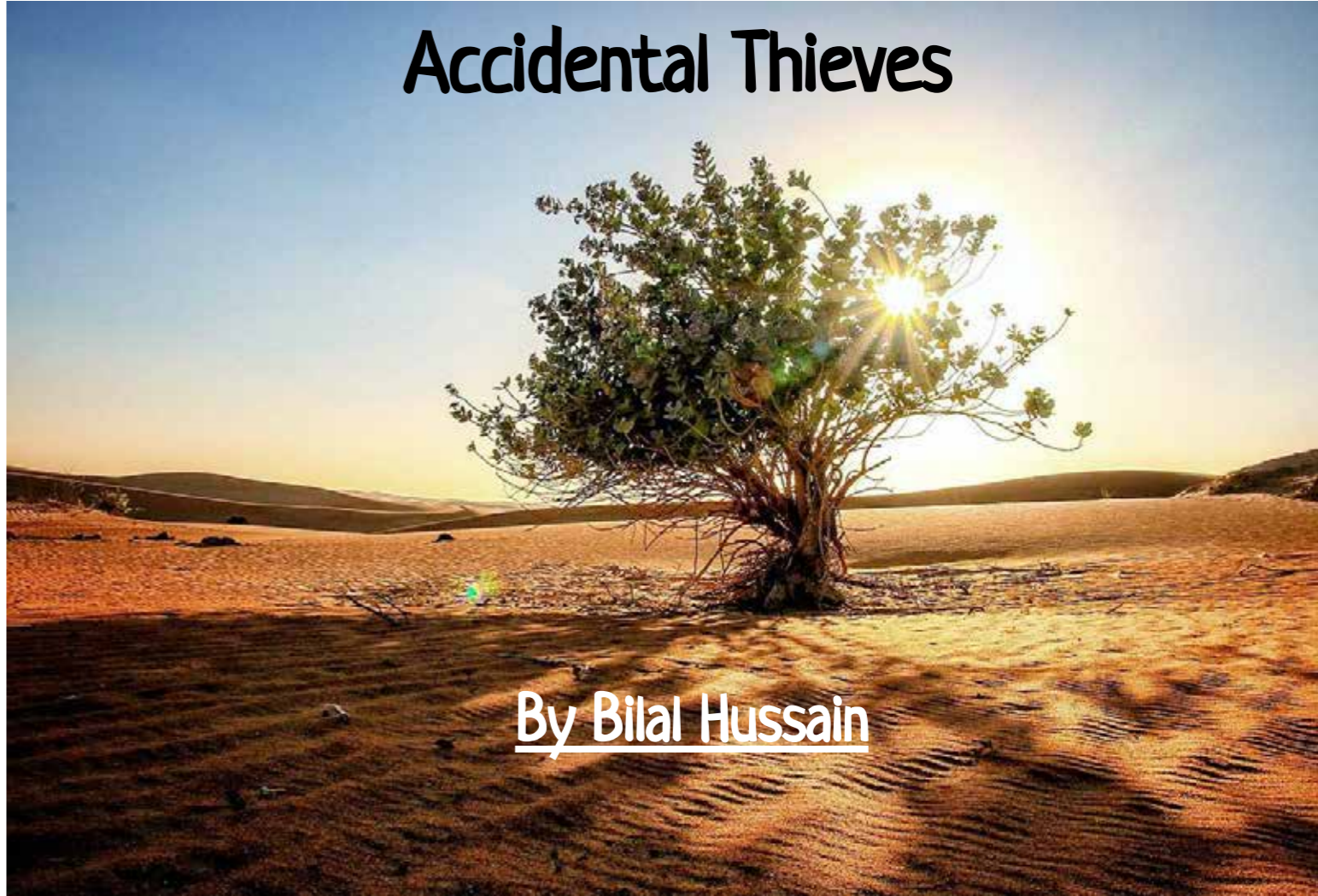


Accidental Thieves

By Bilal Hussain



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Written & illustrated by

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Aged 9

Chapter 1

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Have you ever argued with your friends so much you wonder why you are still friends with them?

