

Chapter 7. A Deadly Mistake



“Who is in my library?” Mrs. Norolla repeated.

Luz cleared her throat and tried to speak as if she had seen nothing unusual. “It’s me, Luz Lucero.”

Mrs. Norolla pulled open her office door. She swiveled her head to the left and lowered her chin until she was looking right at Luz.

“And *what* do you want?” she asked, as the warning bell rang. “I have only a few minutes before my first class comes in. It’s very difficult being a school librarian when you have to teach thirty-five classes a week, rain or shine your shoes! Just try that with a reduced

budget and no help to speak of.”

Luz tried to look away, but she only managed to stare at Mrs. Norolla’s hands. She was wearing a new pair of gloves now, but all Luz could picture were the skeleton hands underneath. Her eyes darted back to Mrs. Norolla’s face. “I, uh, just wanted, uh, to tell you, uh—”

“What’s the matter with you? Does the cat have your tongue and groove?”

Luz took a deep breath. “Dwight’s sorry,” she blurted finally. “He didn’t mean to be rude.”

“That’s very nice of you to apologize, but I’m certain that he can do that himself.”

“He’s embarrassed, that’s all,” Luz said. “He doesn’t want you to be mad at him.”

“He doesn’t need your help,” Mrs. Norolla replied. “Now you’d better run along or you’ll be trying to break the Sixth Rule. Remember: No late passes for lads and lasses! Get going, or you’ll be in quite a pickle and cole slaw.”

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By the time Luz walked out of the library, Dwight and Max had already gone to class. She hurried down the hall. She placed her backpack in her locker, grabbed her textbooks, and headed for the classroom door.

The final bell was ringing as she walked inside Miss Feliciano’s room. She wanted to run over to Dwight and Max and tell them what she had seen, but there wasn’t any time.

“Take your seats, please,” Miss Feliciano told everyone, as Luz reached her desk. “It’s time for the announcements.”

“Good morning, everyone,” the principal’s voice sounded over the intercom. “Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Luz shoved the textbooks into her desk, turned around to face the flag, and quickly placed her hand over her heart. She recited the words from memory, then slid into her seat.

The principal kept talking, but Luz could barely hear anything he said.

“These are the announcements for September 10th. There will be a bake sale in the cafeteria at lunch today....”

That morning Luz's desk felt as if it were made of the hardest concrete. She couldn't get comfortable no matter how she sat. All she wanted to do was stand up and yell to everyone that the school librarian had skeleton hands!

Instead, she ripped a sheet of paper from her spiral notebook. Her heart was pounding as she wrote:

A photograph of a handwritten note on lined paper. The text is written in red ink and reads: "Dwight-- Mrs. Norolla has skeleton hands under her gloves! I am not lying or making this up!!!". The note is written on a piece of white paper with horizontal lines, and the handwriting is in a cursive style.

Next, Luz folded the paper and tried to get Dwight's attention. He was sitting two seats back in the next row, reading a joke book. She stared at him, her eyes bulging in desperation, but he didn't look up.

She vaguely heard the announcements drone on: "...to plant a tree on the playground tomorrow. This will be in memory...."

Luz coughed once in Dwight's direction. Then she coughed again, a little louder this time.

Finally, Dwight looked up. Luz showed him the folded note, then bent down and slid it across the floor toward him.

“Have a good day,” the announcements concluded, as Dwight leaned over and picked up the note.

“Luz!”

It was Miss Feliciano’s voice. Luz bolted upright in her seat.

“Luz, what were you doing? Weren’t you listening to the announcements?”

Miss Feliciano walked down the aisle toward her.

“Yes, I was,” Luz said.

“Then tell me about the last one,” Miss Feliciano ordered.

“Oh, it was something...about a tree?” Luz asked.

“What about a tree?” Miss Feliciano demanded.

Luz’s face turned red. “I don’t know.”

“Then I will tell you,” Miss Feliciano replied. “Tomorrow is September 11th, Luz. The school is having a special ceremony in memory of that day. We’re having an assembly outside to plant a tree of remembrance. You need to pay attention to the announcements. And as for you, Dwight, what do you have in your hand?”

Dwight’s mouth dropped open. “Huh?”

Miss Feliciano turned her head and stared at him.

“I don’t have anything,” he said.

She walked to his desk and held out her hand. “Then I’ll take the nothing that you picked up from the floor.”

“Oh, Miss Feliciano, you don’t want that,” he said. “It was just some garbage. I was cleaning up the room.”

“Isn’t it funny how that garbage looks just like a note? So you have a choice. You can either stand up in front of everyone and read whatever’s written on that piece of paper out loud to the entire class, or you can give it to me.”

