

**Prompt - "Write the opening scene of a fantasy novel where a reluctant hero discovers they have the power to control time." Tool Chat GPT**

The Clockmaker's Gift

The village of Greystone had always been an unremarkable place, tucked into the elbow of the Mistral River and shadowed by the imposing Spirewood Forest. Its residents went about their lives in quiet monotony, and that suited Corwin Fenn just fine. At seventeen, he had no great aspirations, no dreams of adventure. He was content working in his uncle's clock shop, repairing the gears and springs of other people's lives.

The shop smelled of oil and old wood, the faint tick-tick-tick of clocks creating a soothing rhythm. It was a cocoon against the world's chaos, a place where time felt predictable—measured, manageable. Corwin wiped his hands on a grease-streaked cloth as the last customer of the day shuffled out, clutching a newly repaired pocket watch.

"Another masterpiece," Uncle Horace muttered from his workbench, not looking up. His gnarled hands were busy assembling the inner workings of a mantel clock. "You've got the touch, boy. I dare say you're better than I ever was."

Corwin shrugged, uncomfortable with praise. "It's just gears and springs, Uncle. Nothing special."

Horace chuckled, a deep rumble that seemed to shake the walls. "Oh, Corwin. If only you knew."

The shop bell jangled as the door opened, admitting a rush of cold evening air. Corwin turned, expecting another villager with a clock in need of mending. Instead, a cloaked figure stepped inside, their face hidden by shadows.

"I need time," the figure said, their voice low and resonant, like the toll of a distant bell.

"You've come to the right place," Horace said, unfazed. "What kind of time are you looking for? A pocket watch? A sandglass?"

The figure reached into their cloak and pulled out a strange, crystalline device, its surface shimmering with an unnatural light. Corwin's breath caught. It wasn't a

clock. It wasn't anything he had ever seen before.

"This," the figure said, placing the object on the counter. "It is broken. It needs mending."

Horace's jovial demeanor vanished. He stood slowly, his face pale. "Where did you get that?"

The figure ignored the question, turning to Corwin instead. "He can fix it."

Corwin shook his head, taking a step back. "I don't even know what that is."

The figure extended a hand, and the room seemed to shift. The ticking of the clocks slowed, then stopped entirely. Silence fell, deep and unnatural. Corwin's heart pounded in his chest, the only sound in a world suddenly still.

"You are the Clockmaker's heir," the figure said, their words echoing as though spoken in a cavern. "You can fix this. Only you."

Corwin stared at the crystalline device, now pulsing faintly, like a heartbeat. "I—I can't," he stammered. "I'm just a locksmith. I can't fix... whatever this is."

"You don't understand," the figure said, their tone sharp. "If you do not repair it, time itself will unravel."

Corwin looked to his uncle, but Horace's face was grim, his lips pressed into a thin line. "Corwin," he said quietly, "it's time you learned the truth."

Before Corwin could protest, the crystalline device flared with light, and the room disappeared.

