

Chapter 1: The Edge of Tomorrow

Elias Voss lived in a small, cluttered apartment on the edge of the city, where the hum of traffic blended with the distant drone of industrial machinery. The walls were lined with shelves crammed with books on physics, engineering, and obscure scientific journals. Blueprints and circuit diagrams were pinned haphazardly across every surface, some curling at the edges from years of handling.

Each morning, Elias followed the same routine. He brewed strong black coffee, poured it into a chipped mug, and sat by the window overlooking the cracked pavement below. The city was waking up—people rushing to work, cars honking, the occasional bark of a street dog. Elias watched them all with a quiet detachment, his mind already racing ahead to the day's work.

His life was simple, almost austere. He didn't have much—no fancy gadgets or expensive clothes—but he had his machines, his theories, and a stubborn hope that what he was building would change everything.

Despite his solitary existence, Elias wasn't entirely alone. Mara, his closest friend since childhood, was a constant presence in his thoughts. She worked long hours at a nearby hospital, and their conversations were often limited to quick texts or brief phone calls. Still, her voice was a lifeline, a reminder of the world beyond his experiments.

Today was different. Today, Elias was on the brink of something he had dreamed about for years: a successful jump through time.

In the corner of the apartment, dominating the cramped space, stood the machine Elias had poured years of his life into building. It was a complex assembly of large copper coils, thick iron cores, and multiple permanent magnets mounted on rotating shafts. The magnets spun in opposite directions, their synchronized motion designed to generate a stable toroidal electromagnetic field—a doughnut-shaped bubble of energy that, in theory, could bend the fabric of spacetime.

Elias ran his fingers over the cool metal surface of one coil, feeling the faint vibrations transmitted through the frame. The machine was humming softly now, powered by a bank of capacitors and an array of custom-built inverters. It required immense precision: the rotation speeds had to be perfectly balanced, the magnetic fields aligned just so, or the entire experiment could fail—or worse.

He glanced at the control panel, where a digital readout displayed the current parameters: magnetic flux density, coil temperature, rotational velocity. All within acceptable limits.

The physics behind it was daunting. Conventional science didn't yet accept time travel as possible, but Elias believed that manipulating electromagnetic fields in this configuration could create localized distortions in spacetime—tiny loops

where cause and effect blurred, allowing movement forward along the timeline.

His calculations suggested that a jump of exactly 24 hours forward was achievable with the current setup. Enough time to glimpse the immediate future, gather critical information, and return to his present with knowledge of what was to come. He could not go back—only forward, and then return to the exact moment he left, as if nothing had happened for anyone but him.

But the risks were real. Temporal displacement could cause disorientation, physical strain, or worse—unintended paradoxes. Elias had prepared meticulously, running simulations and safety protocols. Still, the moment of truth was always the hardest.

He pulled on a lightweight suit designed to shield him from electromagnetic interference, its fibers woven with conductive threads. It was uncomfortable but necessary. The last thing he needed was a malfunction caused by static or stray currents.

Elias sat down at his cluttered desk and opened a worn notebook filled with calculations, sketches, and notes. He reviewed the sequence one last time: the exact moment to activate the machine, the duration of the jump, and the critical data he needed to observe.

His hands trembled slightly as he sipped lukewarm coffee.

The weight of the moment pressed down on him. This wasn't just an experiment anymore—it was a leap into the unknown.

A sudden ping from his phone startled him. A message from Mara.

“Hey, you still on for dinner tonight? I’ve got a long shift, but I could use the company.”

Elias smiled, fingers flying over the keyboard.

“Wouldn’t miss it. Got something important to show you.”

He hesitated, wondering how much to reveal. Mara was his anchor, but the secret of time travel was heavy. For now, he kept it simple.

“See you at seven.”

A second message from Mara:

“Be careful tonight. I worry about you.”

He replied:

“I’ll be fine. I have to do this.”

Taking a deep breath, Elias stepped into the chamber. The air felt charged, alive. He strapped himself in, heart pounding.