Dwight drummed his fingers against his cheek and rolled his eyes toward the ceiling. He was considering his options, and everyone laughed...except Miss Feliciano. Finally, he opened his hand and showed her the folded paper.

Miss Feliciano picked it up with her fingertips, as if she were holding a mouse by the tail.

“Dwight, you know better than this. And Luz, I’d like to see you right now in the hall. Everyone else, please get out your social studies book, turn to page 43, and start reading. We have work today, sixth graders!”

Outside, the hallway was dark and cool, but Luz didn’t notice. Miss Feliciano shut the classroom door, folded her arms, and glared at Luz.

After a moment, Miss Feliciano said, “Luz, I’m surprised at you. I don’t know what’s going on today, but it was a mistake to pass that note to Dwight during the announcements. I’d like to be able to count on you to be a class leader,” she continued. “I need you to show everyone how to behave properly...not how to misbehave. I know your mother wouldn’t want you to act this way.”

Immediately, Luz felt embarrassed. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I just had to tell Dwight something really important.”

“*Important?*” Miss Feliciano asked. “Let me see how important it was.”

Luz's face wilted, as Miss Feliciano opened the note. She watched Miss Feliciano's eyes focus on each word.

"I think I've learned a lesson from you today," the teacher said as she refolded the note. "It's a good thing that Dwight didn't read this out loud. Everyone would have been laughing at you. Why did you write this? Are you having some kind of problem with Mrs. Norolla?"

"No."

"Then tell me why you wrote this."

Luz was silent as she asked herself, *Should I tell her what I saw? Would she believe me? Even if she does believe me, what are we going to do? Turn Mrs. Norolla into the police for having skeleton hands?*

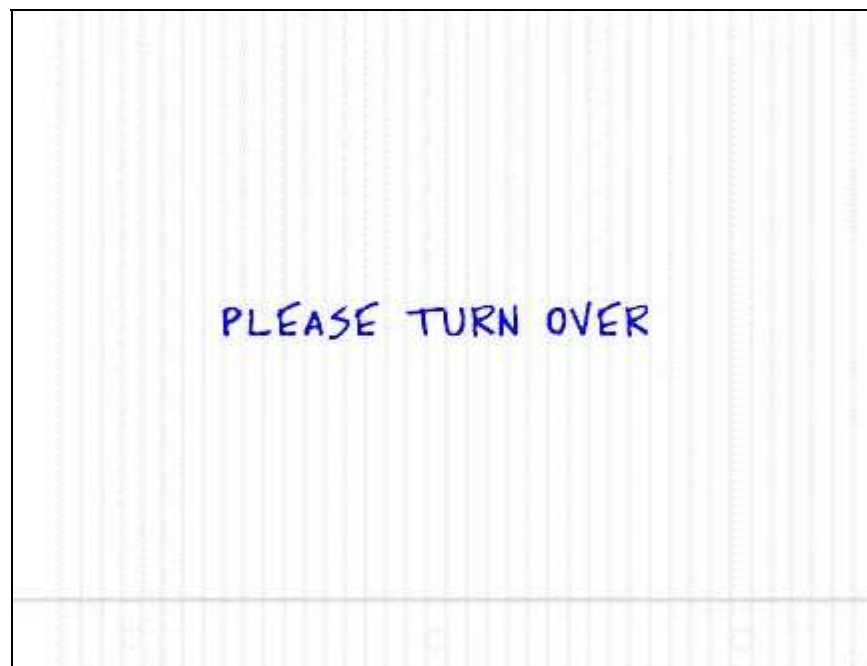
Confused, Luz scanned the floor with her eyes. "I don't know," she said finally.

"Well, you are on warning. If anything else happens in my classroom involving you, I'm going to call your mother. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Miss Feliciano."