Well once there was a group of friends who felt just like that. They were all very different.

That group of friends included me. The other four are Josh, Max, Sarah and Zainab.

I watched as all four whispered angrily to each other. Josh looked defensive and Zainab's face was red with anger. Max was shaking his head whilst Sarah sat staring at her coat pocket, terrified. I looked back

through the bus window expecting multiple police cars following with their sirens blazing. Nothing.

Not even one police car in sight. I closed my eyes and prayed that nobody found out what we had done.

I sat, trembling as I remembered what happened.

Chapter 2



We had gone to the museum to quickly get information for our ancient Egyptian project for school. Then, suddenly, the

power was cut off and the lights turned off. We stood next to a statue of "Heka", an ancient Egyptian god. We stood in the dark, then all of a sudden, the statue lit up and the glass cabinet flung open.

In the statue's hands, there were coins. "Quick! Grab one and run!" Josh shouted as he grabbed one of the coins and dashed into the darkness. I watched in horror as one by one, all my friends grabbed one each. In a panic, I took one too, and put it

in my pocket. I ran blindly in the direction my friends had gone, and kept walking into things until I felt a hand grab my arm.

My heart sank. I had been caught.

I was pulled along, and as we exited the museum, I looked up. It was my friend Zainab! I had never felt so relieved in my life.

I stopped thinking about it, and noticed we were almost home. Then, the bus stopped.

We got off and the cold crisp air stung my cheeks and numbed my nose. The crunchy, orange leaves were scattered all over the pavement.

We trudged on in silence towards home, giving each other angry looks.

As we entered through the front door, I was relieved that there was nobody home. We sat around the dining table and slowly, one by one, placed the coins on the table.

We looked at each other, waiting for someone to speak.

Then finally, I said, "I'll get my laptop". I ran up the stairs and ran into my room, grabbed my laptop and ran back down. We had no time to lose. I handed my laptop to Sarah.

Chapter 3



"Let's find out what these coins are," I said.

Max couldn't hold in his anger any longer and shouted out, "Josh! What were you thinking? What did you make us do?"

Josh looked up sheepishly and said, " It's not my fault! I just took a coin! You didn't need to listen to me! Stop blaming me! I wish I could stay away from you guys for a few days and then you would appreciate me!"

Nobody noticed one of the coins start to glow on the table...

Also, nobody noticed a coin go missing as Josh grabbed his bag and stormed out the front door. Slowly, everyone else got up and left too.

As I gathered the coins, one looked brighter in colour and felt warm like it had just come out of the oven. I had to find a safe place to put them. That's when I noticed... "Hang on," I said to myself "Didn't we have five coins? Why are there only four now?"

I heard the front door open, and quickly dashed up the stairs, clutching the coins in my hands.



Chapter 4



The next morning I gulped down my glass of orange juice as I waited anxiously for my mum to leave for work.

The doorbell rang and I felt my heart leap into my throat.

It's the police isn't it?

They know I have the coins and they are here to arrest me.

I sat like a statue, unable to move, as my mum walked out of the kitchen and towards the front door.

My heart was pounding so hard I felt it drumming in my ears.

I closed my eyes.

"Sam, are you listening? I'm off to work but Sarah is here to work on your school project. Please don't make a mess!" Mum said as she left.

Sarah!!

I opened my eyes and nearly tumbled over with relief.

"Sam, where are the coins? We have to find a way to return them. I've messaged

everyone to come quickly so we can decide what to do." Sarah said as she perched on the stool next to me.

"Sarah, did you take a coin with you last night? There were only four coins on the table after everyone left last night." I asked.

"No I didn't but maybe one of the others did." Sarah sounded perplexed.

But when Max and Zainab arrived they didn't have the coins either. There was no

sign of Josh though and Max was getting agitated. " This is ridiculous! How can he just keep ignoring our calls when he was the one who got us into this mess?"

Anxiously, Zainab looked up from the laptop that she was researching on. "I can't find anything! Without the name of the statue there's no way of getting any information."

