



A unique new store has opened in town. All it sells are snow globes. The secret is that something truly wonderful happens with every hundredth snowstorm.

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- I could not get into it
- It was okay
- I enjoyed reading it
- I would recommend it
- I loved it

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"Do not worry, my friend. You'll soon be adopted."

The old man lovingly put the final touches to the snow globe. He held it up to the light before carrying it over and setting it down on the table. Groaning, he pulled the ladder closer as he looked up at the shelf.

"I believe I can make room for you right here."

He placed his foot on the bottom rung and began to climb, wincing as the arthritis in his hip screamed. The bell over the storefront door rang.

He climbed down and winced again. "I really need to hire an assistant."

A couple stood by the entrance and gazed around the store.

Probably in their late twenties, he thought to himself. The man wore a baseball jacket and matching red hat. His companion, a lovely blond woman, held his hand as they strolled looking at the vast inventory of snow globes.

"What an amazing place. Look at these, they are so real looking," the young woman said as she picked up a globe that caught her eye. "The detail is incredible. This could be my Aunt Rita outside of her country house. It's perfect."

"Hi, may I help you?" the old man said. "My name is Mr. Smith and this is my store." He held his hand out to the younger man.

"Oh hi, I'm Jonathon and this is my girlfriend Brenda." He reached over and shook the hand offered to him. "We're just looking. We've been meaning to stop in since you opened. You're the talk of the town. A store that sells only snow globes is unique. Do you make these?"

"Thank you and welcome. Yes, of course, I design all the globes myself. Sort of a hobby I started many years ago. It's always nice to have visitors. Please, look around. Let me know if you find something that interests you." He started to walk away but turned and said, "May I ask what profession you're in?"

"I sell cars over at McPherson's Used Car lot."

Mr. Smith tilted his head, mentally reviewing his stock. He walked back up to the couple. "I believe I have a globe that you might like to see. If you would permit me to show you one, please, it's right over here."

He guided them over to a shelf that held medium-sized globes, then took one down and placed it on the counter. The couple leaned forward and examined the scene inside.

"Jonathon, this could be you. It's brilliant."



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Jonathon leaned in closer, moving his head around to see the globe from all sides. There was a young man shoveling snow between tiny cars. Above him, a sign stretched across the interior, Used Cars for Sale. A petite building sat to one side, complete with windows and a door. The scene had exquisite detail.

"It looks just like McPherson's lot," Jon said in wonder.

"I have to buy this for you. It will look great on your desk at work. How much is it?" Brenda asked the store proprietor.

"I'm so glad you like it, I thought you might. This particular globe is on sale right now, it's been marked down to only ten dollars. That's a real bargain if I do say so myself."

"Excuse me, what's that in the corner?" Jon pointed to a pair of small black squares attached to the top of the tiny building.

"That is a digital counter. It marks the number of snowstorms. It's something I put in all of the globes I make."

"A digital counter, really? There are only two squares, what happens if it's shaken a hundred times?" Jonathon asked as he picked up the globe, causing snow to fall on the miniature lot.

"The counter always resets itself after ninety-nine. Something truly wonderful happens for every hundredth snow storm."

Jonathon looked up from the globe. "Something truly wonderful, what does that mean?"

Mr. Smith smiled at him. "I suggest you buy it and find out, Sir. The counter does not start until the globe is purchased."

"Well, I'm buying it," Brenda said. She pulled the bag off her shoulder.

"Fantastic, I will pack it for you." Mr. Smith took the globe from Jonathon's hands.

Jonathon arrived at his office the next day and opened the box that held his new snow globe. He looked at the digital counter located on the building. It read fifty-five. He shook the globe and watched the snow descend. For a few seconds, the fierce mini storm obscured the numbers. Then the snow settled and the counter reading became clear, fifty-six.

The curiosity was about to kill him. Jonathon was dying to find out what truly wonderful thing would happen for every hundredth shake.

The intercom on his desk buzzed and the lot secretary said, "Jonathon, you have customers on the lot."

"Okay, Mary, thanks. I'm coming."

