

## Story Title: 10:19

**Trigger Warning:** This story contains themes of death, grief and mild coarse language.

### Present, Sunday 23:00

*If you could save someone's life - would you?*

When did it become up to me?

Did she deserve to live?

Do I?

Which life held more value?

Did more people need her?

Do more *need me*?

The gun fired.

And my choice - it can't change now.

It can't change ever.

Because time stops for no man.

### Sunday, 11:00

Rivulets of thick, red blood drip down my shirt. Sitting in the back of an ambulance, and I'm wrapped in one of those "*emergency accident blankets*". I peer around - but no one is looking. Perfect. I grab the damned blanket, press it against my bleeding side, and half limp - *half walk with a severe wound* - away.

### 10:30

I hear the sirens. Ambulance. And police? They'll be here soon. *Good*. Tears prick through the numbness - through the pain. *Just focus on breathing*. I'm slumped against the marble wall, an ache slipping where my fingers try to staunch the flow of blood. It could've been worse. It *should've* been worse. I should've - pain splits my heart as I struggle to suck air into my lungs. Panic. Guilt. Grief. I can't think. *Breathe. Just focus on breathing*.

### 10:25

The wound isn't as bad as I first thought. With a few *colourful* words, I scare the onlookers away. I press my ruined coat against my side. All the adrenaline and energy that pushed me to fight is gone. And now *he's* escaped. Guilt slips past the defences I *so carefully* keep in place. *I could've saved her. I could've stepped in front*. I drag myself against the marble wall of the once-pristine bank. I'm not even brave enough to look at her.

### 10:23

No one is even focusing on him. No one is honouring her by going after him. I can't. I tried. And I *failed*. I see him glance at the revolving glass doors. *No. Damn it. Damn him.* Because he gets what he wants. He slips through. He *escapes*.

**10:21**

My first punch lands, to my grim delight. But he turns, wielding the gun. *Run. She'd want you to live.* I want to. *So badly. No. Stay. Honour her. Don't be a coward twice.* I land a second blow, before the gun cocks again. I kick him in the shin. *Hard.* He swears but doesn't go down. Instead, his finger flicks on the trigger. I try to dodge. But burning, *burning* fire rips my side. This one might not be fatal. But it *hurts*. Like *hell*. I clutch my side - the adrenaline that coursed through my veins now trying to keep me from bleeding out as I fall to the ground.

**10:20**

I see her chest fall still. No matter how badly I want to press my fingers against the wound- *I could stop the flow of blood. She could live* - It's too late. I *need* to go back in time. I *need* to make the choice again. I *need* - I see the man who shot her trying to slip away. *Like hell that's happening.* I run forward. I want this to *be painful*. Like the aching part of me that I can't live with yet. The guilt and grief I can't even acknowledge yet.

**10:19**

She stands there, so vulnerable and defenseless that it *hurts*. What is she doing? We were only supposed to be here for five minutes. Just paying a quick deposit.

Damn it. Why won't she lie down?

*"Do as he says,"* I hiss at her.

He has a *gun*. You don't irritate a man *with a gun*.

Because that gun cocks.

Milliseconds. Less. I can step in front. I should step in front. *Why won't I step in front?*

I'm a damned *coward*. I know what will happen before the shot rings out.

My sister collapses. Red spreads across her top like ink that refuses to dry. It's her favourite colour. Red, like the roses she used to cut for mother. Red, like her first prom dress. Red like, *like* -

Like pain.

Like anger.

Like the revenge I will get.

For *me*. Because I stood still and did nothing. And for *her*, because she deserves a brother who isn't afraid. Who isn't scared. Who should've saved her.

**Present, Sunday 23:01**

No, I can't go back in time. Because time doesn't stop for my sister. Time doesn't stop for *me*.