

The Cuckoo Clock - Based on a Story by Kim Golding.

An old clockmaker was working in his workshop. Around him were many unfinished clocks, all of them had to be completed and sent off to their new homes around the world. All except one - a small Cuckoo clock that he had been making for his grand-daughter Patience. She too was learning to be a clockmaker and was travelling the world visiting workshops of other clockmakers, to learn her craft.

The clockmaker knew he would soon be retiring and that his workshop would close forever if she did not return soon. He found it tricky to finish the clocks, he was getting slower and his eyesight was not so good. He looked at the cuckoo clock. It needed a tiny spring to make the cuckoo pop out and sing 'Cuckoo'. He could not find one anywhere.

The tiny cuckoo inside the clock was puzzled, and sad. Why didn't the old man finish him,

why didn't he spend the time with him to help him sing. The tiny cuckoo heard the comforting sounds of the other clocks ticking in the workshop. Late at night this was a soothing noise that helped him relax, but each day the sounds seem to get quieter as another clock was packaged up and sent off to its new home. The old clockmaker would spend time cleaning and polishing the clocks that remained. The cuckoo liked the smell of the polish, it made him feel cared for and cherished.

The old clockmaker found it tiring to work each day and sometimes did not come to the workshop. The place became dark and dusty, and when the old clockmaker did visit, the surprise made the cuckoo jump and he became fearful of shadows and creaking wood. Most of all he became fearful that the old clockmaker had forgotten him. When the old clockmaker visited, he mostly polished the clocks that were ready to be shipped out, and the smell of the polish started to annoy the

cuckoo, why did they get polished, and he did not?

One day the old clockmaker was looking in a drawer for a special hook to attach to the back of a clock ready to be sent to a distant country. As he rummaged in the drawer, he found a small box. Clouds of dust swirled around the room – the box had not been touched for a very long time. The cuckoo heard a big sneeze as the old clockmaker opened the box, which startled him and aroused his curiosity. He could hear the rummaging sounds but was too far away to see clearly. ‘Oooh’ he heard the old clockmaker say in surprise, followed by a delighted chortle of laughter. Then he heard footsteps coming across the room and felt his clock being lifted into the air.

The cuckoo clock had not been handled for a very long time and the cuckoo felt excited and a little nervous. The doors of his wooden window opened and he could see the old clockmaker’s face with a wrinkly smile staring

in at him. Then he felt the old clockmaker's hands gently lift him out and place him on the work bench. The clockmaker busily worked on the clock until the cuckoo heard a tiny 'boing' sound as the missing spring was attached to the case and he was lifted onto it and clipped in place.

The old clockmaker carefully wound the clock and placed it on a hook on the wall. It began to tick. The cuckoo could feel his wooden heart racing with excitement and suddenly the wooden window burst open and he was thrust into the bright room to sing his welcome to the hour. 'Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo'. He watched the joy on the old clockmaker's face and felt a pride and a love that he had missed for so long.

The cuckoo clock on the wall sang every hour for that day, and the cuckoo watched the smiles and heard the laughter as the old clockmaker chattered back to him about the clocks he was finishing. They were nearly all

gone now and the large workshop was sounding echoey and quiet.

The cuckoo clock sang every hour the next day too, but then the clock became slower and slower and finally stopped. The cuckoo was desperate to sing his song, to hear the laughter and chatter, and see the smile on the old clockmaker's face. He felt alone, and he felt sad, but most of all he felt angry. After about a week the old clockmaker returned and wound the remaining clocks, including the cuckoo clock.

The cuckoo was delighted to be singing again, but he noticed after a while that the old clockmaker seemed a bit irritated by him, shaking his head and tutting, as though he no longer wanted to hear the song. The cuckoo became worried that the old clockmaker did not want him and would not return. He summoned the magic of the beautiful wooden genie lamp that the clockmaker had carved long ago, to grant him

a wish. 'I wish I could sing all the time, so I will always be noticed'.

The genie lamp frowned and shook his head slightly as though unsure about this idea. He granted the wish and suddenly the cuckoo burst into song, jolting the wooden window open and springing into the daylight, just as the old clockmaker was finishing a delicate piece of carving. He growled as his chisel went a little too deep and he had to reshape the design to smooth out the mistake.

The cuckoo mistook the old clockmaker's grumble as a sign that he wasn't loved, and decided he had to sing even more, so that the smiles and laughter would return to the old clockmaker's face. He took a deep breath and sang once more making the old clockmaker jump as he carried a packaged clock to the door to be loaded onto a van. As he jumped the old clockmaker dropped the label with the address on it, and the clock was placed in the van and sent on its way with no hope of finding its new home.

