

## Karma Tempus

A flurry of dust and bright sunlight enhanced the chronic squint on the weathered countenance of Reggie Webster as he honored the Clements Prison Unit with a one-finger salute. He smirked, then turned west toward northeast 24th. The lack of a ride was almost preferred as it allowed him time to think in the atmosphere of cherished freedom while trudging the few miles into Amarillo.

At the edge of an upscale suburban neighborhood he knocked on the door of a house that looked like a good mark for a handout. But, when no one answered, he slipped a pry bar from a backpack and with a practiced move had the door open in a matter of seconds. After stuffing valuables in the backpack while swiftly moving through the rooms, Reggie paused in front of a faux fireplace decorated like an altar with several candles and incense burners encircling a gold pocket watch.

"What have we here?" he grunted as he picked up the ancient looking timepiece and pressed the stem.

"Cool," he chuckled as the cover popped open, revealing the face.

Abruptly, the sound of a car prompted Reggie to rush to a window. Peering out, he spied a family laughing and tumbling out of a van in the driveway. Slinging the backpack over a shoulder and pocketing the watch, he scurried through the back door.

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Later, Reggie tossed the backpack onto the bed of a seedy motel room and retrieved the watch from his pocket.

"Nice," he mumbled, popping it open and noting the sweeping second hand.

*Damn thing actually works, real pawnability.*

Reggie turned the crown knob to adjust the time and a shadow moved at the window. He slunk over and glanced out, but no one was there.

"Gettin' paranoid dude," he grumbled and turned the watch knob again. Suddenly it was dark outside.

"What the...?" he sputtered, looking out at cars going by with headlights blazing. "That's not right, it's only three o'clock," he whispered to himself.

Reggie stumbled over to the bed and sat down. He looked at the watch face which registered 7pm. Then he looked at a digital alarm clock on a night stand that indicated the same time.

*What the hell, did I pass out or sumthin'?*

Reggie idly turned the watch knob while staring at the clock and noticed the digital numbers changing. He jumped off the bed and hustled over to the clock. He twisted the watch knob again slowly, and as the hands turned, the digital readout on the clock moved in sync.

*Damn, is this the Twilight Zone?*

He swiftly advanced the time on the watch twelve hours and sunlight coursed through the window, and a maid carrying towels suddenly appeared inside the room. Spotting Reggie, she screamed and ran to the door. Reggie quickly turned the crown knob backwards. The maid disappeared, and the window went dark again. Reggie grabbed a nearby flask and guzzled, then shook his head slowly while staring at the watch.

"Supernatural man, it's a damn magic time machine watch. I gotta think about this," he muttered.

Steam roiled from the bathroom as Reggie showered. Suddenly, he yelled, "I got it, damn, I'm a genius." Reggie closed his eyes. *I go into a jewelry store. I browse around, then turn the watch to midnight. I break the display cases and pocket a buncha stuff. When the alarms go off, I walk to the door and turn the watch ahead a coupla days to maybe 2pm, and then I just walk out like a normal customer. Bingo!*

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It was a lovely sunny day as Reggie sauntered out of Goodin's Jewelry store with the watch in hand, bulging pockets, and a huge smile on his face. He whistled and greeted people on the sidewalk while heading to the corner of Hobbs Road on the way to a liquor store. He waited for the pedestrian light at the intersection, then headed across. Reggie's finger inadvertently turned the crown knob slightly as he was slipping the watch into his pocket and the garbage truck that slammed into his body left little doubt that timing is everything.

The truck driver leaped from the cab and ran to the crumpled form lying on the street. He knelt to check the man's injuries and noticed sparkles next to what was left of Reggie's head. The truck driver surreptitiously pocketed the gleaming diamonds along with the gold watch lying nearby and grabbed his cell to call 911.