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# The Time Thief's Daughter

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## Introduction

Julianne Everett never understood her father. He was an enigma, a man whose silences spoke louder than his rare words, whose eyes seemed to carry the secrets of centuries. Growing up, she learned not to ask questions—especially not about the intricately carved pocket watch he always wore close to his heart, nor about his unexpected disappearances that lasted days, sometimes weeks, on end. The answers, she suspected, lurked in shadows she was never meant to explore.

It was only after his death, marred by its own shroud of mystery, that the veil began to lift. Among the modest remnants of his estate, Julianne unearthed that very same watch—its golden gears still ticking, impossibly, in the absence of any visible power source. Along with it were letters she'd never seen, some dated decades before she was born, and a single cryptic note in her father's unmistakable hand: "Guard the timeline, whatever the cost."

Thrown into confusion and grief, Julianne tried to move forward, dismissing her suspicions as the workings of a restless mind. Yet the watch would not let her forget; it called to her in dreams, pulsed with a quiet warmth in the palm of her hand, and, with a turn of its crown, revealed an impossible truth—time was not a river, but a vast ocean, and she had been handed its ship's wheel.

As the days bled into troubled nights, potential began to eclipse sorrow. Piece by piece, Julianne unraveled the puzzle of her inheritance, even as strange phenomena began to encroach upon her world: whispers of voices not her own, glimpses of landscapes both ancient and unfamiliar, and presences that watched from the corners of mirrors. Each discovery led her further from the ordinary, deeper into a lineage she never knew she belonged to—a lineage not simply of blood, but of guardianship.

Soon, she would learn the greater truth: her father was no ordinary man, but a sentinel of history itself, part of an ancient brotherhood tasked with keeping the natural order. Now, the watch passed to her—a key not only to the past, but to dangers and wonders she could scarcely imagine. With every tick of the mechanism, Julianne would be forced to weigh the immense responsibility now resting on her shoulders.

This is the story of Julianne Everett—the Time Thief's daughter—who, in learning the cost of rewriting history, discovers that some legacies transcend not only generations, but eras themselves. Her journey would test not only her courage, but the very limits of fate, love, and the fabric of reality.

## CHAPTER ONE: The Watchmaker's Legacy

Julianne's grief was a persistent, dull ache, a constant companion since the solicitor's call three weeks prior. Her father, Alistair Everett, had passed away quietly in his sleep, or so the official report stated. There were no witnesses, no lingering illness, just a sudden, inexplicable departure from a world he had always seemed to navigate with a profound, almost detached, awareness. He'd been seventy-two, a reclusive watchmaker whose storefront on a quiet London side street had long since been converted into a living space, the intricate gears and springs of timepieces replaced by the dust motes dancing in the afternoon sun.

Her relationship with Alistair had always been a delicate, unspoken truce. He was a man of routines, of silence, of distant contemplation. Julianne, on the other hand, was all vibrant chaos, a graphic designer by trade, accustomed to the fast-paced demands of her craft and the lively hum of city life. They were two planets orbiting entirely different suns, occasionally crossing paths but rarely truly aligning. Still, he was her father, and his absence left a gaping hole she hadn't anticipated.

The solicitor, a balding man named Mr. Finch with a perpetually worried expression, had called her for the reading of the will. It was a brief affair, as Alistair's earthly possessions amounted to little more than the decaying Georgian townhouse and its contents. Most peculiar, however, was the specified inheritance: "To my daughter, Julianne Everett, I bequeath my most treasured possession: the Chronos Amulet. She will know its true value when the time is right."

Julianne had frowned, remembering the solicitor's hesitant, almost apologetic tone. "The Chronos Amulet?" she'd asked, a slight edge to her voice. "My father never mentioned an amulet. He only ever wore that old pocket watch." Mr. Finch had merely offered a sympathetic shrug, muttering something about the eccentricities of the deceased. She'd left the office feeling more perplexed than anything else, the heavy weight of her father's passing momentarily eclipsed by this strange, unexpected detail.

Back at the townhouse, which now felt eerily silent without the occasional creak of her father's floorboards or the faint ticking of unseen mechanisms, Julianne began the somber task of sifting through his life. His study, a room usually locked, yielded few personal effects. Books on ancient history, forgotten languages, and theoretical physics lined the shelves, their spines cracked and pages yellowed. A workbench, still littered with minuscule tools and disassembled clockwork, stood beneath a tall window overlooking a neglected garden.

