

THE SEVENTH HOUR

TAKE TIME BACK



WHO IS SPEAKING?

Every voice has its own color.
See the color — you know who is talking.

ELI — the fix-it kid — this is his story

"I fix things. That's what my hands do."

ELI, TELLING THE STORY — the story boxes

"There are two kinds of things in the world..."

TOCK — the penguin watch — Eli's teacher

"Hands first. The knowing follows."

AYA — the girl from the First Age

"Kah."

MR. RIGGS — the pawn-shop man

"Wind the past, not the clock."

Now — the story begins.
THE SEVENTH HOUR: TAKE TIME BACK

There are two kinds of things in the world. Things that work. And things somebody gave up on.

You gave up too soon, buddy.



**I fix things. That's what my hands
do.**

**Mom says I should charge.
Dad says I should sleep.**



**And then I saw the thing nobody
should have given up on.**



Forty years it's sat there. Tickin' not once.

How much?

Whatever's in your pocket, kid. It's been waitin' for the right hands.

Wind the past, not the clock.

Huh?



He was heavier than he looked. And that little scratch —



...huh.

Okay, buddy. Let's see
what gave up in here.



Fixing me won't wind me.

THE STATUE TALKS?!

We're going back in time.



No we are NOT! I have school tomorrow — and I am NOT —

In the Beginning, only first things can hold their shape. So he folded into the next-best thing.



Okay. Okay okay okay. I'm dreaming. Or poisoned. Probably poisoned.

Put me on.

Other wrist.

What's wrong with this one?

Nothing. For a watch that tells time. Left wrist, Eli. Over the mark.

Whoa. It — it fits the mark.

That is how you know I am on right.

Okay, that's — I moved it. And it moved BACK.

The mark is where I sit. It has always been where I sit. Now you know it — not because I said it.

...There's a lot you're not telling me, isn't there.

There is a lot you have not asked yet. Ask. I answer. That is how this works.



What do you mean, no? You're a magic watch!

Okay. So — show me the past. Show me where we're going.

No.

It's broken.

It is waiting.

Waiting for WHAT?

Work. I am a teacher, not a window. When there is something to teach, the light rises and draws it — in the air, above your wrist, big enough to read. Blueprints. Steps. I do not show places, Eli. I show how things are made.

...It wakes when there's **WORK**. Not wishes.

You said it. Not me. Remember it that way.



Is that — sand? In a watch?

Time sand. Turn your wrist and count it. What you can see is what you have. It is the price of being where we are going.

What happens when it runs out? Like — all the way out?

Then we come home. All at once, ready or not. Mid-word. Mid-build. Whatever your hands are holding stays there.

It doesn't fall DOWN. It falls — whichever way I —

It falls toward home, Eli. Not toward down.

Can't stop it. Can't save it up. Can't even touch it.

Would shaking — ?

No.

...So how do I get more?

What do YOU think pays for time?

...Finishing. The only way to get time — is to FINISH something.

That's the whole bargain.

Finish the First Thing, and its clock pays sand back into the chamber. A finished thing buys time. An unfinished thing buys nothing.

That is the whole bargain. And you worked it out yourself.



When we go — where do you PUT me? Like, an address? A map? Do I just — appear?

I choose the ground, Eli. Always the same ground, at the Beginning — a clearing by a river, where a tribe lives cold. That ground is not an accident.

Because that is where you will build. But first, learn this, because first crossings frighten everyone: you will not step through. You will FALL.

I know. So do not take my word for it. Test it.

Your desk. Hold me over it.

When I fall with you, I pour the sand down ahead of you — a cushion of gold light, the size of a boy. That is all the landing is, Eli. Bigger.

And I will be on your wrist the whole way down, talking. You will not fall alone.

Why that one?

I don't like falling. ...Or the dark.

Test it HOW? I'm not jumping off the roof.

...It didn't break.

Fall toward the glow. Land in the light.

...Okay. Teach me the rest before I chicken out.





