

# The Peculiar Pocket Watch

The attic was filled with boxes! Where was it? Tova looked left and right for her great grandfather's War box. Her class were learning about the first World War at school. Her great grandfather was a General for the British army and had many war badges and trinkets from the time he served.

Suddenly, a brown box fell onto the damp attic floor. Her feet scurried across the dusty room eager to take a look inside the box of memories. "Wow!" she gasped.

Shimmering, shiny medals and trophies littered the box. Everything in the box looked like a picture-perfect collection... except for a grubby jacket. Curiously, she lifted it up and put it on. Tova darted to the mirror across the room. Standing there looking at her reflection, she could feel something in the pocket. Gently, she reached her hand in and took out a metal pocket watch.

The base of the polished watch was as shiny as a freshly pressed coin. It had gorgeous carvings of... stars? Tova almost felt as if they were moving before her eyes, like the Mirrie Dancers in the Northern sky. This watch was strange and very puzzling!

Swiftly, she clicked the mysterious watch open and a piece of parchment slipped out. Quickly, she swooped it up and unfolded it. The paper felt dry and as fragile as a cup made out of the finest China. It was a map!

Written on the paper was a strange riddle:

'I mark the hours as they pass,  
with ticking hands beneath the glass,  
I sit three quarters of the way,  
find fourteen past to make my day'

She thought and thought and suddenly had it. The riddle was clearly stating that Tova had to set the clock to fourteen minutes past nine!

First, she moved the long hand. "Click, click, click". After that, she moved the smaller hand. "Tick, tick, tick". Then... nothing. Feeling disappointed, she set the jacket down.

“Ahhh!” Tova shouted in surprise.

The ground started shaking beneath her! Panicked, Tova rushed to the door and swung it open. As soon as she looked out into the hall, the quaking stopped. She watched the sparkling map and somehow, she knew she was safe.

Her house looked normal but something felt different. She noticed the walls were covered in ancient pictures from before her time. She recognised the men in the old-fashioned picture... “Hang on,” Tova murmured. She had to find answers!

The map shook like it wanted to speak. She looked down at the wrinkled paper and saw a picture of the young boy in the photo. Slightly worried, Tova walked down the rickety stairs, into her kitchen.

Inside the kitchen she was bewildered! What had happened? Anxiety hit her like a bullet! At that moment she could see a figure outside. She rushed out to question the person... It was him! The little boy from the picture upstairs! He looked as surprised to see her as she was to see him.

Suddenly, the parchment jiggled in her pocket! Swiftly, she snatched it out of her leather pouch and flicked it open. “Not another riddle,” said Tova in an unamused tone. It read:

‘Locked inside the garden shed, changing paths lie just ahead,

Tick, tick, tick, the floorboards creak,  
time runs out for what you seek.’

She thought for a while, then she had it. This riddle was pointing towards the shed.

Rapidly, she dashed over. “Ah!” it was locked. Out of nowhere she felt a light tap on her leg. It was the shocked boy. “I can help you with that,” he said smiling.

Gently he took a silvery key out of his pocket and slid it into the bulky padlock. Like magic it clicked open.

The boy gave her a picture trapped in time, "Give this to your Mam, will you?" he said cheerily. "She'll be happy to know that I will always be there for her." Just like that, the door closed and the rumbling came back. "Poof". She was back in her attic, more confused than ever!

The map had led her to her family from years before. Showed her a brave war hero, her mother's kind grandad. She had heard stories of when he passed. Stories about Mam's immense sadness. But this picture. This memory. This map, was magic waiting to reunite them.

As she looked at the map, her eyes clocked onto a new riddle. The answer - 24:26... Would this be her next pocket watch adventure?