

The Chronograph Atlas

My hands work like clockwork in the dense atmosphere of steam hissing and gears twisting and turning. the workshop is a mess, papers and plans scattered around. Tools left out and my watches are surprisingly tidy in their cases. I know what you are wondering. Who am I and what am I doing. My name is Alastor Watt. My father owned a watchmaker store in East London. After his unfortunate passing, I took control of the shop. Not my mother nor my sister Marie. Me. This is because in Victorian England, men own many things. Anyway, I now work at a watchmaker shop making all sorts of wonderful, weird watches. No one buys them though. Currently I am working on a butterfly watch. The wings beat with every minute which is amazing for time tracking if I say so, though many disagree. Ever since I was a young lad, I was always an outcast, a weirdo, a disgrace to the family name as my father put it. And I still am.

This evening was different though. For the first time, a knock was heard on my door. No one ever knocks. I was a bit annoyed with this interruption as I am making a new watch. This is a deciphering watch. It can decipher anything from a coded letter to a mismatched map. At least I think so. As I make my way through this mess, I open the door to hear the rusty bell jingle. I startle at it considering I haven't heard it in over 20 years; it is really no surprise. There was no one there. I mutter to myself thinking then I tilt my head down to reveal a letter. I found that bewildering as I only get 1 or 2 letters a week. So, I look around and grab the letter quickly incase someone saw me. Though I don't think anyone could because of all the smoke and steam puffing out filling the street. I turn inside back to the smell of hot oil and gas. I move my current projects and peel back the envelope to reveal a crinkled-up pattern. Then I see it.

I grab my tools and begin creating a watch. This watch, however, does not follow my watch designs. This watch appears to be the more socially acceptable design. No weird components. Nothing. So, I discard it and continue the deciphering watch. Then it clicks. The letter wasn't a watch plan; it was a puzzle.

I spent the rest of my evening decoding the letter. It seemed to reveal a map, a very interesting one to say the least. The names of places were mixed up like *while patch* for Whitechapel. As soon as I finished the puzzle, I found out that this is the map of London. The end of the map appeared to be this old, ruined factory which could have been used for the manufacturing of steel and weirdly it began at my shop.

Obviously, like any ordinary person, I discarded it not wanting to be involved in something deeper. However, it kept eating away at my thoughts, so I gathered up my courage, my glasses and favourite trenchcoat embarking on a journey through the polluted streets, which smelt rancid.

It seemed to be awfully quiet as I passed through the streets. Not surprising nor unprecedented but bewildering. Eventually I found it. It was shockingly difficult to

discover due to the colour of the map, the crinkles and tears and the low lighting. After all, factories love to release smoke. Anyway, it seemed to be together still, the building that is. The doors appeared to be larger and more weathered than I thought.

Nonetheless I entered. I jumped at the creaking though. Very intense.

I step across the weathered threshold, my oil lamp flickering against the groaning, rusted pipes that lined the wall like iron veins. Deep in the shadows, ancient brass gears gave a rhythmic, unsettling twitch as I approached a small chest. The latch was already open. My heart hammered as I lifted the lid, finding only a yellowed letter addressed to me somewhat surprising. The blueprint for my father's impossible, mechanical masterpiece: The Chronograph Atlas.