Choose who you will be
where we go. In your
own clothes, they will
run from you. In his —

Will I still
be me?

The
heart
stays
yours.
Only the
outside
changes.

He even
has my
belt.
...Him.

Then walk as him. But he
arrives with clean skin, Eli.
Remember that. It matters
there.



Clean skin? They care about
— skin?

Where we go,
everyone knows
what a watch-animal
means. When they
see me on your
wrist, they will know
— an Avatar, come
from a different
world. I am the sign.
And the marks an
Avatar wears are his
record. They are
ranks.

A mark is proof,
Eli. Proof comes
after the thing it
proves. A mark
before the deed is
a lie written on
skin — and that
world reads skin
like a book.

So I land there
with **NOTHING**.
And everybody can
SEE I've done
nothing.

And if I mess up
the fire? No mark?

Then no mark, and cold nights,
and we try again. — And you are
not the only one. Beyond your
village, other chosen ones walk
with their own watch-animals,
learning their own First Things.

There are more of
us?

There are more beginnings.

Ranks? Like
— prizes?

Okay. Give
me one.

No.

One little one.
The fire one — I'll
earn it **THERE**.
Just — pre-mark
me.

...It won't
take.

You land honest. Then
every mark you wear,
you earned — a First
Thing truly finished,
granted in gold light.
Not asked for. Not
bought.

See? NOTHING. It doesn't care about spoons.

It cares about work.

So when we get there, you don't just — hand me the fire. I have to touch the real stuff first. The wood, the grass, the stone. Lying there. THEN it wakes, and you teach, and I build it. Mistakes and all.

Hands first.

That sounds slow.

It is the only speed there is. One more thing, and then we go: the fire you will light is the First Fire — the fire at which my clock stopped. Light it where it first went out, and the clock starts again, and the sand comes back. That is the journey, Eli. Fix the first broken thing.

Hands first.

The knowing follows. Well said. Now — hold on to me.



**If I land on my face in front of
everybody in history —**

**Then land soft,
and get up
fixing. Cross,
Eli.**



**TOCK! THERE'S NO
FLOOR!**

**OOF — ...soft. You
made the ground soft.**

**Why this
ground?**

**First crossings are falls.
I have you.**

**I made your landing soft.
Now look where you are,
Eli.**

**Because this is where you will build.
Your village will stand here. And one
day — your guild.**



**When they see me on your wrist, they will know
— an Avatar, come from a different world. And
when your marks come, they will know how far
you've come.**

They had never seen a flame. Their nights were cold and full of sounds.

K-k-k—

Yeah. I know.
Cold.



**Counting like you said.
It's falling.**

**Then we do not waste it standing
still. It is cold, Eli. They are cold.
Your hands know what page
comes next.**



**Okay. Fire. Teach me
fire.**

Hands first, Eli. The knowing follows. You touched what the land gives you — so now I can teach. That pile is a KIT. Every piece has a job. Learn the pieces before you learn the fire.



The flat one is the fireboard. Soft, dry, dead wood. The straight stick is the spindle — it spins, and its end does the work. See the shallow hole in the board? The spindle sits in it. Now the most important cut of all —

A little wedge. From the edge... into the middle of the hole.

The notch. Hot dust falls through it and piles below. No notch, no coal. Slip the dry leaf under it — the coal must never touch your fingers.

And this one?

