René Kaiser

# Julian and the Guardians of Time

Book 1

## The Clock Without Hands



Book 1 · English edition

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## The Clock Without Hands

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Moments · Questions · Routes · Time

# A Moment to Look Closely

Dear children and everyone reading aloud,

A silver clock stands on Julian’s windowsill. It has no numbers, no hands and ten empty indentations. Outside, a single leaf pauses while the street keeps living.

Julian and the silver fox Lio begin René Kaiser’s fourth Julian series. The Chrona opens a new story arc. Earlier journeys are briefly explained; you can begin this series with this book.

Across 25 chapters, they meet the inventor Tovin and his mechanical bird Pendel. An invention keeps pictures still needed outside. Observations, questions and shared checks help more than a hurried attempt to catch the bird.

The Chrona, time connections and captured moments belong to this imaginary story. Adults secure carts, water routes and machinery and undertake maintenance. Children and fox stay at safe observation places.

Read together and pause. Julian is allowed to change his first idea. Waiting, listening and other people’s help belong in his adventure too.

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CHAPTER 1

# The Missing Tick



When Julian woke, there was something he couldn't hear. The blackbird sang in the apple tree. Dishes rattled downstairs. Even Lio's ear twitched as a bicycle bumped over the street outside. Still, a sound seemed to be missing from his room.

A silver clock stood on the windowsill. Julian had discovered it the evening before and decided to look more closely in daylight. Its pale face had neither numbers nor hands. There were only ten little indentations around the edge, five on the left and five on the right.

“Perhaps it isn't finished yet,” he said.

Lio lifted his nose from the rug. “Or it's waiting for something we don't know about.”

Julian opened his drawer. His old compass lay inside. All ten stars shone steadily. He touched the closed lid and shut the drawer again. The borrowed Atlas was back in Seren's library. The silver clock belonged to neither of those journeys.

On its back, Julian found a name. He read it slowly. “Chrona.”

It sounded like a word that made you lower your voice without meaning to.

Black sand trickled from beneath the windowsill. Julian moved his feet back. Then he noticed a brown leaf outside. It hung between branch and ground, perfectly still.

The bicycle kept moving. The blackbird hopped to another twig.

Julian looked from the leaf to the clock.

“Not everything has stopped,” he whispered. “Just something very particular.”

CHAPTER 2

# The Leaf Outside the Window



Julian opened the window without climbing onto the sill. The brown leaf hung directly in front of him. Its narrow tip pointed towards the tree and its stalk towards the ground. No falling leaf he'd ever seen looked like that.

“Wait before touching it,” Lio said.

Julian's finger was already on its way. It brushed the dry edge. The leaf jumped a little higher, as though it had found the beginning of its fall again. At the same moment, black grains trickled from the clock case onto Julian's sock.

He pulled his hand back.

“Did I do that?”

“You touched it,” Lio said. “We don't yet know exactly what that changed.”

Julian would have liked a clearer answer. But this one fitted what they had actually seen. He fetched his notebook and wrote: Touched leaf. Leaf jumps. Sand falls. He added a large question mark.

A tiny bright doorway appeared on the clock face. Something flashed unevenly behind it. Twice quickly, once slowly, and then not at all.

“Someone might need help,” Julian said.

“Or we need to understand where that opening leads first.”

Julian nodded. He closed the window again so nobody needed to lean out. The leaf stayed suspended outside. The street beyond it was full of ordinary movement.

He lifted the Chrona from the sill. It was cool and surprisingly light. The little opening travelled over its rim, and a narrow frame began to shimmer on the wall beside the window.

CHAPTER 3

# The Threshold Comes First



The frame widened. Where Julian's wall had been, he could now see level stone flooring. Warm light lay across it. Beyond stood a railing, with no deep drop, no ladder and no leap into the unknown.

Even so, they didn't go straight through.

Lio sat beside Julian's boot. “Remember the Atlas? An open drawing wasn't the same as a checked route.”

Julian stayed on his bedroom floor and looked carefully. The stone beyond the threshold was at the same height. The frame stood still. A quiet knocking came from far away, and between the knocks he heard a woman's voice.

“I can see you. Stay there for a moment.”

A woman in a long teal robe stepped into the light. A silver streak ran through her dark hair. She held a little hourglass.

She examined the frame from her side, checked its fastening and rested her hand on the railing.

“The crossing is clear. You can come. Walk together as far as the bench.”

Julian put his notebook and pencil in his backpack. The compass stayed in its drawer. He held the Chrona in both hands.

Lio stepped over the low threshold first, with Julian directly behind him. The bedroom didn't shrink or disappear. It remained visible as a quiet, bright opening.

Only when he reached the bench did Julian breathe out. The unfamiliar air smelled of brass, rain and a very old wooden cupboard.