



The Clockwork Heist

[Dhairya]



Crystal chandeliers cast a warm glow across the grand hall of the Grand City Museum as distinguished guests gather for the annual evening gala. At the center of the room, resting beneath a secure glass case, glimmers the priceless ancient Golden Scarab.



A sharp gasp ripples through the crowd as the museum alarm blares softly, revealing an empty display case. In place of the priceless golden relic sits a mysterious brass scarab, its internal gears softly ticking in the dim light.



Detective Maya arrives at the crime scene, her sharp gaze scanning the gallery for subtle clues. With the gala ending at midnight, she knows she has limited time to solve the mystery and recover the stolen artifact.



Maya begins her investigation by questioning Dr. Vance, the museum curator, who looks visibly agitated. Bitter about being passed over for a recent promotion, he insists he was in the storage rooms inspecting artifacts when the alarm went off.



Next, Maya approaches Lord Sterling, a wealthy collector notorious for gathering rare antiquities in his private vault. Swirling his champagne glass, he smugly claims an airtight alibi, stating he was giving a keynote speech in the main hall at precisely 11:15 PM.



Maya then speaks with Master Tobias, an eccentric clockmaker hired to restore the museum's vintage timepieces. Magnifying goggles pushed up on his forehead, he marvels at the fake scarab, praising its exquisite miniature gearwork.



Drawn back to the evidence, Maya leans close to inspect the brass scarab under her magnifying glass. She carefully observes the movement of the tiny brass cogs and notices a peculiar irregularity in how the hands align.



Maya's eyes light up as she realizes the incredible truth: the scarab's gears are crafted to turn in reverse. The deliberate reverse-mechanics lock the scarab's hands permanently at 11:15 PM, matching a pre-planned time stamp.



Stepping into the center of the ballroom, Detective Maya presents her deduction and points directly at Lord Sterling. She reveals that his pre-set alibi of 11:15 PM was baked into the backward-ticking clockwork mechanism he personally commissioned to frame his timing.



Caught red-handed by his own clever trick, Lord Sterling surrenders as museum security uncovers the real Golden Scarab hidden in his velvet coat pocket. The gala guests erupt in applause as Detective Maya smiles, closing another brilliant case just before midnight.