He placed the globe down on his desk but he couldn't walk away from it. He picked it back up and shook it, watching the swirl, fifty-seven. He laughed at himself. "You are starting to become obsessed with this thing, Jon."

He placed it back down and reached for his red baseball cap. Jon knew every car sales man needed a signature, something unique for customers to remember. The red baseball cap served this purpose for him. Potential buyers didn't need remember his name, they simply asked for the man with the red hat.

After giving the globe one more look, he turned and headed out.

Jonathon looked at his watch. "Oh God, Brenda is going to be pissed if I'm late again."

He finished the paperwork on the 2001 Ford, one of three cars he had sold.

"Not bad for a Monday."

The snow globe turned out to be a great conversation piece, distracting the buyers as he ran through their credit reports. This was always the worst part of any deal.

He looked over at it, noting that the counter now read eighty-four. The temptation to pick up the globe and give it sixteen more shakes was almost overwhelming.

"You are a good partner," Jonathon said to the tiny version of himself shoveling snow. He picked it up and the snow fell. It was so realistic. He could almost sense the frustration of his counterpart as a white blanket covered the ground.

"Yes, I know that feeling my little friend, all that hard work. Sorry, I couldn't resist." He laughed as the counter changed to read eighty-five. He placed the globe back down and closed the file in front of him. "I need to go, can't have the lovely Brenda angry with me."

The following morning, Jonathon arrived at his usual time with a bagel and steaming cup of coffee. He placed the items down on his desk and immediately reached for the snow globe.

"What?" he exclaimed as he looked at the digital counter. It read zero-one. Jonathon turned the globe around in his hands. Maybe the counter is broken, he thought as he shook it. The snow settled and the counter read zero-two.

"It seems like its working." He groaned with disappointment. He had thought about the snow globe all night. He couldn't wait to come to the office and see what happened when he hit the crucial number.

The intercom on his desk buzzed, interrupting his thoughts.

"Jon, have you spoken to Mr. McPherson today?"

"No, why?" Jon asked as he stared into the globe. Something was different. He couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"Well, his car is in his space but he's not in his office. It's weird. It almost looks like he never went home."

Jon was barely listening, obsessed with the globe. When he spotted a new figure standing in the doorway of the small building, the hair on the back of his neck stood up.

"Where did you come from?" he whispered.

"What was that, Jon?"

"Oh, uh...nothing, I'm sure he's just running late. Give him some time."

"In the twenty-two years that I've worked for Mr. McPherson, he has never been late. His office is a mess. He always tidies up before he leaves."

Jonathon couldn't stop staring at the tiny person that had appeared inside the globe.

"Jon, are you listening to me."

A sudden look of realization came over his face

"Jon?"

He looked at the intercom sitting on his desk and cleared his throat. "Yes, Mary, uh...let's just give it some time, okay. Maybe he ran out for something."

"Well all right, but I have a bad feeling about this," the intercom clicked off.

"I have a bad feeling about this too," Jonathon said under his breath. He opened the top drawer of the desk and pulled out a magnifying glass. He held it up to the snow globe and bent down to look.

The middle-aged man was standing in the doorway of the building, his arm extended in a wave. He had a ring of gray hair circling a baldhead and a charcoal colored suit. Mr. McPherson had worn a version of that suit to work everyday for the last twenty-two years.

Jon slammed the glass down on the desk.

"No, that's not possible."

He picked the magnifying glass up again. The tiny man was waving, not at the miniature Jonathon shoveling snow but at the big one sitting behind his desk.

"Oh my God, Mr. McPherson, is that you?" He tapped his fingers on the glass surrounding the globe. "How did you get in there?"

"This is not truly wonderful," Jon said to the globe.

He fell back into his chair and stared at the ceiling as a scene played through his mind. Mr. McPherson comes into his office and finds Jon gone for the day. He turns to leave but notices the new snow globe on the desk.

"Of course he noticed you, everyone notices you."

Mr. McPherson can't resist picking the globe up and shaking it. He keeps shaking, hypnotized by the changing numbers until...

