

The Wardrobe of Time

By Emily C3

It started when I was 25, and I had just bought a house. The house that changed my life. I know what you're thinking; 'Mark, how can a house change your life?' If you want to know the answer to that question, well, you've come to the right place.

When I bought the house, I did a full inspection. Being a keen reader of detective stories, I kept my eyes peeled for suspicious nooks and crannies. Mainly, though, I was looking for anything that needed some cleaning. I was particularly interested in the fireplace, as I reckoned it was antique. So, being the curious soul that I am, I stuck my head in it and looked up. It was just wood! My detective side kicking in, I assumed it was a distraction. A beautiful distraction at that! So I ran my hands along the wall, waiting for a dip in the wood. It didn't come! And here you were, thinking this story was so predictable! I punched the wood in my frustration. Which was probably a bad idea, as the design was full of sharp edges, but guess what! Yes, it was a craftily concealed button! Oh, *now* I get how this story is predictable. Me being me, I didn't call the former owners, but I went right ahead and pushed it.

Suddenly, the fireplace creaked and groaned, sliding forward on rusty gears. I stepped through the newly made passageway and gasped. It was a hidden room! Well, really, what was I expecting? The walls were creamy white and were dotted with pictures every now and then. I saw a beautifully crafted wardrobe at the far side of the room. I think it was mahogany, but that's the only fancy wood name I know, so it might have been a completely different type of wood. Anyway, I opened it and sighed. There were just some different coloured shirts. Who builds a whole entire secret room and just puts clothes in it! Well, I thought to myself, you might as well use them. So I picked the one which was closest to white and went back through the passageway.

After exploring the house, I discovered there was no food in the fridge of cabinets. So I went shopping and wasted 10 minutes of my life making a completely useless shopping list. I stepped out the door and gasped. The houses next to me had disappeared, replaced by shining steel and glass towers. Everyone around me was zooming past on top of a sort of mini-UFO. I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. What was going on! I caught snatches of conversation, from groups hovering in mid-air.

"They shouldn't let downtown scum like that run amok. I mean, it's the fiftieth century, we don't want someone looking like they're from 2020 ruining the place." I looked around, realisation slapping me in the face. Or maybe that was just a bird. I pulled off

my shirt and the scene around me shimmered, like looking through heat waves, and I was back in Hays Mews, people staring at the man who was shirtless, and had apparently just appeared out of thin air.

Next day, I had given this some thought and had concluded that it could be nothing other than the shirts. So, after a quick breakfast of scrambled eggs and bacon, I retraced my steps from the previous day and found myself in the concealed room. I had brought with me a stack of sticky notes and a pen. On the off-white shirt, from yesterday, I stuck a note saying, "50th century, caution of flying discs". Smiling at my own private joke, I turned to the next shirt, a cat – patterned turtleneck the same reddish-brow as my messy hair, which, come to think of it, wasn't that clean anymore. I pulled it on – transferring several dust particles onto my hair - and looked out the window. I gasped. Outside was nothing, just floating space. I felt my chest tighten and my throat close from the lack of oxygen and used my remaining strength to pull off the turtleneck. I took great gasps of oxygen as the air returned to my lungs and I could breathe again. Shuddering, I labelled the sticky note, "past destruction of earth – no oxygen – don't visit".

So the day went on, me visiting a bunch of different time periods. Some were quite nice, like before animals were around, so it was just plants and trees. Others were a complete fiasco, like being almost eaten by a queer, flying shark-pelican breed – apparently people have them as pets in 3500. Another one didn't transport me anywhere. After a mind-numbing day of time travelling, I lay on the soft, feather mattress bed, exhausted. I lay, half in and half out of dreamland, when I dreamed that I appeared in this room knocked over a glass, saw the bed, and screamed. Then, my mind quick on the uptake, I realized that I was not dreaming. So, being the sensible man that I am, I started screaming my head off as well. Then the other me yelled, "Stop, I've got a headache!" I stopped, only to reply, "A bit rich, coming from you. Who are you?" but I was already getting an inkling of what was going on. "Remember that shirt that didn't teleport me, I mean you, well us, anywhere? It transports us to now. So, hi. I should go. Bye." He started to pull off his green shirt. I stopped him. "Wait. This is useful. Tell me about my future." He had just opened his mouth to speak when BAM - a flash of blinding light – and an even older me appeared. "Stop! This will ruin your life! Green shirt, don't you tell him anything." I was so confused. I was just having a conversation with 2 other me's from the future and everyone was chill about that. Well, not very old me. We both replied. "Okay." "Calm down."