"Sssshhh, no one can know we stole those coins!" Max said in a loud whisper, looking

around him like we were in a bustling street where many people could hear us.

“They probably have CCTV footage of us!” realised Sarah, her face draining of colour.

We all looked at each other, dashed into the living room and switched the tv on, expecting our faces to be all over the news channels.

“ I hope the CCTV wasn’t working and they have no footage,” wished Sarah.

We flicked through the news channels, not one of us noticing the coin glowing again on the sofa next to us.

We stared at the screen in shock. The museum manager had become seriously ill and was in a precarious condition in hospital after a power cut at the museum yesterday. Ancient artifacts had gone missing and there were no cctv images due to a fault in the system.

What!!

“Wow Sarah!! I guess your wish came true!” I said in shock.

Chapter 5



“Breaking news! Many more staff from the British museum have become seriously ill with a mysterious illness. Doctors are saying they are finding it difficult to treat

these patients as they have never seen an illness like this before. It seems to be an ancient illness that has returned." the news reader read in a solemn voice.

As we heard this, we became worried about Josh. Maybe that's why he is not answering his phone!

"Let's go to his house!" Sarah said, getting up and going to get her coat.

"Are you sure?" I said, "What if we get ill?"

Sarah rolled her eyes at me and walked out the door. We all followed her.

As we were walking down the main road, We saw a man on a bike and he threw a banana peel right at Zainab and laughed as he went past. Zainab's face looked like a red balloon waiting to pop.

"I hope you crash into a car!" she shouted after him.

“OWCH! Oh wow, this coin is hot! It's burning my hand!” exclaimed Max.

We all looked down at once and it was glowing.

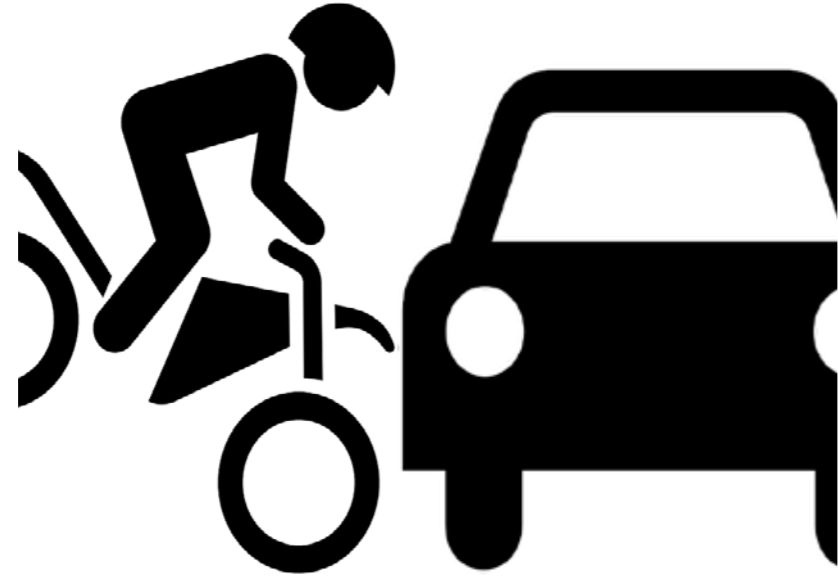
Before we could say anything, we heard a loud SCREECH and a **CRASH!**

We ran around the corner and saw the banana peel man laying sprawled on the floor with his bike on top of him in a tangled mess. A black car was speeding

down the road, which we watched as people crowded around the man.



Chapter 6



We walked the rest of the way to Josh's house in silence.

Zainab fought hard to control her tears as she blamed herself for making a bad wish.

What is happening? Why are our wishes coming true?

I remembered the glowing coin from before, and suddenly it came to me.

Is it the coins? Could they be magical?

We had no luck finding Josh. The house was empty. Then I remembered what Josh had said last night as he left.

"I wish I could stay away from you guys for a few days and then you would appreciate me!"

He had wished for it! Maybe the coin made it true! But I hadn't seen it glow...

Then, I decided to try it myself.