"Until what, Jon, the globe eats him?" He stood up and paced in front of his desk, throwing the occasional glance at the globe. Finally, he grabbed his red cap and walked out into the lobby.

"Mary, I'll be back soon. I have to run an errand."

"What do you mean you'll be back soon? Where are you going? What about Mr. McPherson?"

"Oh...well, I'm sure he's fine, probably caught up in something."

Mr. Smith looked up as the bell signaled the arrival of a customer.

"Well, Jonathon, nice to see you again," he said, walking towards the younger man. "Are you looking for another snow globe, perhaps a gift for your lady?"

Jon shook his head, trying not to let his panic show. "No...I need to talk to you about the globe we bought. I think, maybe, something is wrong with it."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Nothing I can't fix, I'm sure. It hasn't been leaking, has it?"

"No, No, it's not that. I know this is going to sound crazy. A new figure has appeared in the globe. It's a man. He's standing in the door of the little building. Who is that?"

Mr. Smith smiled. "Oh, I see. I assume the digital counter has reset?"

"Yes, when I left last night it read eighty-five but when I came in this morning it was at zero-one. Now there is someone in the globe."

Mr. Smith nodded. "Yes, that's what's unique about the globes I make. The scene changes every time the counter resets. Quite creative, don't you agree?"

"So more people are going to end up inside the globe?"

"Well, yes, that is part of the design."

Jon looked away from him and began pacing nervously in front of the counter. He stopped, biting his thumbnail as he considered what to say next.

"Okay, look here's the thing. Mr. McPherson, that's my boss at the car lot. It looks just like him, I mean the little man inside the globe." He paused to catch his breath. "See, he is the first one at the store every morning. It's been that way for twenty-two years, without fail but today no one can find him. He's just gone. Do you understand?"

Mr. Smith looked at Jon, confusion on his face.

"Now I'm wondering if it's possible... Well, could it be him?"

"Are you asking me if Mr. McPherson is inside the globe?"

Jon cringed, gritting his teeth. "It sounds nuts, I know, but yeah, that's what I'm asking you."

"Well, imaginative might be the word I would use. No, it's a plastic figurine," Mr. Smith replied slowly.

"It looks just like him. Little circle of gray hair, even the charcoal suit he wears everyday."

"Your boss is not inside the snow globe. I have no idea where he is but certainly not there."

Jon laughed with relief. "I'm sorry. You probably think I'm crazy but it looks so much like him."

"I quite understand. I'm sure his disappearance is very troubling. The figures in the globes have a generic look to them. It's a type

of optical illusion, if you will. They look like someone to whoever sees them. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, it does. Thank you for understanding. I'm sure he will turn up with a good explanation. I'll let you get back to work, I'm sorry I bothered you with this."

"No, please visit me anytime. I'm an old man, I can use the distraction."

Jon returned to the office and sat down. The old man's explanation made perfect sense.

"People don't get trapped inside of snow globes, dude. Okay, you can lose your mind all you want but that is just a fact."

As the afternoon went by, Jon couldn't stop staring at the globe. Occasionally, he would pick it up and shake it, watching until the snow settled. Finally, he put it in the bottom drawer of his desk.

"I just don't want to look at it anymore," he told himself, "It's not him."

Every few minutes he would open the drawer and the snow would fall. When he finally took it back out, the counter read ninety-eight.

"Uh oh," Jon whispered when he saw the numbers.

"Is everything all right, Sir?" A voice came from the doorway.

Jon jumped up in surprise, startled by the police officer standing there. He grabbed his chest. "Yes, it is. You scared me. I'm sorry, can I help you?" Jon asked him.

"I didn't mean to sneak up on you." The officer smiled as he looked down at the small notebook in his hand. "You are Jonathon Brady, right?" Jon nodded. "Good, I'm Officer Richards. We got a call an hour ago about a missing person, a Mr. Jonas McPherson. No one has seen him since last night, right?"

"Right...I think. I guess I don't really know."

"I see. Do you mind if I sit down, I have a few questions?"