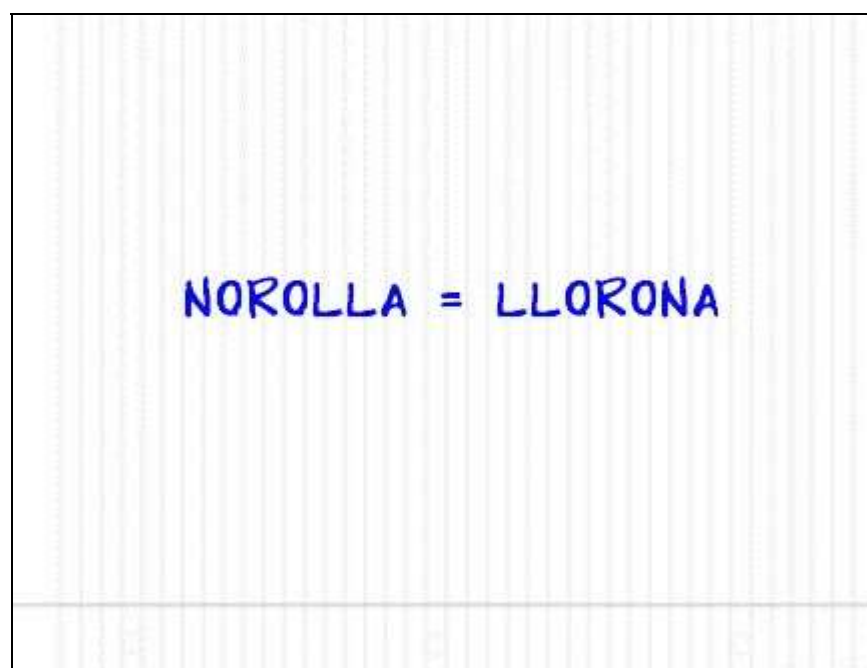
"Good. Now go back inside and get to work."

As Luz walked toward her desk, she saw a piece of notebook paper lying on top. The paper read:



She recognized Max's printing.

When she flipped the paper, she saw:



Luz stopped breathing for a moment. Then her hands started to tremble.

She needed to talk to Max, but he sat three rows away, against the windows. Slowly, Luz lifted her desktop to retrieve her social studies book. She leaned under the desktop so that her head was hidden, then turned in his direction. But the brim of his hat was covering his eyes.

Slowly, carefully, she turned her head the other way and glanced back at Dwight. His eyes darted to hers, then quickly went back to watching Miss Feliciano. She held up the note for him to see.

“Luz? Is there a problem?” Miss Feliciano asked.

Luz slid the note into her desk and lowered the top. “No,” she said.

“Your book should be on your desk by now.”

Luz opened her textbook and slumped in her seat. Miss Feliciano continued talking about the social studies lesson, but Luz didn’t hear a word. Instead, she was thinking about Mrs. Norolla and La Llorona and Dwight and Max and her ghost and all of the other mysteries. Every few seconds she looked at the clock above the door, hoping that it was time for lunch, but the morning seemed to last a year.

She knew that she had to do something. When Miss Feliciano had finished the social studies lesson, she gave everyone some time to study the week’s spelling words. Luz had an idea.

“Miss Feliciano, please,” Luz said, approaching the teacher’s desk, “could I go to the office and make a phone call? Please? I forgot to tell my aunt something.”

“And what is that?”

“She’s taking me to the dentist this afternoon, and she didn’t tell me what time she was going to pick me up.”

“I thought *you* didn’t tell *her* something,” Miss Feliciano said.

“No, I meant that *she* didn’t tell me. I have four cavities. I have to go to the dentist today, and I can’t miss the appointment.”

Luz tried to look as if she might cry.

“All right,” Miss Feliciano said. “Here’s an office pass, but come right back.”

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Luz hurried to the office.

“Mrs. Allen,” she told the secretary. “I need to call my aunt. Miss Feliciano said it was okay.”

As she punched Tía Rosa’s number into the phone, Luz prayed that her aunt would answer.

“I have to talk to you,” Luz said when she heard the sound of her aunt’s voice. She turned her back to Mrs. Allen and whispered, “I don’t know what to do.”

“What’s the matter?” Tía Rosa asked.

Luz wasn’t sure what to say. Mrs. Allen was sitting right behind her.

“Wait a minute!” her aunt said. “Where are you? Did you stay home from school?”

“No, I’m in the office,” Luz said.

Just then, Mrs. Allen stood up and walked to the copy machine on the other side of the office. She placed a piece of paper under the cover and pressed the start button. The machine whirred. Quickly Luz said, "I have to tell you something important. The librarian at my school is La Llorona."

"*What?*" Her aunt almost screamed the word.

"Yes, she is," Luz continued. "I saw it with my own eyes. And her hands are only bones."

Just then, the copy machine stopped. Mrs. Allen was walking back to her desk.

Luz put her hand over the mouthpiece and said softly, "She wears gloves and—"

Now Mrs. Allen was standing behind her desk, looking down at Luz. "Calls are limited to one minute," she said.

"Okay," Luz told her and smiled. "I'm almost done."

"Luzita," her aunt said, "I don't know what is going on but I promised your mother I wouldn't talk about ghosts with you anymore. Okay? It's over, our little talks. They were a big mistake. Whatever you saw wasn't a ghost. And bones? I'm in enough trouble with your mother. What am I supposed to do? Tell her La Llorona is in your school and another ghost is in your closet and on your front porch? She'll never talk to me again. She made me cry last night, that's how bad it was!"

