

An Orb for a Better World

by H.L. Pauff

Max sighed. Solving for x was boring, so mind numbingly boring that he didn't notice the flickering blue light hovering in his room. It crackled and popped, growing until a shimmering rectangle stretched from floor to ceiling.

A hand pushed out from the rectangle, and a moment later, a man stood in his room, smiling. His grey robe hung loosely, hiding his small frame.

"Greetings, Max," he said.

"You have one second to leave before I call the police," Max said.

"Do not do that. Please. I have come a long way bearing a great gift." He reached up one of his sleeves and produced a red orb. "It has changed my life and I hope it will change yours."

Max squinted and studied the orb. "What is it? And... how do you know my name?"

"I seek disadvantaged people with good hearts, like you, to create better futures. This is a magical orb of ancient power. Focus its energy on another person and they will realize incredible wealth and power." He handed the orb to Max who rolled it in his hands.

"Why don't I just use it on myself and get the wealth and power?"

"The orb comes from another time when people were selfless. It will not work on your own person. If it is wealth and power you desire, then choose a recipient that will benefit you directly. Perhaps a parent."

“Good luck,” he said and stepped into the portal. It closed behind him.

Max held the orb, unsure of what just happened. A car door slammed and he saw his father walking up the driveway in his suit with campaign signs tucked under his arm. “I’m home,” his father announced. “I almost raised money.”

Money had been tight since his mother died, and now every available penny went towards his father's new aspirations. Perhaps this orb could help them.

As a test, he aimed it at a stuffed alligator on his shelf. A second later, the alligator erupted into flames.

The portal appeared once again and the mysterious man stepped through. “Hello. I just wanted to check in on you. Have you not give your father endless wealth?”

“Who are you, really?”

The man scrunched his face. “I am sorry?”

“This is not magical. It's a killing device,” Max said, pointing to the alligator.

“I have told you. It can only be used on a person.”

“Last chance. Who are you?”

The man raised his hands defensively and backed towards the portal. “You do not know what is at stake. The future... You and only you must use it on your father. I — “

Flames engulfed the man, dropping him to the ground. A second later, his father burst through the door. "What was that?" He looked at Max holding the orb, the dead man on the floor and the blue portal, swirling in the center of the room. His jaw dropped.

"I think this man wanted me to stop you from winning the election."