"No, please." Jon gestured with his hand towards the chairs in front of his desk. "Anything I can do to help."

The officer sat, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a pen. "Now, about what time did you see him last?"

Jon thought about it. "Well, around 4:30 yesterday. He signed some paperwork for me on a sale and then I left for the night."

Officer Richards made a notation in his book. "I noticed a safe in McPherson's office. The secretary tells me you have the combination for that. Can you open it and see if anything looks like its missing?"

"Sure, I can do that." Jon opened the top drawer of his desk and took out a slip of paper. "Do you want to come with me?"

"No, I'll wait here if you don't mind. It will give me a chance to call the station and see if they found anything at his house."

"Okay, I'll be right back." He got up and starting walking toward the door of his office. He glanced uneasily at the snow globe. He was tempted to tell the officer not to touch it but decided against it.

Within a few minutes, Jon returned. "I didn't see anything missing." He stopped in the doorway and looked around the empty office. "Officer?" He turned, letting his eyes sweep the lobby. "Officer Richards?" He moved towards his desk and the snow globe caught his eye. He picked it up and looked at the counter, zero-one.

"Oh no, not again."

There was a police officer figure inside of the globe, shaking the tiny hand of Mr. McPherson.

"This can not be happening." Jon frantically started shaking the globe. He held it up and watched the snow settle. The two figures inside were no longer shaking hands, they had both turned and were now waving at him.

Jon gasped, "What am I going to do? I got to get them out of there!" He desperately pounded the snow globe on the edge of his desk.

After a few whacks, he knew the globe wouldn't break. "Jesus, what is this thing made of?" He sat down in front on

his desk and grabbed his letter opener, intending to try to pry the globe from the base.

The movement caused the number on the counter to increase. He looked closer. "Wait, the digital counter must have a power supply of some kind, maybe if I should try to turn it off first. I don't want to end up shaking hands with Mr. McPherson." He flipped the globe over, looking for a

compartment that would hold a battery. Instead, he saw a tiny red button. Black raised letters surrounded it.

"DO NOT PUSH THIS BUTTON," Jon read the words aloud. "Okay, what is this now? Do not push this button." He flipped the globe back over and watched the snowfall. He looked at the counter. It read fifteen.

"I don't know what to do." He looked around his office to make sure no one was watching then leaned forward. "Look guys, I'm kind of stuck here, what do you think?"

The figures inside the globe stood there with no response, arms suspended in a wave.

"Jeez, you are no help. All right Jon, let's think this through." He picked the globe up and turned it over again. "The old man must have a way of opening this up. That has to be what the button is for, a latch of some kind." His thumb hovered over the spot as he hesitated. "So if I push the button, the globe pops open and what? The tiny men come spilling out and then I take a vacation. A nice long one, some place warm. I think I've seen enough snow."

He pushed the button.

Jon felt a slight vibration in the hand that held the globe. He flipped it back up; the counter now read zero-one. "Uh oh..."

A middle-aged man with a fringe of gray hair and cheap charcoal suit strolled into Jon's office.

"Jon I am so sorry about all the confusion today. I don't know what happened. I just seem to lose track of the time. "He stopped and looked around the empty space." Now, where has he gone off to?"

He glanced at the desk. "What is this? This is new." He picked up the globe and gave it a shake, laughing as he watched the snowfall. "It looks just like Jon, right down to the little red hat he always wears."

He placed the globe back on the desk and walked out towards the lobby. "Mary, where did Jon take off to?"

Mr. Smith studied the tiny figure he had just completed painting. "I do believe you are done."

He turned as a buzzer went off in his workroom. Standing up, he felt his joints creak as he walked over to a wall covered with digital counters. Scanning them, he located the one that had signaled.

"Oh Jonathon, I should have known. He did seem a little too curious. Just the type that always ends up pushing the button."

He smiled as he walked over to the window next to his bank of counters. Leaning forward, he looked up at the sky.

"It won't be long now. The storm will be coming. I do so love the snow; it makes me feel young again."

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