“Let's go back,” I told the others “I have such a great idea, it might explain why Josh is not at home!”

“Uhhh... Okay... I guess...” Zainab said, turning around.

We ran back home, and I explained my theory.

When I was finished, everyone looked at me as if I were crazy

“Don't be silly!,” said Max

“Well, let's see!” I said, taking the coins out and placing them on the table.

“If this works, we are in for an epic adventure!” Sarah chuckled.

I closed my eyes, and made my wish.



Chapter 7



“I wish we get teleported to the place where the coins and the statue are from and we find out all their secrets...”

I slowly opened my eyes and looked around. Nothing!

My friends doubled over laughing.

“Well we are off home now but we shall see you in the morning in the middle of the hot Egyptian desert. Then we will have lunch with an ancient princess.” Max laughed so hard he fell on the sofa.

Sarah and Zainab pulled him up and dragged him towards the door, both trying to control their giggles as they looked back at me.

I grabbed the coins and slowly walked up to my room, feeling deflated.

Chapter 8



I felt my cheeks burning and sweat run down my face.

My back felt scorched and was leaning against something hard and solid.

I coughed and felt like I had swallowed... sand?

I opened my eyes and felt blinded by the sun.

Where was I?

I quickly sat up and looked around.

I was leaning on a dying tree, and there was sand all over the floor.

All I could see was sand.

I stood up before my legs and back burnt to a crisp.

Lying on the ground were my three friends.

Ohhh!

The wish from last night!

I looked in my pocket and took out the coins.

As expected, one was glowing brightly and was burning a hole through my hand with its heat.

I quickly woke everyone up and showed it to them.

They all stood in shock, and Max looked like his eyes were going to pop out.

“Come on, we have to move! It's too hot!”

We stumbled and slipped across the sand, not sure what we were looking for.

We kept going for what felt like hours, our hearts thudding in panic.

What if we don't find anything? What will we do in this desert?

The same thought went through all our heads.

Just as we felt like we were ready to collapse and the sun felt like it was right above our heads, we saw something in the distance.

We hurried across the sloping dessert until we could see a wooden hut.

As we reached the hut, we saw a table laid with many glasses of water and lots of food.

Chapter 9



Although we were parched we were too scared to grab a glass of water.

I almost fainted with fear as someone walked out of the hut.

It was an old lady.

It was a very, very old lady

“Come my friends! I have prepared lunch for you! Don't make me wait any longer, I have already waited a very long time for you,” she muttered in a very wheezy, weak voice.

Encouraged by her smile and also the dryness of our throats, we cautiously walked towards the table. She gestured towards the chairs, beckoning us to take a seat.

We sat.

Max grabbed a glass of water and gulped it down, his eyes transfixed on the lady all dressed in black. Seeing that he was ok gave the rest of us courage to grab glasses of water and drink with relief.

"Please help yourselves to some food, and tell me do you bring with you Heka's coins? I feel their presence, it brings me strength!" Her smile turned to a frown. "But you don't bring Heka with you? Why?"

"Heka? Who is Heka and how do you know about the coins? Sarah asked, surprised.

"Heka is the ancient Egyptian God of Medicine, he holds the 5 coins of different powers."

We sat staring at the wrinkled old lady as she described the statue we had seen in the museum and the coins which we had stolen.

She told us about the powers of the God of Medicine and the coins; how the statue and the coins had been stolen from the princess

and how, without the blessings of the ancient God, the thriving town in the centre of the desert and its Royal family had withered and died, leaving only the wooden rotten hut and one tree in the centre of the desert.

"Please bring Heka and all his coins back to his land. This land has suffered enough without Heka. I sensed a change a couple of days ago and I knew it was time. Time for Heka to return. But you have come without him. You must go back and bring him. You really must." she beseeched.

We explained how we had accidentally stolen the coins from the museum and everything that had happened since.

"We are not thieves I promise. We don't know what happened to us that day and why we stole those coins. It was like we were in a trance and couldn't control our actions." Zainab explained.