The old clockmaker became more and more frustrated with the cuckoo clock. The cuckoo mistook these frustrations for rejection, and felt unloved, unwanted, and very alone which made him want to sing more and more, in the hope it would bring the old clockmakers attention to him once again. The old clockmaker could not understand why the cuckoo sang every 5 minutes. It made it hard for the old clockmaker to concentrate and he was worried that the mistakes would make his customers cross and mean that his workshop would have to close forever. He did not know what to do and was feeling very unhappy.

The next morning the old clockmaker returned to his workshop and saw a curious package outside. It looked like a suitcase, and beside it was a box that looked like it contained woodcarving tools. He listened and could hear the faint sound of busy hands and singing – not from the cuckoo clock, but a young woman's voice. He opened the door and was greeted by a cheerful cry,

‘Grandfather’ and a rather soppy, squeeze hug engulfed his frail body. The old clockmaker’s granddaughter, Patience, had returned from her travels. They hugged for several moments, as the old clockmaker’s face become moist with a slight tear. Then a shrill singing filled the room ‘Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo’.

Patience turned in surprise and looked at her watch ‘but it is only 10 past nine, Grandfather what ...’ she did not finish her question. The old clockmaker poured out his story of feeling too old to continue making clocks, and of the customers who were not returning, and of the frustration he felt at being constantly interrupted by the cuckoo. He talked for a whole 5 minutes, and then ‘Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo’ the bird sang again.

Patience took a deep breath. ‘I think the cuckoo is worried that he is not heard, and does not have your love, so he keeps searching over, and over again to find it’. She squeezed his hands ‘you must find a way of showing him your love, even when you are not here, so

he knows your care does not end when you turnout the light and close the door each night. You must find a way to help him feel safe even when you are not near enough to utter reassuring words, and you must help him to share his song with the world so that others can help him feel loved and cherished also.

The old clockmaker looked sadly at her, through tired old eyes. I don't know that I can do these things anymore. Patience squeezed his hands once more, 'I can, let me help you. I can come to your workshop every day and make the clocks I have been designing from around the world'. The old clockmaker frowned 'but how will you manage the constant interruptions?' Patience smiled wisely, 'he sings to know that you are here, and that you love him. His song needs an echo; a smile, chattering faces, a gently nodding head, a warm glance, and even a friendly, reassuring 'shush' from time to time'.

The old clockmaker was unsure 'but how will you get customers to come to the workshop if the cuckoo causes us to make mistakes and spoil the beautiful clocks people have ordered?'

Patience smiled with wide excited eyes. 'I have a plan for that too'. This workshop space is far too big for just making clocks. I will make this sunny part into a café where people can come and have tea and cake, and can see the lovely things we have made, and can listen to the 5-minute cuckoo.

I think you will find that the more content the cuckoo feels, the longer each 5 minutes will become, so his songs will be less often and more pleasurable. I will call the Café "The Long 5 Minutes", everyone has 5 minutes for a cuppa, especially one that lasts a magical extra-long time'. At the word 'magical' the genie lamp rattled a little and nodded wisely to himself, uhm, his magic was needed here too. 'In this café' Patience concluded 'everyone will have 5 minutes to listen to each other and to show their care

and love for everyone, and that 5 minutes will magically last as long as it is needed’.

The old clockmaker looked puzzled once more ‘and how will that work?’. ‘Because’ Patience reassured him ‘even 5 minutes in loving company will last a lifetime in your heart. At the moment the cuckoo does not know how to hold the love inside him when his wooden window is closed. When the light of the world is not shining on him, he feels abandoned and alone. We must help him to grow memories of love and kindness deep inside his heart so that every time he breathes his lungs fill up with safety and his heart will fill with joy. When the cuckoo can do these things he will no longer think that he is only loved when he is noticed’.

The old clockmaker smiled. ‘Let’s sweep these floors and get the kettle on, we have a café to prepare and some cakes to bake!’ The next few days were busy in the workshop, preparing tables and chairs, and creating a beautiful

café sign to hang outside 'The Long 5 Minutes'.

When the café opened the customers were surprised that it was indeed a 'long 5 minutes'. The cheerful smiles of the customers, and the caring routine of winding and polishing that Patience provided meant that the cuckoo grew safer and felt more loved than ever before, so his singing became less often, and a 5 minute cuppa could last 10 minutes, or even 15 before his cheerful 'Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo', would signal that it was time for people to leave the café for today return to their daily lives.

We all need to know that when we are alone, or when the light fades from the day we are still loved, just like the cuckoo.