



## The Watch Stops

An Alias fic by Avenue Potter

His elegant wife slides a slim back case across the table towards him, and pulls his menu away from his face – forcing him to examine the gift she's proffered. As he opens it and when he realizes what is inside his heart sinks - for this is not her domain. He fingers the band, lifting the timepiece up for a closer look. It's changed – she has altered it. The second hand ticks downward. . .

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He is caught in the middle of another busy day as usual – nothing ever seems to slow down when you work for the government. His buddy, Weiss, knocks on his door to let him know that yet another person needs to see him. He sighs and checks his watch. Though it is terribly out of style and doesn't seem to match anything, he never takes it off. His father gave it to him long ago, telling him that you could set your heart by this watch. It is beyond reliable.

It is 11am, still before lunchtime, as he resigns himself to one more interruption. He takes a brief glance at the photograph of himself and Alice on his desk and smiles. He thinks he is happy, content.

And then he meets HER.

She is a mess of red hair and punk make-up, with a desperate story escaping from her very being. This woman, charged with passion and fury, is writing down first-hand information about covert operations for the agency, oblivious to the world around her. She doesn't even pause as her tortured tale spills out onto the papers that she frantically fills with ink. He is virtually invisible to her, just another suit behind a desk. The only thing she ever asks of him is to provide her with another pen. She barely even notices when leaves to get her lunch.

When she finally finishes getting everything down on to paper, she waits for him in his office. He pauses a second before entering and catches her contemplating the picture of him and Alice. As he passes her, he turns it from her view. The dimming exterior light coming into his office through the blinds makes her red hair look even more ridiculous. She doesn't fit. Yet, instinctively he knows that there is something far deeper to this woman - - something at the core that makes time stand still for him. It is a bit unnerving, but he trusts his instincts.

He heads home that evening, the frantic energy of the day dropping away. He notices that the outside world now seems dimmer in comparison to the driven soul he has just encountered. He stops to fuel up along the way and feels like he has all the time in the world as he leans against his car. The clicking rhythm of the gas pump lulls him with its slow meandering pace as he watches the setting sun. What time is it?

He checks his watch. Eleven?

That can't be. Has his watch stopped? He can still hear his father testifying to its steadfastness: You could set your heart by this watch.

But SHE came into his life – and now it is broken.

He removes the watch from his wrist.

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The time begins to drag whenever he's with Alice. All the life has gone out of this relationship, yet he can't seem to find a polite way to let her go. He is aware that he is stalling. He is afraid to confront his growing fascination with the one who interrupted his life in a flurry those many months ago. Her. The one he meets with in secret, directing her in her work. The one he needs to keep a professional distance from. The one he can't stay away from.

He wakes in the middle of the night from dreams of kissing her, holding her, touching her only to find himself in bed with Alice. It is such a disappointment. But since Alice's father has died so very recently, he has not found the heart to pull away from her just yet. He intimately knows what it's like to lose someone you're so close to, someone you look up to. Alice still needs his strength.

He shuffles around in the dark, finding his father's watch within the clothes he wore to the office that day. He goes into the other room and turns on a soft light so as not to wake Alice. Holding this piece of his father in his hands he thinks about what he wants out of life, this short life. He thinks about her. The missions he sends her on every week could take her life in an instant. This is not a safe occupation. He hates to admit that this keeps him up at night with worry - it makes him insane.

He ponders these things as he puts the watch away, turns of the light, and makes a decision. He knows the truth of the matter and needs to disclose it.

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He stops her. He takes some time to retrieve the timepiece from his pocket. He is nervous. He tells her.

"This watch belonged to my father. . . He said you could tell your heart by this watch. It stopped October 1st. The day we met."

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He looks up into his wife's eyes, "This isn't working."



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