"But Tía...."

"I will see you at 4:15, Luzita. That's 4:15, so don't be late today or I'll be in more trouble than ever!"

Then her aunt hung up the phone.

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Luz walked slowly back to class. By the time she arrived, the class had begun a reading assignment. Luz tried to read, but the words didn't make any sense. Finally, when Luz thought she couldn't survive another second, the lunch bell rang.

Miss Feliciano stepped into the hallway as the class filed out. Luz remained in her seat, waiting for Dwight and Max. They approached her desk cautiously. Luz looked up at Max. She could barely see his eyes under the brim of his cap.

"I've got news for you," Luz whispered. "Mrs. Norolla has skeleton hands."

"What do you mean?" Dwight asked softly.

"I mean, her hands were just bones."

"Are you sure?" Dwight asked.

"I saw it through the window in her office," she told them. "She took her gloves off. That's why they felt so funny when you shook her hand."

"You mean I was shaking bones?" Dwight asked.

Luz nodded.

Dwight look worried. "Did she see you?"

"No," Luz said. "At least I don't think so."

“Com on, let’s go eat,” Dwight suggested. “We’ve got to figure out what we should do.”

They headed to the shaded patio outside the cafeteria. Max and Dwight started to sit at their regular table, but Luz hesitated. They had a lot to talk about that day, but Luz had never eaten with the two boys before. She always sat with Brittany and Sara at a table on the other side closer to the playground.

“Just a minute,” she told the boys.

She walked over to her usual table.

“I have to eat over there today,” she told her friends. “Sorry.”

“With *who*?” Brittany asked.

“Max and Dwight,” Luz said.

“What for?” Sara wanted to know.

“We’ve got something to do.”

“Okay,” Brittany said and shrugged.

Luz walked away. Brittany and Sara had never been good friends, not the way that her Avondale friends were. But she couldn’t talk to anyone about the mysteries except Max and Dwight.

As she took a seat next to Max, she realized how strange this was, eating lunch with the boys. But it was even stranger to see *what* they were eating. Dwight’s lunch was bologna and American cheese on white bread with mustard. But Max was eating something that didn’t look familiar.

“What’s in your sandwich?” Luz asked.

“It’s called pastrami,” Dwight told her. “I never heard of it before Max came here.”

Max reached into his lunch bag and pulled out a small plastic bag. He opened it and held up a large dill pickle.

“He eats one of those every day,” Dwight said.

Max smiled.

“We’ve got stuff to talk about,” Luz said. Then she leaned forward and whispered, “Like what La Llorona is doing at our school.”

“La what?” Dwight asked.

“La Llorona,” Luz said. “Didn’t you see my note?”

“Yeah, but it didn’t make any sense.”

“Well, let me fill you in,” Luz began. Then she explained what she knew about La Llorona.

“So if the library lady is La Llorona,” Dwight asked finally, “what is she doing in our school?”

“Looking for her children,” Luz said. “That’s what La Llorona is always doing.”

“Yeah, but what’s she doing *here*?” Dwight repeated. “Her kids aren’t here.”

“It doesn’t matter where they are,” Luz said. “She’s never going to find them.”

Then Dwight asked, “But what was she doing outside my house?”

“I don’t know,” Luz said.

“Man, she must have made a mistake because her kids aren’t in my house either,” he said. “I’m the only kid there, and I’m not hers.”

“Maybe they *were* in your house,” Luz suggested. “A long time ago.”

“You mean...when it was part of the Wisely Mansion?”

“Maybe,” Luz said. “And somehow we’re going to find out.”

“You know, we could find out something online right now,” Dwight said, “if we went to the school library.”

“Do you think we should?” Luz asked.

“Only if we hurry. The Phantom of the Library will still be out to lunch.”

Luz looked at Max. He nodded.

“Then let’s go,” Luz agreed.

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Miss Tracy was sitting behind the desk with her headphones on. When she saw the children, she waved and went back to her schoolwork.

Dwight, Luz, and Max headed for the computer area and took a seat. They each logged on to a search engine, hoping to find some information. Almost immediately, Dwight found an article about the Wisely mansion.

“Look at this!” he called. Luz and Max crowded around his monitor. “There was a fire!” He pressed the print button.

“When?” Luz asked.

“February 14, 1924.”

“That’s weird,” Luz said. “That’s exactly twelve years after the statehood ceremony. Do you think they’re connected?”