Suddenly I woke up. No one was there. I began to wonder if it was all a dream, then I saw the knocked over glass and the stain on the carpet. That got me thinking. This event was changed by very old me telling older me to not tell me anything. There was one

shirt I hadn't tried. What if I had to change something, too? So, as the first beams of sunrays were lighting my room I stood up and plodded over to the secret room. My hand found the button automatically, and the familiar creak of rusty gears announced the opening of the room. I opened the wardrobe, the musty smell of wood enveloping me. I pushed the shirts back one by one, until I found it. The only unlabelled shirt. It was a navy blue, patterned with asteroids. Taking a deep breath - and regretting it as I coughed and spluttered from the dust - I pulled on the shirt. I looked outside the window. Everything was the same, except some houses had changed, but I caught the end of a sentence. "...Halloween in two days, dear..." Halloween! But it was the 28th of October! I suppose it was a day into the future. Suddenly people screamed, pointing to the sky. I looked up and gasped. There was an asteroid, heading toward us! It was seconds away when I pulled off the shirt. I panted. I had to do something. But what? Two hours later, and I was on a plane to Washington D.C. When I reached the NASA headquarters, I ran inside, ignoring the security shouting and running at me. I sprinted to the lift, silently thanking my P.E. teacher for forcing me to learn to run faster. I reached the lift and scanned the list of floors at lightning speed. Fourth floor, the place where they examine the solar system and sky. I should go there. I frantically jabbed the lift button and almost fell inside, panting "Lift going up" said that smooth female voice that is inside all lifts for some reason. I felt a judder, then the lift glided upwards. As the doors opened, I remembered why I was here and as soon as the doors glided open, I ran through a room full of people at desks, working on computers. I saw a man at a huge network of computers, each displaying different moving diagrams. I made a beeline for him, and everyone gasped as I skidded to a halt in front of him. He took a moment to register the situation and began in an angry tone, "What in heavens name do you mean by this, boy? Do you know-" "Sir, listen. An asteroid is going to hit earth in a day, and you must stop it!" I watched shock flee across his face, before it returned to its angry demeanour. "Do you have any idea what a disruption you caused, with your nonsensical fantasies, boy?" Suddenly, a woman in the back row shyly put up her hand. "Sorry, Mr Brinke, sir, but I just checked this, um, young man's theory, and there is an asteroid heading towards earth at an alarming speed." There were screams and gasps from the rest of the people, but then someone else spoke up. "The rocket that is scheduled for next month is, in fact, ready to launch and we could possibly avoid this collision by making an emergency launch." Mr Brinke replied sharply. "Well then, what are you doing, Rogerson? Alert the head of launching department at once. Floor 27. And be quick about it!" The man scampered off, and Mr Brinke sighed. "You can rest assured, boy, that this will be dealt with." I started, "Sir, is there anything I can-" "You may go now. There is nothing you can do. In fact, can I have your address?" I gave it to him and left.

Two hours later, I was back home, in the secret room. I took a deep breath and pulled on the navy shirt. It was the same, except... no asteroid! It worked! And two days later, I got an award for saving the world. Honestly, I expected more, but you can't mess with important people. And that is how a story changed my life. Not convinced? I thought so. Well, there is no more I can tell you, so live with the question, 'is he lying to me or not?' for the rest of your life. Now I need a sandwich, because this was a long day. I wonder if the award means I can have free sandwiches...

Signed

Mark.