

Detective Arnie Hooks looked up at the big clock on the precinct wall once again. And for the umpteenth time he noticed the relentless motion of the minute hand as it swept through. "Tick, tick, tick," he muttered to himself, even though the clock was perfectly silent. Still, the sense of the present slipping inexorably into the past was overwhelming. It was 11:31 pm. It had been 11:30 just a few ticks ago, and in a few more it would be 11:32. There was no escape. No getting away from the sense that everything—his patience, his life, the whole wide world—was winding down.

Noticing this obsession with the clock, Del Chambers spoke up, more to break the monotony than anything else.

"You're only going to slow it down if you keep that up," she said.

"What?" Hooks jumped.

"It's the relativity of time problem," she said.

"I thought that meant that astronauts came back younger than their twins or something," David Gere interjected.

Gere had been slowly pacing near the window, trying not to also obsess about the time and failing for the most part, just like everyone else in the room.

"I mean psychologically," Del answered. "If you concentrate on the passing of time, it seems to pass slower."

"Slow or fast, it's still passing," Hooks said abruptly, "and we're no closer to solving this damn thing."

"And if this lunatic is to be believed," Gere said, "we've only got 29 minutes left to figure out what's going on and then..."

"Bang," Hooks said. "Happy New Year, Murder One."