The bearing block. It sits on top of the spindle and lets your hand press DOWN — bare hands cannot press on a spinning stick. Pressure is half the fire, Eli. And the nest —

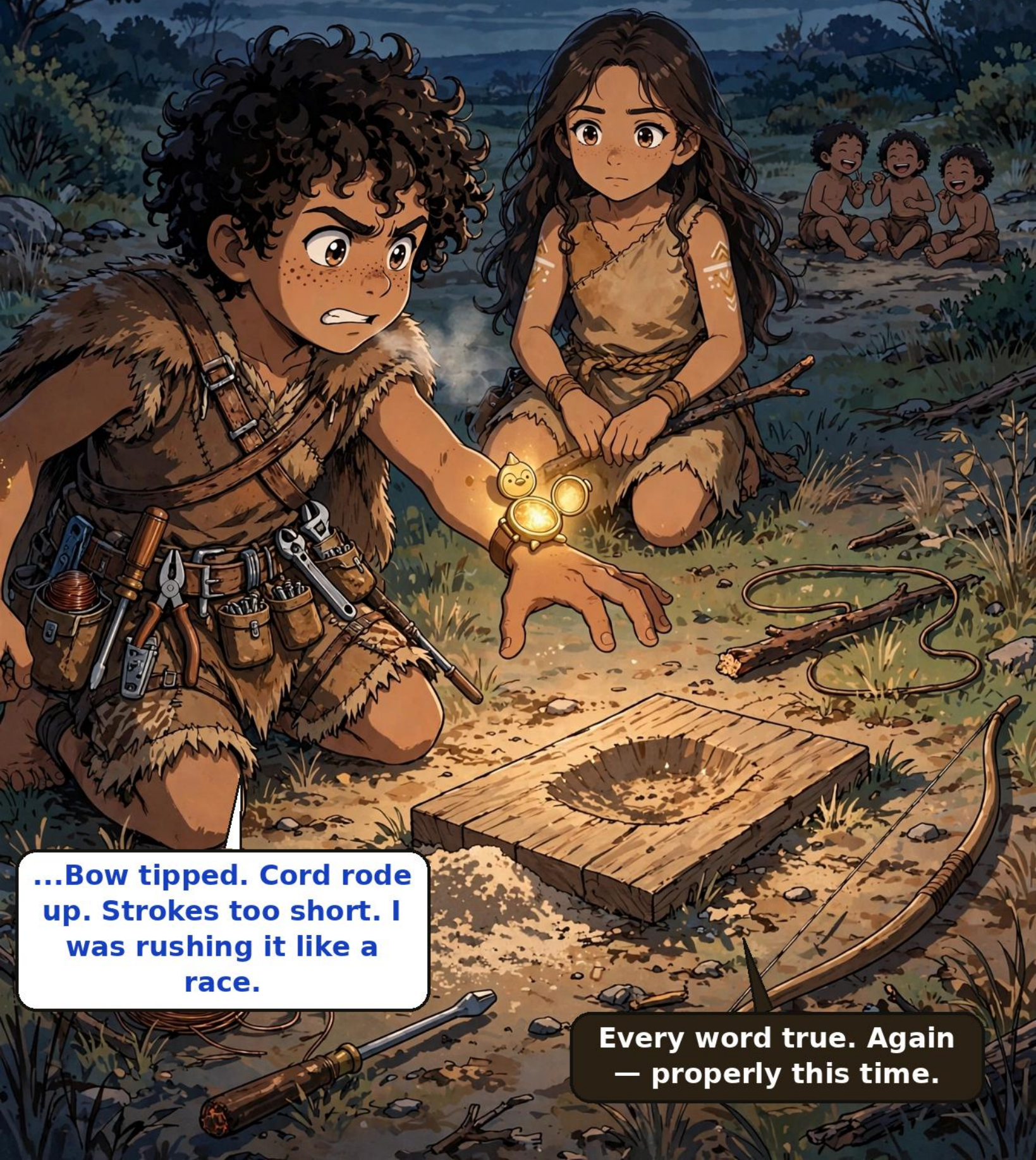


Made first. Kept dry. The fire's cradle.

You listen like a fixer. Now wrap the cord around the spindle — once — set it in the hole, block on top... and ask the wood your question.

Wait — that's — okay, hold it — It's not working!

Then your hands haven't asked the right question yet. Look at your dust, Fixer. Pale dust is cold dust. What did you do wrong? Count it yourself.



...Bow tipped. Cord rode up. Strokes too short. I was rushing it like a race.