“Why would they be?” Dwight said. “Maybe it has something to do with Valentine’s Day instead!”

“Shhh!” Luz said, taking the article from the printer. “Let me read what this says.”

Conflagration at Wisely Mansion

Handsome Residence Still Smolders

Incendiary Origin Undetermined

A fire which broke out Tuesday night about midnight in the home of Robert Wisely and family could not be extinguished, resulting in the complete destruction of the residence. Only the stable block remained standing.

Members of the household staff escaped injury along with the Wisely's four-year-old son. Mr. and Mrs. Wisely were thought to have been out of town at the time.

The fire department sent a wagon carrying 120 gallons of chemical, but because of a delay in reporting the fire, the amount of chemical was too small to control the blaze. By the time firefighters arrived, the fire had gone to the roof. No water was available in nearby wells.

A crowd of a hundred or more spectators stood helpless by as the flames, unhindered, gradually consumed the handsome structure and all but a small part of its elegant furnishings.

A desk in one of the rooms, reportedly containing valuable jewels, was surrounded by fire when the firemen arrived. Upon being advised of this fact, they fearlessly entered the suffocating smoke and flames and saved the desk.

The ruins of the house which was a three-story structure containing twenty-five or thirty rooms are still smoldering. What caused the fire has not yet been determined.

"I wonder what happened. Miss Moon didn't tell us there was a fire," Luz said, handing the story to Max. "Here, Max, read this."

"I want to know about the desk and all those jewels," Dwight said.

"We need to go to the Luna Drive library after school and ask Miss Moon some questions," Luz told him.

"Don't you think she knows about the fire?" Dwight asked.

"Yeah, but she doesn't know about Mrs. Norolla."

Just then a familiar woman's voice said, "Who doesn't know about me?"

Mrs. Norolla was standing behind them.

The children slowly turned toward her. Luz noticed that Mrs. Norolla she was holding a book, but all she could picture were the skeleton hands beneath her gloves.



“What were you saying?” Mrs. Norolla asked. “And look at me, please, when I am addressing you.”

Luz tried to look Mrs. Norolla in the eyes. “Nothing,” she said.

“You were talking about me,” she replied. “Weren’t you?”

Luz took a deep breath and started to say, “We just said....” But she ran out of words.

Dwight filled in the blank. “We were saying that you have a really good library and that we were going to have to tell other kids about you and the library because they don’t really know that.”

“I see. And what are you working on so diligently today instead of playing outside?”

“We have to do reports for class,” Luz told her.

“Really? Miss Feliciano hasn’t said anything to me about that.”

“She just told us today,” Dwight confirmed.

“And what is your report about?” Mrs. Norolla asked.

“Old houses in Phoenix,” Dwight replied quickly.

“That’s an unusual topic,” Mrs. Norolla said. “What have you found so far?”

“Oh, not much,” Dwight said. “Just some old houses, some very old houses. We probably should be going, right, Luz?”

“What’s this?” Mrs. Norolla asked, plucking the story from Max’s hands. “Information about one of your adobe houses?” She scanned the headline and drew a loud breath. “Oh, my,” she said, then placed her gloved hand up to her neck. She swallowed hard. “My throat is so dry.”

Luz watched Mrs. Norolla’s face turn pale.

“I can’t see why *this* house would interest you,” Mrs. Norolla said. “It isn’t worth its salt and pepper.”

Luz wasn’t going to say anything, until Max nudged her. She glanced at him. Even though she couldn’t see his eyes, she knew what he wanted her to do.

Maybe she was foolish, maybe she was making a terrible mistake, but Luz decided to tell Mrs. Norolla the truth.

“Because,” Luz replied, “Dwight lives in part of the house that didn’t burn down.”

Suddenly Mrs. Norolla seemed very interested. “He does?” She looked at Dwight. “You do? In an old house like that?”

“It used to be the stables,” Dwight said.

“How did you ever figure that out?” she asked.

“Oh, Miss Moon told us,” Dwight explained.

Mrs. Norolla shifted her head slightly, and her eyes rolled up as if she were reading words written on the inside of her head.

“Miss *who*?” she asked in the sweetest voice.

“Miss Moon,” Dwight repeated.

“Do you know her?” Luz asked.

“Not on your life and death,” Mrs. Norolla said. She clapped her gloved hands together and tapped her index fingers once with a slight click.

“We’d better go now,” Luz said. “Bye.”

“Bye,” Dwight added.

Max adjusted the brim of his cap and waved as they headed for the door.

“I think she knows Miss Moon,” Luz told them as they walked down the hallway.

“I do, too,” Dwight said.

