



The Watch

Springs and cogs catapulted across the workshop bench. Many of them fell between the cracks and were lost forever. Some landed on the rough wooden surface and were immediately snatched up by a pair of rough hands.

"Blast it," Ayah said, scurrying around on the floor to collect any pieces she could see. "Lord Halcyon will have my neck for this."

Somewhere in the dark corners of the workshop, a bird squawked in conversation.

"He won't understand," Ayah said. Her voice was strained through gritted teeth; she was focused on trying to prise a tiny bolt from between two floorboards. "His exact words were: 'Ayah, this watch has a very important purpose. Don't mess it up and, whatever you do, don't lose any of the pieces again.'"

Another squawk. This time the bird seemed to agree with the girl. Ayah gave up on the tiny piece of metal and walked over to fetch the bird. She knew it didn't like being in the dark, but having a crow on display put the customers off, Lord Halcyon had said. Ayah was just grateful that her new boss had let her bring the bird with her. She couldn't imagine getting rid of him now. Not after all they'd been through.

Ayah had built a rugged stand for her pet from a few pieces of wood and some nails. It wouldn't win any prizes for beauty, but it did the job. She'd hung a mirror next to it to give the bird something to look at. She caught her own reflection in it now. She was surprised by how much she'd changed in the two months since she'd been working here.

Gone was her long, blond hair. She'd chopped it to her ears and dyed it black as soon as she could. It was the only way to keep the city guards from spotting her when she'd fled. Her hands were rough and covered in small cuts from the sharp tools. They were a long way from the smooth, manicured hands she'd been so proud of back at the palace. All the changes were worth it, though. Nothing would get her to go back there now. There was nothing left to go back to.

And now, she might have to run away from her new life. In her heart, Ayah knew that her mishaps and mistakes were driving Lord Halcyon to distraction. He hadn't said anything yet, other than his stern warning when he'd left the workshop. She offered her shoulder to the crow who hopped on and squawked in her ear.

"No, he won't just have the pieces lying around," Ayah answered. "These aren't ordinary cogs and wheels. There is something magical about this watch. Or there was."

Suddenly, she had an idea. There was a magnet in the back room that Lord Halcyon had brought home from his travels, one day. It wasn't allowed in the workshop because it did funny things to the clockworks, he'd said. Ayah grabbed it and ran it across the cracks in the floorboard.

With a series of metallic pings, the nuts and bolts stuck to the side. Without warning, they started to glow; a pulsing, blue halo formed around each piece. Ayah backed away quickly. Something magical was happening.



1

a) Where did Ayah live before moving in with Lord Halcyon?

1 mark

b) How did she feel about leaving? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

2 marks

2

Find the phrase: 'It wouldn't win any prizes for beauty'.

Which word would best describe the bird stand?

Tick **one**.

Beautiful

☐

Old

☐

Unattractive

☐

Ornate

☐

1 marks

3

What colour was Ayah's hair before she fled?

1 mark



4

Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Ayah had carefully taken the watch apart.		
Lord Halcyon had a pet bird.		
Ayah was worried about what Lord Halcyon might say when he returned.		
Ayah knew what was special about the watch.		

2 marks

5

What impression do you get of Ayah?

Give **two** impressions, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

1. _____

2. _____

3 marks

SATs Practice - Answers

1. a) The palace
b) She was happy to leave. (1 mark) The text says “All the changes were worth it, though. Nothing would get her to go back there now.” (1 mark)
2. Unattractive
3. Blond
4. **Give 1 mark for 2 correct answers, 2 marks for 3 or more.**
False
False
True
False
5. Give 1 mark for 2 correct impressions, and 1 mark for each piece of acceptable evidence.
 - **Ayah is clumsy (or alternative synonym)**
 - This isn't the first time she's broken a watch
 - Lord Halcyon made it clear to her not to lose the bits again
 - **Ayah wants to please Lord Halcyon**
 - She is worried about what he might say
 - She knows her mistakes are upsetting him