Every word true. Again — properly this time.

There. Dark dust, Eli — dark dust is HOT dust. Now press. Down through the block, and give the bow its speed — NOW, at the end, not the beginning!

**Come on. Come on
come on come on —**



Now your breath, Eli. Long and soft and steady. A coal is not a candle — do not blast it. Breathe on it like it is sleeping.

Oh. Oh no. Don't you dare go out.



Seven grains. That's all the time we bought — and every one of them was worth it.



Kah?

...Eli.

Hands first. The knowing follows. Well fixed, kid. Your first rank, Fixer.

...I earned that.

Kah.

Yeah. Me.

THE FIRST FIRE

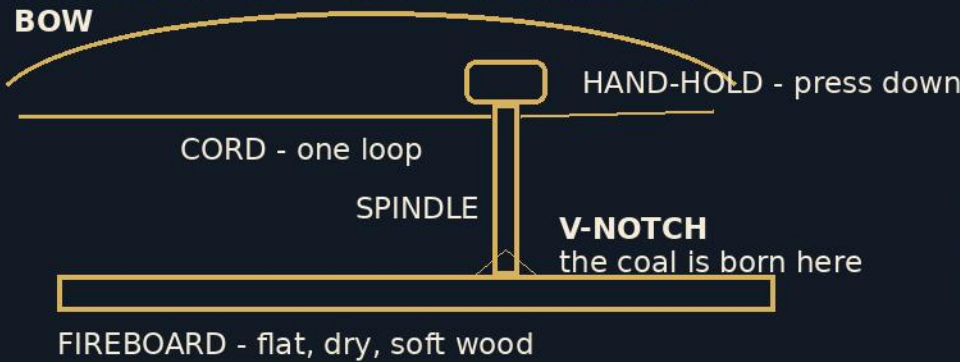
The real bow-drill way - the way the first people really made flame.

- 1 BUILD YOUR KIT**
Dry dead **SOFT** wood: willow, cedar, basswood. Same wood for spindle and board is best.
- 2 MAKE THE NEST**
Fluff dry grass and bark fiber into a bird's-nest bundle. Damp tinder **NEVER** lights.
- 3 CUT THE NOTCH**
Carve the hole, then a V-notch from the edge into it. The coal is born in the notch.
- 4 WRAP AND SET**
Cord loops **ONCE** around the spindle. Tip in the hole. Hand-hold on top, press down.
- 5 SAW LONG AND SMOOTH**
Long, **LEVEL** strokes, the whole bow. Go easy first. Brown dust piles into the notch.
- 6 PRESS AND SPEED - SMOKE!**
Dust turns **BLACK**? Press harder, bow faster! Black dust + smoke = a coal is waking.
- 7 CARRY THE COAL**
Slide the glowing coal onto a dry leaf, then tip it into the heart of the nest.
- 8 BLOW SOFT AND STEADY**
Long, gentle breaths - never blast it. Smoke... glow... **FLAME!** Feed tiny sticks first.



Eli works the drill. Aya holds the board steady - just like page 23.

TOCK'S BLUEPRINT - THE BOW-DRILL KIT



TINDER NEST - dry grass + bark fiber, fluffed loose. **KINDLING** - tiny dry sticks, ready nearby.

"Hands first. The knowing follows. This is how the first fire was really made." - **TOCK**

TOCK'S RULE: real fire is only ever made with a grown-up beside you.

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A NOTE FOR PARENTS

This comic teaches real first things — fire, the wheel, the boat, the house — the true way they were first made, step by step. Every build inside is a build to try together: parent and kid, hands first. Tock's rule stands on every page — real builds are only ever made with a grown-up beside you.

— Tock

INSIDE THIS BOOK

Issue #1 — "The Pawn Shop Penguin"

Eli earns the FIRST FIRE — and his first rank.

Plus the TOCK TEACHES page: the real bow-drill, step by step.

BY MIGUEL MEDINA