“We have to find out what’s going on,” Luz said.

Max nodded.

Then the bell rang and they were off to class for the afternoon.

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The afternoon in school raced by so fast that Luz couldn't have told you anything that happened. All she was thinking about was running to the library with her friends and finding Miss Moon. They had to tell her about Mrs. Norolla.

They met in the hallway after school. As if they were spies, they barely looked at each other and didn't even speak. They took what they needed from their lockers and walked silently out of the school, down the sidewalk, down the street, around the corner to Luna Drive, and then to the entrance of the deserted lot.

That afternoon the sun was hot; the air was still. A few birds called from the shady branches of the grove of cottonwood trees. As the children made their way across the vacant lot, their feet kicked up puffs of dust.

And then, the library was in front of them. Luz could feel her heart begin to race, and she found herself smiling. It was almost as if she had been away on a long trip and was on her way back home. She couldn't wait to be inside.

"Miss Moon has to turn off time right away," Luz told the boys as they crossed the street toward the library. "I'm supposed to be home at 4:15 so my aunt can take me to the dentist."

Luz had gone over the timing a hundred times. If Miss Moon turned off time by 4:05, she'd still be able to run home and meet her aunt, once time started again.

"Look who's there," Dwight said when they reached the front walk. "It's the scary man."

At first, Luz didn't see anyone. Then she noticed a man cutting the grass in the library's backyard. At the same time, he spied the three

children. He left his lawnmower and headed around the side of the library's yard toward them.

"Are you going in the library?" he asked as he approached.

Luz exchanged glances with Max and Dwight. Then she looked at the man. He was old, and his bloodshot eyes looked as if he hadn't slept in years. Then Luz noticed that he was wearing gardener's gloves. She couldn't help but wonder what might be under them.

"Didn't you hear me?" he continued. "I asked if you were going inside?"

"Yes," she replied warily.

"Do you know my mother?" the man asked.

"No," Dwight said.

"Well, if you see my mother in there," the man continued, "tell her that her son is looking for her. She's never there when I go in. And I need to find my mother."

"What's her name?" Luz asked.

"Why, her name is Mrs. Wisely," he replied.

"Mrs. Wisely?" Luz repeated, quite surprised. "Like the Wisely Mansion?"

The man's red eyes opened wide. "I used to live there," he said.

"There was a fire," Dwight told him.

The scary man's eyes wandered, as he seemed to remember something. "Oh, the fire. I don't like fire."

“Were you there when the fire started?” Dwight asked.

“The grass is growing,” the man said, as if he hadn’t heard Dwight at all. “I must cut the grass and keep it nice and neat. Just the way my mother liked. Please, if you see her, tell her that I’m cutting the grass.”

With that, he turned and began to walk away.

The children waited until he was far enough away, then Dwight said, “Man, what is going on with him? Is he crazy?”

“I don’t know,” Luz said.

“Who could his mother be?” Dwight asked. “Do you think it’s Miss Moon?”

Luz remembered what Miss Moon had said about the man: *“He’ll go away.”*

“I don’t think it’s Miss Moon,” Luz said. “If she was his mother, wouldn’t she want to see him?”

Max nodded his head.

“Let’s just ask her,” Dwight said.

With that, he started up the library steps.

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By the time the reflection of the four o’clock sun cascaded down the windows in the library tower and cast its bright glare onto the portrait of Calvin Coolidge, the children had thought of a hundred questions to ask Miss Moon. And when the sunlight bounced from Calvin

Coolidge to the opposite wall and the secret door appeared, the three children ran to open it.

Inside the elevator, they looked at each other as they made the trip to the basement.

“Max?” Luz asked.

He barely looked at her.

“What?” Dwight asked.

“I was just trying to check if Miss Moon stopped time yet.”

In a moment, the elevator reached the basement, and they pushed the door open. They hurried to the round room. Miss Moon wasn't there, and neither was a welcoming sign. But the red door was standing wide open as if the dark room beyond had been waiting for them to arrive.

“Miss Moon?” Luz called.

Dwight looked into the other room, expecting to see her at the table. “She's not there,” he said.