“Twenty-four hours ahead,” he whispered, “just enough to see... and to change.”

His finger hovered over the activation button.

Instantly, the world around him dissolved into a kaleidoscope of light and sound. The low hum of the machine swelled into a roaring crescendo, then fractured into shards of color that danced across his vision. The sensation was like falling and flying at the same time—disorienting, exhilarating, terrifying.

His body tingled as the electromagnetic field wrapped around him, bending time itself. The air shimmered, rippling like heat waves on a summer road. Seconds stretched and compressed, folding over one another in impossible ways.

Then, abruptly, silence.

The hum faded. The colors vanished. The world snapped back into focus.

Elias opened his eyes.

He was still in the lab, but something was different. The calendar on the wall showed tomorrow's date. The sunlight through the window was brighter, sharper.

He hurried outside, heart pounding, and made his way to the corner convenience store—a small, faded shop that smelled of stale coffee and old newspapers. Inside, the fluorescent lights flickered as he approached the counter. The clerk, a middle-aged man with a tired smile, nodded in recognition.

“Morning, Elias. The usual?”

Elias shook his head, trying to keep his voice steady. “Just today’s paper, please.”

The clerk handed him the folded newspaper. Elias tucked it under his arm and hurried back to his apartment.

Back inside, Elias unfolded the newspaper. His eyes scanned the lottery section. The numbers were there—clear and bold.

A slow smile spread across his face. “This should keep the lights on,” he whispered.

But as he scanned the rest of the paper, a headline caught his eye:

“Collision near exit 42 involving multiple vehicles. Local man, Leo Karras, among those injured.”

Elias’s smile faded. Mara’s younger brother. Suddenly, the stakes of his experiment shifted. This wasn’t just about money anymore.

He checked his phone. A message from Mara: *“Elias, you need to see this. It’s urgent.”*

He opened the link. The news feed showed the accident scene—cars twisted and smoke billowing. His heart pounded.

Elias's mind raced. He pressed the return button on his device. The world shimmered and twisted, light and sound folding in on themselves. In an instant, he was back in his apartment, the clock hands unchanged, the coffee on his desk still warm.

He now held the newspaper from the future, the winning lottery numbers burned into his memory—and, more importantly, the headline about the accident that would change Mara's life.

Now, he had a chance. He could warn Mara. He could try to stop Leo. He could do everything in his power to prevent the disaster he'd seen.

Mara

Mara sat at her small kitchen table, the glow from her laptop casting soft shadows across her tired face. The hospital shift had been long, filled with emergencies and quiet moments that weighed heavily on her mind. She rubbed her temples, trying to shake off the exhaustion.

Her younger brother, Leo, had been acting restless lately—distant and distracted. She worried about him constantly, especially with the long drive he made every day on the highway.

Her phone buzzed. A message from Elias lit up the screen:

“Stay home tonight. Don’t let your brother drive.”

Mara frowned, her fingers hovering over the keyboard. Elias was usually cautious, but this message felt urgent, almost desperate. She debated calling him but decided to text back instead.

“What’s going on? Why? Is Leo in trouble?”

Minutes later, her phone buzzed again.

“I can’t explain now. Just trust me. Please.”

Mara’s heart tightened. Trusting Elias had never been hard, but this was different—something beyond the usual worries.

She glanced at the clock. Seven o’clock. Elias was supposed to come over for dinner soon. Maybe he’d explain then.

Mara had always been the steady one—the caregiver, the protector. After their parents died in a car accident years ago, she’d taken on the responsibility of looking after Leo. The weight of that loss shaped her, making her fiercely protective but sometimes distant.

Her job at the hospital was demanding, but it gave her purpose. Still, she often felt torn between saving strangers and protecting her own family.

Her friendship with Elias was a rare constant—a connection

that grounded her. She admired his brilliance but worried about his obsession with his inventions.

Tonight, that worry felt heavier than ever.

