

Today, I am going to catch them in the act. I am going to prove that they are somehow compressing or otherwise altering the flow of time. I've grown increasingly suspicious of this fact over the past two months.

The two young men have visited me twice per week in the past months, asking me to tell them stories about my past. Anything at all that I want to talk about is fine with them, they say, but I've noticed that their eyes light up a little more when I delve into my time in the intelligence services. The stories can go on for what seems like half the day, but when I glance at the clock it shows only one or two hours have gone by. I never see them activate any device - in fact, they don't even take notes; they just sit there and listen - but I know better than most that just because I don't see a device, doesn't mean a device, or several, aren't there.

Yesterday, I asked the nurse to bring me a very specific old fashioned holographic clockwork toy. It's exactly the kind of sentimental crap a doddering elderly like me would use to pass the time. It doesn't make much noise so it won't distract the youngsters, but it'll show some colors and whirr in my hand for a good nine minutes per wind-up.

Ah, here they come, punctual 10am as always. And after many hours of me talking, they'll leave at the latest at noon, but today I will surprise them.

After the usual greetings and well wishes for my ailing health, I launch into a story from my field duty days many decades ago. I mentally argue that this surely cannot still be classified, but I also find that I don't really care so much about keeping my country's secrets when they can't be bothered to keep my body functioning in these final years.

The story is about how we foiled the France-Germany Unification. To the public, our Prime Minister and Department of Foreign Affairs were of course all in favour of the Unification, hailing it as a grand step in making the world a tighter knit group. But behind the scenes, we were ordered to make sure it did not happen. Even in those days, encryption was everywhere, but I devised a novel way to use the prototype teleporters that involved sending a micro-drone with a quantum relay into the target's vicinity, and then copying or even subtly altering documents en-route to the crypto hardware. And in cases where that wasn't possible, we used good ol' seduction, social engineering and rumourmongering.

We never targeted the big players themselves since their security details were amazingly paranoid, but we didn't need to. Instead, we slowly but surely eroded the confidence of the lower-end politicians and officials that the talking heads listened to. Little inconsequential tidbits that you wouldn't think twice about if you heard just once, were suddenly major issues brought to the negotiation tables. The whole process bogged down in minutiae and old grudges - exactly as planned - to eventually be shelved for an indeterminate future date.

One of the young men stirs as if about to ask for another story, but I hold up the toy to forestall him. They both look at it, then at me with questioning gazes.

"I wound up this toy seven times during my story so I know it took at least an hour, but the

clock on the wall only shows twelve minutes have passed. Care to explain how you are doing that?", I ask them.

They look at each other and seem to flicker for a moment, before turning back to me. The short man reaches into his jacket, pulls out an ancient looking envelope and hands it over. It is addressed to me and the sender claims to be simply Chroniclers.

The tall man intones, "You have a keen mind and a life's worth of experience. We'd like to offer you a job of the ages."