"You are not thieves and you must not blame yourselves. Heka wants to return to his land and he has chosen you for the mission. He made you take the coins. Everything that has happened since is the power of the coins. You must go back and use the power to find your friend and bring Heka and the coins back to me.

Now that you know how to use the coins to help you, it won't be hard. Go back to the

tree and lay under its blessed shade. You will return to your land in no time.

I will wait for you again."

She smiled sadly, deepening the lines etched across her face.



Chapter 10



The journey back to the tree was much easier and quicker. We sat down under the shade and clutched a coin each.

We closed our eyes and wished to be back home.

The coins felt warmer in our hands and as we slowly opened our eyes, we were back in my living room.

We sat late into the night making plans and wished for Josh to be back in the morning.

That night we headed to our beds, exhausted and still in shock.

First thing in the morning we headed to Josh's house, knowing that the coins would have worked their magic and we would finally see our friend again.

As we walked up the drive, the door flung open and Josh came running out towards us.

“Guys, I'm so glad to see you. I'm sorry I haven't been in contact. My grandad had a stroke and we had to leave in a rush. I forgot

my phone at home and I couldn't remember any of your numbers to call you from another phone. Are you still angry with me?" Josh panted breathlessly.

"It's a bit more complicated than that, Josh. No we are not angry with you but there is a lot we have to tell you..." I said nervously.

Late at night we all grasped a coin each in trembling hands, closed our eyes and wished to be transported to the museum near Heka without being caught.

We opened our eyes and saw Heka glowing in the dark. The glass cabinet door clicked open.

We carefully lifted the ancient statue out of the cabinet and gently placed each of the five coins back into Hekas open palms.

Closing our eyes we wished to be back under the large old tree in the middle of the Egyptian desert.

And here we were. The sun burning our skin again and sand slipping under our feet.

We had done it.

We hurried towards the hut as fast as we could over the desert dunes.

As the hut came into view we could see the old lady standing outside, waiting.

She smiled as we handed her the statue.

“Thank you my friends. You have returned a very valuable thing to an old lady. The day I lost Heka and his coins was the worst day of my life. I lost everything and everyone I loved soon after. I had lost the blessings of Heka and have been suffering since. I will forever be grateful and remember you in my prayers. You must head back to your land now before it's too late.”

She said the last part with a worried frown on her face.

Realising that we were running out of time we turned to leave.

“Wait, what is your name?” Zainab asked, turning back to the old lady.

“Quadria,” the old lady smiled, clutching the statue of Heka in her hands, as it gleamed in the bright sun.

I pulled Zainab as I started running towards the tree.

As the others ran ahead, I stopped and looked back.

Standing in the same spot as the wrinkled old lady, was a young, beautiful girl. Dressed in a flowing, golden gown, with a sparkly crown on her head. As her long golden hair blew in the wind she stood clutching the statue of Heka in both her hands.

I rubbed my eyes and looked again. She smiled and I raised my hand to wave

goodbye, realising that Heka had started working his magic.

As we ran back towards the tree, the air felt cooler, and the sun not so hot. We heard birds chirping and the distant sound of people talking and laughing.

I smiled as we all closed our eyes and ran faster.

I felt the soft slippery sand turn to solid ground under my feet and opened my eyes.

We were running on the pavement outside my house.

We headed straight for the kitchen and I grabbed some lemonade for us all from the fridge.

We could hear the tv in the living room.

"The ancient Egyptian statue was stolen from the museum last night. Again, the cctv system failed and there were no signs of a break in. The hotel manager who has recovered from a mysterious illness along with many other members of staff, said they will keep investigating the mystery of the missing statue...."

"Sam is that you? Where have you been? Your room is a mess. Please go up and clean it now!!" shouted mum.

We looked at each other and smiled, knowing that the last wish we had made before we returned the magical coins was that we all remain best friends forever.

We hope that you and your family and friends enjoy the book that you have created.

This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by Clare Ford, Founder of Switched ON! the global online academy which is re-defining education beyond academic success.