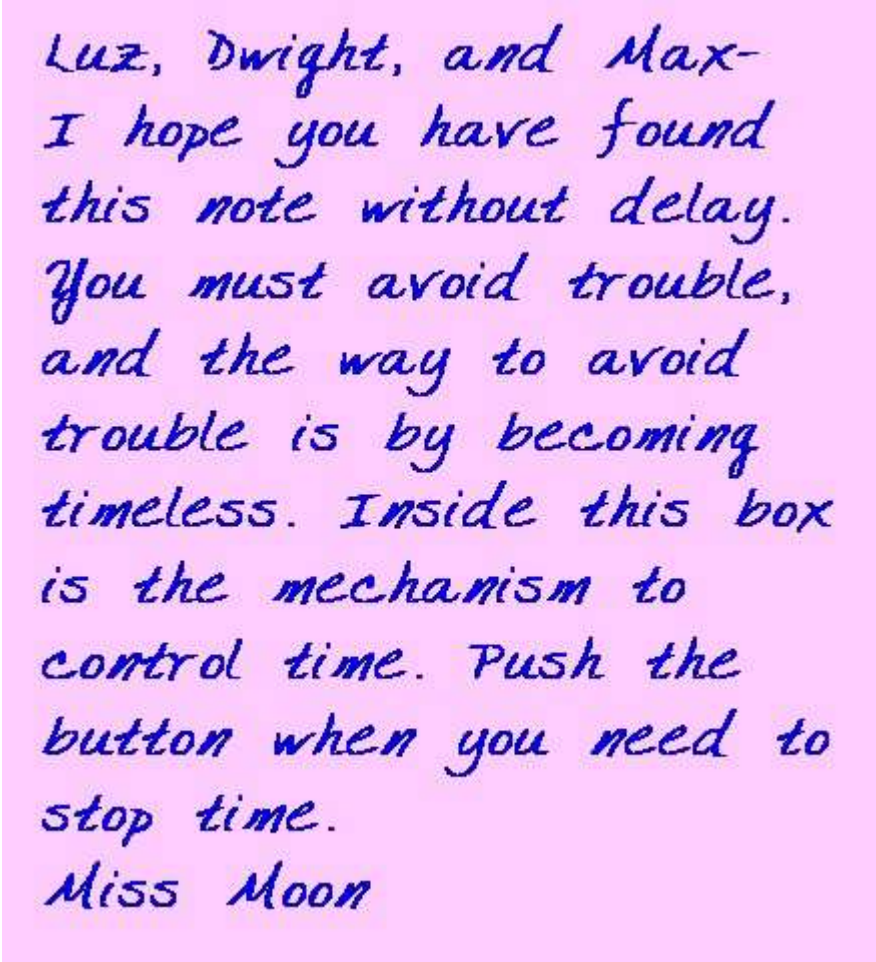
“Maybe she's had another spell,” Luz said. “Miss Moon?”

Luz stood at the entrance to the other room and looked inside. The room was brighter now, and Luz could see into the darkest corners. A long counter lined the wall where Miss Moon had gone to turn on time yesterday.

“I can't stay much longer,” Luz said. “If Miss Moon doesn't turn off time, I'll have to leave or I'll get in trouble.”

“Maybe we can figure out how to do it,” Dwight said.

Luz walked toward the dark stone counter. It was covered with folders and newspaper clippings. At the end of the counter was a small wooden box with a note attached.

A handwritten note on a pink background. The text is written in a cursive, blue ink style. The note reads: "Luz, Dwight, and Max- I hope you have found this note without delay. You must avoid trouble, and the way to avoid trouble is by becoming timeless. Inside this box is the mechanism to control time. Push the button when you need to stop time. Miss Moon".

Luz, Dwight, and Max-
I hope you have found
this note without delay.
You must avoid trouble,
and the way to avoid
trouble is by becoming
timeless. Inside this box
is the mechanism to
control time. Push the
button when you need to
stop time.
Miss Moon

“Look at this,” she called.

When they joined her, she showed them Miss Moon’s note. Then as Dwight and Max watched, Luz tried to pick up the wooden box, but it was firmly attached to the counter. Next she opened the lid and saw two buttons, much like a light switch. The ON button was pushed in.



“What are you waiting for?” Dwight asked. “Push it.”

Luz reached in and placed her finger on the OFF button.

“You don’t think I’m going to get hurt, do you?” Luz asked.

“Do you know what time it is?” Dwight reminded her. “You have to go home and meet your aunt, or you’re going to be in big trouble.”

“Okay,” Luz said. Then, without another word, she pressed OFF.

She wasn’t sure what would happen. She wondered if there would be a noise or a flash of light, but there was nothing, only the odd sensation that she was timeless again.

She heard Max breathe a long sigh.

“Hi,” Luz said to him.

“Hi back,” he said.

“How are you?” she said.

He shrugged. “Fine, I guess.”

“I don’t like it that you don’t talk when time is running,” Luz said. “I wish you could talk all the time.”

Max smiled at her.

“Why can’t you talk?” she asked.

“Because I don’t want to,” he said.