Leo

Leo's job wasn't what most people expected when he said he worked at a warehouse. The building itself was nondescript—a squat, windowless structure on the city's industrial fringe—but inside, it was a vault of secrets. The facility housed rare objects from overseas: ancient sculptures, priceless art, crates of antique wine, and artifacts with histories as tangled as the shipping manifests that accompanied them.

Security was tight. Cameras watched every aisle, and biometric scanners controlled access to the more sensitive storage rooms. The air was cool and dry, the climate carefully regulated to protect delicate items from the ravages of time. Leo wore a badge on a lanyard, which he swiped at every checkpoint, and he'd grown used to the low hum of the HVAC system and the occasional echo of footsteps on polished concrete floors.

He liked the quiet, the sense of mystery. Each crate or case he moved could be holding something with a story that spanned centuries or continents. Sometimes, he'd pause to study a label—"Ming Dynasty Porcelain," "Benin Bronze, 16th Century," "Meteorite, Namibia"—and imagine the journey that item had taken to arrive here.

But the job also came with pressure. The value of what the warehouse held was staggering, and a single mistake could mean disaster. He worried about dropping something irreplaceable, about letting his mind wander at the wrong moment. And lately, his mind wandered a lot.

Tonight, as he prepared for another late shift, Leo felt that restlessness again. He checked his phone—no new messages from Mara, but he knew she'd be thinking of him. He shrugged on his jacket and headed out, the warehouse keys heavy in his pocket.

He didn't know that his night—and his life—were about to be changed by events already set in motion.

The warehouse was quiet, the only sounds the distant rumble of forklifts and the soft whir of security cameras tracking his movement. Leo rolled a pallet jack down aisle seven, his path lit by the overhead LEDs that cast long, sharp shadows across the rows of crates.

He stopped at a wooden case marked with faded, looping script:

****“Property of the Maharaja of Jaipur, 1852.”****

Inside, nestled in a bed of velvet, was an ornate hourglass. Unlike any he'd seen before, it was nearly a foot tall, its frame carved from dark sandalwood inlaid with silver. The glass bulbs were perfectly clear, and the sand inside shimmered

with a faint golden glow. A small brass plaque read simply:
“Day’s End Returns to Day’s Start.”

Leo lifted the hourglass carefully, feeling its surprising weight. He turned it in his hands, admiring the craftsmanship. As he set it down on the crate, his elbow bumped the edge, and the hourglass toppled, landing on its side with a dull clink. The sand inside shifted, beginning to trickle from the upper bulb to the lower one.

“Shit,” Leo muttered, heart pounding. He quickly picked it up, relieved to see it hadn’t cracked. He placed it upright again, brushing off imaginary dust, and watched the sand continue its steady descent.

He glanced at the time—almost the end of his shift. With a shrug, he slid the hourglass and its case back onto the shelf, not noticing the faint pulse of light that flickered deep within the sand as the last grains settled.

Satisfied that nothing was broken, Leo moved on, unaware that the hourglass had quietly marked his place in time. When the last grain of sand fell, the day would begin again—resetting everything to the moment he’d knocked it over.

But for now, it was just another artifact, one more mystery among many.

The First Night: Fate Unfolds

Elias's heart hammered as he sent message after message, racing against a future only he had seen. He couldn't undo what he'd witnessed, but now he could try to change it. His only weapon was knowledge—a glimpse of tomorrow's headlines, the echo of Mara's voice breaking with grief.

He called Mara again. "Did you reach Leo?"

"No," she said, panic rising. "I'm going to the warehouse. Maybe I can catch him before he leaves."

"Don't let him drive," Elias pleaded. "Whatever you do, keep him off the road."

But fate was already in motion.

Leo, exhausted and distracted, finished his shift, ignored Mara's calls, and drove out into the night. The accident unfolded just as Elias had seen: screeching tires, twisted metal, a world reduced to chaos and silence.

Mara arrived at the warehouse too late. Elias found her there, both of them shattered by the news.

"There's been an accident," Mara whispered. "It's Leo."

In the silent warehouse, the last grain of sand slipped through the hourglass. For a moment, the air shimmered with a faint golden glow.

****END OF CHAPTER 1****