

FALSE REWIND

SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

"You need to promise me that you won't mention this to anyone," Ray's eyes twitched about, scanning the unusually clean white ceiling in the damp, old room.

"Your secret is safe within these walls," the watchmaker replied after a brief pause. He was wearing a blue vest over a white shirt that looked like it had seen the corner of a stuffed closet too many times. His soothing baritone voice reassured Ray who sat on the maroon leather sofa. His face was barely discernible in the shadows. A light shaft beamed through the only window near the ceiling, reflecting off his silver monocle and on to Ray's eyes.

As Ray tried to readjust his head to avoid the shimmer, the smell of old books and aged wood in the room reminded him of his grandfather's study where he found the curious artefact that would change his life forever. Ray felt his neck rubbing against the leather which felt like plastic. He brushed the thought away as he had a more pressing matter at hand.

He lifted up his left hand and curled his fingers into a fist. He shook his wrist to

draw attention to his watch. It didn't have a brand name. A dome-shaped glass covered the blue dial encased in a gold frame. There was a circular cut out at the six o'clock position for a golden tourbillon unit with a crimson gem in the middle.

"This... is no ordinary timepiece," Ray hesitated to get the words out as he was worried about what the watchmaker would think of him.

"What do you mean?" The watchmaker leaned forward to inspect the timepiece, bringing his auburn moustache into the light.

"It's easier if I just show you," said Ray as he got up from his sofa. He walked to the opposite end of the room up to the largest bookshelf, the leather sole of his half brogues scratched against the seemingly-smooth wooden floor. He started to pull the books one by one and threw them on the ground.

"Mr. Johnson, what is the meaning of this?" The watchmaker's voice bore an unusually calm tone.

"Wait. I can fix this," replied Ray as he reached for the crown of his watch. He

pulled it so that the crown clicked twice and he could turn the minute hand. As he turned the hand back by a minute, he looked at the watchmaker dead in the eyes.

Slowly, the watchmaker began saying what he did in reverse and the books flew back into the shelf one by one, exactly as they had been thrown. Even the dust settled back in the places where Ray's fingers had been.

"You're probably wondering how I got to this point of the room. I walked here and reversed the time using my watch. These particular books were on the ground just now," Ray said as he pointed out the books he had thrown.

"I see. Very interesting," the watchmaker did not seem amused as he straightened the collar of his shirt.

"You don't think this is strange? You think this is a joke?" Ray started to think that he had made a mistake.

"Of course not. You're not the first person to seek my counsel regarding these matters."

"You think this is a joke. I can't believe I just wasted my time," Ray's frustration

seemed to only grow as his voice became louder with each word.

"I need you to calm down. I can help you but you need to be patient. Please wait outside my office and I'll give you a detailed document which will help you control this... *power*," the watchmaker calmly replied.

"Alright, I'll wait," Ray sighed as he slowly walked out of the office room. Did the watchmaker really believe him? Or did he want Ray out of his sight as soon as possible. It was hard for him to keep his thoughts in order.

As Ray exited the room, the watchmaker looked at the floor near the bookshelf. The watchmaker could tell that Ray had thrown a good amount of books on the floor before he turned back time. He could sense the chrono-energy near the shelf.

"So, you're a descendant of the famous bloodline," he cracked a smile as he pulled up the shirt cuff on his left arm to reveal a watch exactly the same as Ray's but with a crimson red dial.

"It's been a while since I added a rewind watch to my collection."