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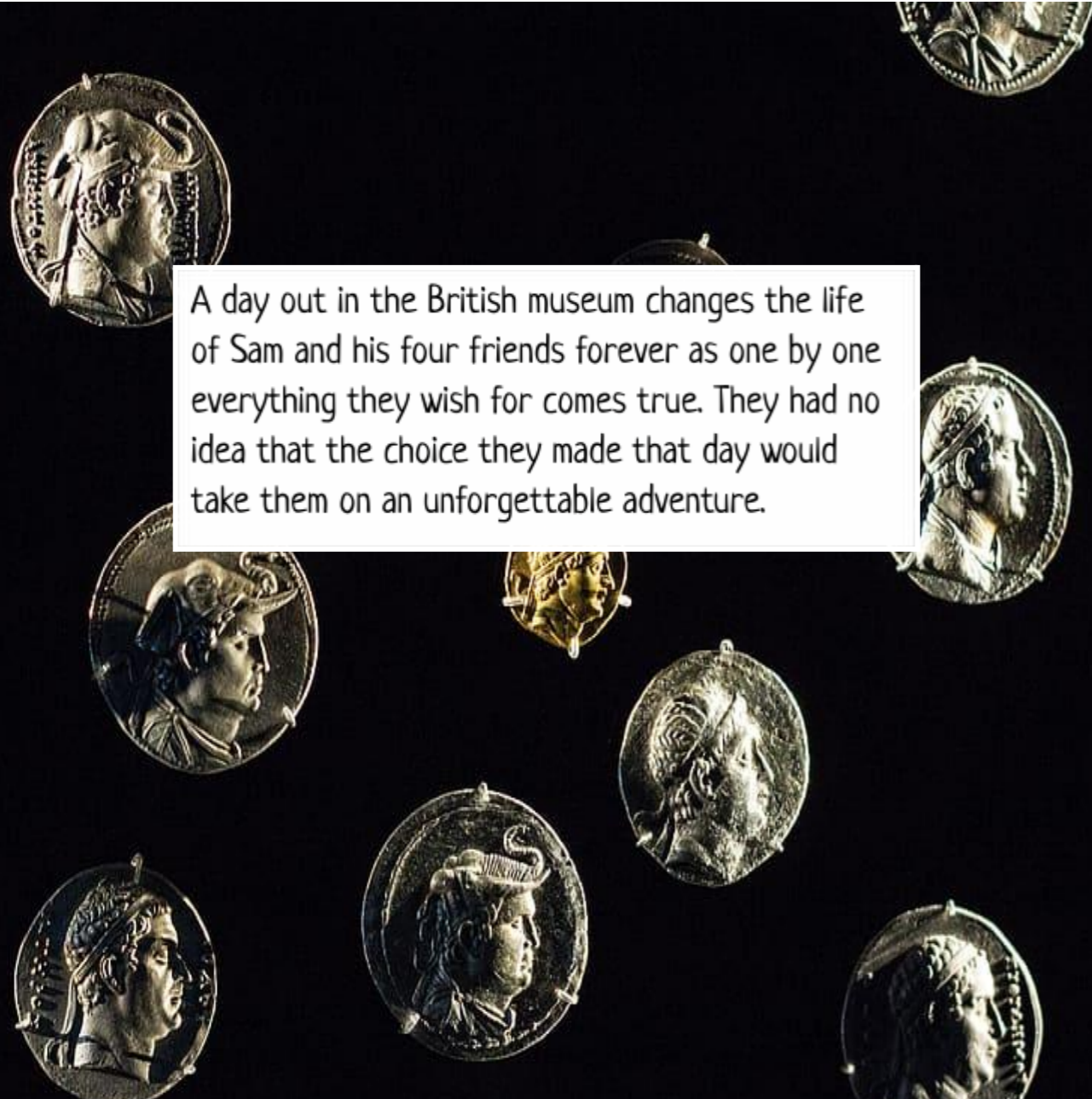
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A day out in the British museum changes the life of Sam and his four friends forever as one by one everything they wish for comes true. They had no idea that the choice they made that day would take them on an unforgettable adventure.

