you.

Tim: But, how?

Older Tim: We do it man. We invent time travel in the future.

Tim: OK. So lets say I believe you. Why are you here?

Older Tim: Because I wanted to talk man. I wanted to tell you about what you have to look forward to and maybe reminisce about the good days. That's right now for you.

Tim: OK so what do we do when were grown up?

Older Tim: Oh man, so much happens dude. Why don't you ask me something?

Tim: Ask you?

Older Tim: Yeah, haven't you ever wanted to know the future? I'm like a future genie, but I have way more than three wishes.

Tim: OK. So who do we date in high school.

Older Tim: Ha, good question man. Well, we really don't date that many. We get way into science, physics especially, and that takes up a lot of our time.

Tim: physics over girls?

Older Tim: Yeah, how do you think we ended inventing time travel dude? Physics!

Tim: So we don't get a girl then?

Older Tim: Oh no, we definitely do. We get married to our wife, the most beautiful creature we ever saw.

Tim: Who is she? Do I know her already?

Older Tim: Yup.

Tim: (getting excited) Well, who then?

Older Tim: Take a guess.

Tim: What? You said that you would answer my questions.

Older Tim: I will, but playing these games are fun.

Tim: (muttering) Yeah I probably would think that. (speaking louder now) Alright let's see...is it...Sabre?

Older Tim: (Laughs) You mean the Sabre that Skyler and we made up the song for? "Sabre, will she date ya, maybe."

Tim: yeah that one.

Older Tim: Yeah man.

Tim: (excited) Really?

Older Tim: Yeah...wait, really what?

Tim: Like really we marry her?

Older Tim: Oh no not her. No, no no.

Tim: (disappointed) oh, well who then?

Older Tim: You know Danni Williams?

Tim: you mean weird Danni you never talks to anyone and likes to make bird calls during recess?

Older Tim: (laughs) Yes, yes she did do that.

Tim: ugh, why?

Older Tim: Hey believe me man puberty does her right.

Tim: Really?

Older Tim: Yup, but more importantly we work on some projects together in science. we learn that we have a lot in common and our lab partnership turns into a friendship, which then turns into dating, which leads to us getting married. (stops and thinks for a moment) She's amazing man. You'll wonder some days how you ever got her. She's beautiful, wicked smart, a great cook let me tell ya and an awesome mom.

Tim: We have kids?

Older Tim: Oh, yeah. We have three gorgeous girls. Olivia, June and Skyler

Tim: Just girls?

Older Tim: So far. I can only tell you about your life up to when I've lived who knows what will happen in the future.

Tim: Wait, can't you go and find out with you time travel stuff?

Older Tim: (shakes his head) doesn't work like that. I can only go back in time and then return to my "anchor point," which is my time.

Tim: Oh. (Pauses) You named one of our daughters after Skyler.

Older Tim: I know right. We wanted to name a son after him, but when little Sky came along we decided to give her the name instead.

Tim: Alright. So how is Skyler doing in the future are we still best friends?

Older Tim: (a darker look comes over Older Tim) Yeah, yeah we are.

Tim: What's wrong?

Older Tim: Nothing it's just (sighs)...I miss him.

Tim: Miss him?

Older Tim: Skyler dies in a car crash about two years after June is born.

Tim: What?

Older Tim: Yeah, it rocked my world man. Everything was going so good, then out of nowhere, life blindsides you. He was out on the driving late and a drunk driver hit him. He was only half a mile from his house. It wasn't long after that that Sabre died to.

Tim: Wait what? Sabre?

Older Tim: Yeah. She and Skyler end up together. Started dating in high school and eventually make up their minds to get married. She got into deep trouble with drugs in high school though, but Skyler...man, Skyler...he was her knight in shining armor man. He never gave up on her, no matter how many times she ended up in rehab or passed out on the floor of some bar at 3 AM. He stuck with her, he pushed her to escape and to do something with her life. without him I don't think she ever would have gotten her high school degree, but she did. His death was too much though. The night she heard he was gone she overdosed. She had been clean for years, but that night the police found her on the floor with a pill bottle in her hand.

(Tim stares at Older Tim horrified.)

Older Tim: I'm sorry you had to hear this, but I figured that I should at least be honest with myself. It sucks man, it really does.

Tim: So that's it?

Older Tim: What's it?

Tim: Your just gonna tell me what happens without anyway to stop it?

Older Tim: Hold on man, we can't...

Tim: Don't tell me to hold on you just told me that my best friend and his girlfriend die in the future! Tell me how to stop it. What night is Skyler out driving I'll stop him!

Older Tim: It's not like that. You can't...

Tim: And when does Sabre start drugs? I'll stop that too! When does all this happen tell me man! Tell me!!

Older Tim: You can't stop it!