She found no amulet. Only the familiar, ornate pocket watch, resting on a velvet cushion inside a locked wooden box on his desk. It wasn't just any watch; it was the one he'd worn for as long as she could remember, a circular piece of polished brass, intricately engraved with constellations and celestial symbols. Its surface shimmered with an almost ethereal quality, as if it absorbed and reflected light in equal measure. A delicate chain, woven from what looked like fine silver, was attached to a tiny loop.

Julianne picked it up, feeling its surprising heft. The brass was cool beneath her fingers, then warmed almost imperceptibly, as if responding to her touch. She traced the delicate engravings, her thumb brushing over a tiny, almost invisible inscription along the rim: *Tempus Fugit*. Time Flees. A familiar Latin phrase, yet here, etched into her father's most prized possession, it felt imbued with a deeper, more personal meaning.

She remembered, vaguely, a childhood memory of her father allowing her to hold it, just once. She must have been no older than five or six. He had held her small hand in his, guiding her finger to the smooth, almost featureless face, which seemed to lack conventional numbers or hands. He had told her, in his usual hushed tone, that it held "the secrets of the universe." At the time, she'd dismissed it as a whimsical pronouncement, a fleeting moment of paternal playfulness from a man not given to such displays. Now, the memory felt less like a quaint anecdote and more like a premonition.

The watch had no discernible buttons, no obvious winding mechanism. Yet, she could hear it, a faint, rhythmic tick-tock, pulsing with an impossibly steady beat. It was a sound that seemed to emanate not just from within the watch, but from somewhere deeper, resonating in the quiet of the study, in the very air around her. It was hypnotic, drawing her attention with an insistent, almost magnetic pull.

As she turned the watch over in her hand, her thumb brushed against a small, almost hidden nub on the side, disguised among the intricate engravings. It was the winding crown, though it didn't look like any she had ever seen. Tentatively, she turned it. There was a soft click, barely audible, and then a faint hum, like the vibration of a tuning fork. The watch face, previously smooth and blank, began to shimmer.

Tiny, golden lines of light flared across its surface, coalescing into what looked like an ethereal map of the night sky, complete with swirling nebulae and distant, glowing galaxies. Julianne gasped, her breath catching in her throat. This was no ordinary antique. This was... impossible. The intricate patterns pulsed with an internal light, casting dancing shadows on the walls of the dusty study.

She tried to turn the crown again, but it was locked. The golden constellations pulsed brighter, then dimmed, and then, with a soft, almost imperceptible *pop*, the air around

her seemed to warp, shimmering like heat haze over asphalt. The smell of old paper and dust vanished, replaced by a strange, damp earthiness, mingled with something metallic and smoky.

Julianne blinked, shaking her head, convinced her grief was finally unraveling her mind. The room, however, refused to cooperate with her rational explanations. The familiar oak shelves and her father's worn armchair dissolved, replaced by towering, rough-hewn timbers. The window, which had overlooked the neglected garden, now showed a swirling, impenetrable fog. A chill wind, biting and damp, swept through the space, carrying with it the distant clang of metal on metal, and the unmistakable, jarring bray of a donkey.

Her heart hammered against her ribs, a frantic drumbeat against the sudden, terrifying reality that had enveloped her. She looked down at the watch, still clutched in her hand, its golden face now radiating a steady, soft glow. It felt warm, almost alive. She squeezed her eyes shut, then opened them again, half-expecting to find herself back in the quiet, familiar study. But the timbers remained, looming above her. The scent of damp earth persisted.

A sudden, sharp clang, much closer this time, made her jump. She realized she wasn't in her father's study anymore. She was in a small, cramped shed, filled with the scent of coal smoke and the lingering tang of horses. Through a narrow, grimy window, she could just make out the silhouettes of cobbled streets and ancient, uneven buildings shrouded in a thick, yellowish fog. The sounds of a bustling, unfamiliar city drifted in—hooves on cobblestones, a vendor's cry, the murmur of a crowd speaking in a dialect she couldn't quite place.

Julianne pressed herself against the rough wooden wall, her mind reeling. This wasn't a dream. This wasn't a hallucination. The watch, still glowing softly, felt heavy and incredibly real in her palm. Her father hadn't left her a mere timepiece; he had left her a portal. A terrible, wonderful, utterly baffling portal. The cryptic note from his will echoed in her mind: "Guard the timeline, whatever the cost." And the phrase on the watch: *Tempus Fugit*. Time Flees.

But where had it fled to? And, more importantly, how in the world was she supposed to get back? A new sound, closer and more urgent, cut through the din of the street: the heavy tread of approaching footsteps, accompanied by a low, guttural growl. Julianne's breath hitched. She wasn't alone. And whatever was coming did not sound friendly. The watch pulsed once more, a quiet, insistent thrum, as if urging her to understand the profound, terrifying journey she had just begun.

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