

## **The Clockmaker's Secret**

Elias Thorne was a man of gears, springs, and predictable rhythms. His shop, nestled in the crooked corner of a cobbled alleyway, smelled permanently of brass oil and old cedar. He didn't just fix clocks; he healed them, coaxing time back into rusted hearts with the patience of a saint.

One rainy Tuesday, a woman in a coat the color of storm clouds entered. She placed a pocket watch on the velvet counter. It wasn't gold or silver, but a heavy, tarnished iron.

"It doesn't tick," she whispered, her eyes darting to the door. "It hums."