“Hey, check this out!” Dwight called. “Do you see what’s here?”

He was walking toward an old wooden roll top desk along the back wall of the room. As he neared it, he raised his arm and began pointing to a decoration at the top of the desk.

“Look,” he said, now tracing the large, carved initials that decorated the top. “It says RW. Do you think this is Robert Wisely’s desk? The one from the fire? I bet it’s the one filled with all those jewels! We could be rich!”

“Yeah,” Max said, as he and Luz walked over, “except it doesn’t belong to us.”

“Could I look inside?” Dwight asked.

“Why are you asking us?” Luz said. “I think you have to ask that to Miss Moon.”

“But where is she?” Dwight wondered. “We can’t wait forever.”

“We can if time isn’t running,” Luz reminded him.

“Well, then, let’s go somewhere,” Dwight suggested.

He headed for the Memory Machine, followed by Luz and Max. As they peered into the opening, Luz saw that it was set to the day’s date: **09 10 2003**.

“How about if we go back a few years?” Luz said. “That way I can find out who’s living in my house.”

She reached inside and moved one dial. Now the date read: **09 10 2001**.

“No!” Max yelled.

“What’s wrong?” Luz asked. She had never heard him speak that forcefully.

“Not that date!” he said.

“But why not?”

“It’s the day before 9/11,” he explained.

“Oh,” Luz said. “Well, we’ll pick another time. Here, Dwight, you do it,” she said, backing away from the Memory Machine. Max’s sudden anger had surprised her.

“Okay,” Dwight said.

As Dwight set the date, Luz began to walk around the room. As she passed by the open red door, she heard a squeak. At least it seemed like a squeak. She didn’t like mice at all, and she wondered if one of the little creatures had somehow invaded the library basement.

She stepped around the door, looking all the while at the floor. She was expecting to see a mouse cowering in a dark corner. Instead, she saw the feet of Miss Moon. She had been standing behind the red door the entire time.

“Miss Moon,” Luz said. “What are you doing there?”

But as she looked up, she saw that Miss Moon wasn't hiding at all. Her veil was lifted now, and her face was very white. There was no doubt in Luz's mind this time. Miss Moon had the face of a white marble statue, much like the white giant they had found in Dwight's garage.

Max and Dwight rushed over.

“What's wrong with her?” Max asked.

“Is she alive?” Dwight wondered.

Miss Moon looked frozen in place. But as Luz looked carefully, she noticed Miss Moon's eyes slowly blinked.

“She's definitely alive,” Luz told them.

Then Luz heard the squeaking again. It came from Miss Moon's lips, lips that could no longer move. Luz realized that she was trying to say something. Luz leaned closer.

“What? What are you saying?” Luz asked. “Tell me again.”

And in the silence of a timeless second, Luz heard Miss Moon say, “Ma-ccccccchine.”

“Memory Machine?” Luz asked.

“Yeeeeeeeeesssssss.” The word came from Miss Moon's lips like a slow breeze.

“But to when?”

Luz heard only the sound of Miss Moon’s slow breathing.

“Come on,” Luz told the boys, “we’ve got to get Miss Moon in the Memory Machine.”

The three of them dragged her rigid body to the opening of the machine. Then they lifted her carefully and placed her inside. “She can’t push the button,” Luz said. “How’s she going to go anywhere?”

“I’ll take her,” Max said, and he jumped inside the glass tube with Miss Moon.

Luz started to argue. “But what if—“

Before Luz could say anything else, Max had stepped on the golden button and disappeared along with Miss Moon.

“Why did he do that?” Luz said. “Miss Moon never said you could put two people in there at a time.”

“Go ahead and follow them,” Dwight said. “Then I’ll come.”

It was then, when Luz took her place in the machine, that she looked down at the time dial. It read **02 14 1924 1800**.

“Dwight!” she screamed. “What’d you do?”

“I didn’t do anything,” he said.

“But you set the machine for the night of the fire!”

“So? What’s wrong with that? I wanted to find out what happened.”

“But that might not be good for Miss Moon. What if she’s really Mrs.

Wisely? Do you think she wants to see her house destroyed by fire? She likes to visit happy times.”

“Sorry,” Dwight said, “I wasn’t thinking about Miss Moon when I set the dial.”

Worried about Max and Miss Moon and annoyed with Dwight, Luz stepped on the button. The Memory Machine began to hum. It was only seconds later, when she was floating back through time to 1924, ready to land on the front lawn of the library, that she suddenly realized her deadly mistake.

Like Max and Miss Moon, she had gone back in time without taking the special blue stone. Now, they had no way to return.