Tim: (quietly) What?

Older Tim: You can't stop it time doesn't work like that.

Tim: What do you mean?

Older Tim: Time travel is like digging a hole in the sand. Every time you dig into the sand more sand rushes in to replace the handful you just took out. If you try to alter your past, time just fills in what you tried to undo. Time has an equilibrium about it that must be maintained. Time won't allow you to go back and change things. Yes, I can travel into the past, but I'm not a player anymore, I'm a spectator I can't alter any of the events that make up my past.

(There is a long silence before Tim speaks)

Tim: Why did you come then?

Older Tim: Why?

Tim: (angry) Yes, why did you come?

Older Tim: Because I wanted to tell you about your future what you have to look forward to.

Tim: Oh, yeah you wanted to tell me about my future full of people who I care about dying!

Older Tim: I know it's really hard, but we have to move past these things. I grieved for Skyler and Sabre for a long time, but I had to be there for *my* family they needed me to be strong and we were able to move on and still have a good life.

Tim: Oh yeah, we get married to weird Danni and have three gorgeous girls and live happily ever after, sounds great, but oh by the way your best friend dies in a car crash, his girlfriend kills herself with drugs and who knows how many other people will die that you haven't told me about. Oh, and the richest part is I can't do a one freaking thing about it!! Why did you come here?! You're not telling me about my future you're telling me about a nightmare, I can't live knowing that my best friend will die and I can't help him. How did you expect me to live with that?!

Older Tim: Listen, Tim...

Tim: No you listen Tim, leave my life. I don't care if you're me leave me alone. I don't want to invent time travel, I don't want to marry weird Danni, I don't want Skyler to die. I don't want your future!

(Tim collapses onto the bench and buries his head in his hands. Older Tim waits a moment before speaking)

Older Tim: The first thing I thought about when I tried to invent time travel was Skyler. I told myself that it was foolish to think that I could save him, but it was always there in the back of my head that maybe I could. I was devastated when I cracked the equilibrium of time theorem. I realized that I couldn't save Skyler. So, I went home and told Danni and she told me that it wasn't Skyler who needed saving anymore, it was me. I had accepted the guilt for Skyler's death, I had decided that I had to save him, that it was my duty to save him through my research. What I came to realize was that even with all of my knowledge I couldn't change the past, but I could still live my future. I don't think Skyler would have wanted me to waste my life mourning him, instead of living.

Tim: But what about me? Now I have to just sit around and watch while things happen that I have no control over?

Older Tim: No, no you won't.

Tim: what do you mean?

Older Tim: Remember the hole in the sand. My visit here is the hole and when I leave time will restore itself. I don't think that you'll even remember that our meeting ever happened.

Tim: If you knew all of this, then why did you even come in the first place?

Older Tim: I'm not sure anymore. Maybe I still feel responsible for Skyler's death and I wanted to talk to the only person who would really understand how I feel. But, Tim you need to know something. I can't change this but maybe you can.

Tim: But, you said the past is unchangeable.

Older Tim: Yes, I can't knowingly go back and change my past, but my past is your future. You may choose a different path than I did, a better path, or a worse one. Time is only rigid to those who have already lived it, but the future is always unknown even to me now. I can only tell you what I did, even though you won't remember any of it, maybe you'll still change your future from the future that I made for myself.

Tim: But, you're the one with time machine, how can I know, how will I know what to choose?

Older Tim: Life is your machine. It only takes you forward and I'm starting to see that perhaps that's the only way it should be. As for decisions, you won't always know what to choose. You won't always know what the right choice is, you just have to live and sculpt your future. The past may play a hand in molding the future but it does not define it. You do.

(A beeping noise is heard and Older Tim checks his phone)

Older Tim: My time's up Tim. I've got to go back to my life. But, I need you to remember, make peace with the past, but never believe that you have to do the same with the future. Your future is yours man, not mine. What will you do with it?

(The Beeping gets louder as Older Tim exits the stage. Tim follows Older Tim with his eyes. Then the beeping ceases and the normal sounds of morning are heard again. Tim suddenly has a look of confusion on his face like he's not sure where he is. Then another boy walks over.)

Skyler: S'up Tim?

Tim: Hey Skyler.

(they exchange a friendly hand clasp before they resume talking.)

Skyler: (looking stage) Hey man, I think we missed the bus.

Tim: What! (looks down stage) Aw man.

Skyler What where you doing here man?

Tim: I think I fell asleep man. I stayed up late to watch Gladiator.

Skyler: Oh, sweet. You gotta tell me about, but first I think if we run we can make it to the bus' next stop.

Tim: Alright lets get gone.

(the boys grab their packs and take off)

Skyler: Maybe you can sit next to Weird Danni today on the bus bro.

Tim: Shut up.

End

