

The Old Clock **by Thunya Dudley**

The tall old clock's hands ticked as time slowly passed by. A young girl with curly brown hair that was neatly pulled into two pigtails watched the old clock with curiosity in her deep blue eyes. She watched the hands on the clock move slowly, making their way around the face of the clock, and then starting over again. The tall clock towered over the young girl, its shiny wood surface reflecting the sun that shone through a small crack in the curtain. The careful, neat designs in the frame and body of the clock were old and chipped. When the girl noticed the chipped designs, she gasped. "Who could do such a thing?" Her small, high-pitched voice trembled. Suddenly the girl sneezed. Dust rose from the clock and into the air.

As the dust settled on the hard wood floors, the young girl cautiously shifted closer to the base of the wooden body of the clock. She gradually placed her small chubby fingers on the old wood. Running her small fingers across the wood and over the bumps and curves, she smiled. Then she saw neatly carved words in the clock's base but didn't get a full good look at it.

The young girl gently lifted her fingers off the wood, glancing at the lines she made in the dust. She placed her right ear on the side of the clock to listen. Steady ticks were coming from inside. "Julia?" the young girl heard from downstairs. Julia stepped away from the old clock, brushing the dust from her blue-laced dress. She glanced at the clock once more, before starting off towards the door. Julia raced downstairs to greet her mother at the kitchen table. She squinted as the summer sun shone through the large glass window and into her deep blue eyes. She covered her eyes with her bare arm to shield her eyes from the bright light.

"Julia?" Her mother's voice was soft and smooth. Julia removed her arm from shielding her eyes. In front of her stood her mother, a tall, gorgeous woman who shared the same deep blue eyes and curly brown hair as Julia.

"Yes mother?" Julia smiled at her mother who stood before her.

"Have you done your homework yet?" she asked. Julia nodded, her pigtails bobbing as she did so.

"What is the old clock upstairs for? Don't we have one upstairs already?" asked Julia inquisitively. Julia's mother stepped forward and brushed the back of her hand on Julia's small chubby cheek.

"It's a very old clock, Julia, it was my father's, your grandfather," answered Julia's mother.

Julia still did not understand. "May I play outside?" she asked, changing the subject. Her mother nodded as Julia rushed out the front door.

When Julia stepped outside, she felt a wave of joy flood her as she saw the bright shining sun and the vivid bright colours of spring. The tall oak trees swayed gracefully in the spring breeze. Julia gazed at the field ahead of her, the lime green grass rippled like waves in the cool wind. She enjoyed living in the forest with her mother and father. Her father was out of town on a business trip. Julia never got to see her father much since he was away so often. A cool breeze blew over her as she breathed in the fresh, sweet-scented air.

Julia stepped ahead and into the lime-green fields. Her blue-laced dress rippled, and her hair blew back. The pastel blue sky had puffs of clouds that, to Julia, looked like cotton candy. Julia closed her eyes and imagined herself soaring with the cotton candy clouds. Julia could almost smell the sweet scent, but the image died away before she could.

There was a sound coming from the forest. Julia glanced at where the noise was coming from. For a moment she thought she saw someone. Julia blinked, but there was nothing there. Just a bird. Julia sighed softly.

After awhile playing outside, making flower crowns and running around, she headed back inside. She tip-toed into the kitchen where her mother was making dinner. She held a daisy crown behind her back, one she made for her mother. She stopped about two meters away from her. "Mom?" Julia asked joyfully.

"Yes?" said her mother, in her sing-song voice that moms use. Julia carefully pulled the delicate daisy crown out from behind her back and presented it to her mother, smiling proudly. Her mother smiled back. "Is this for me?" she asked. Julia nodded and smiled even brighter. Her mother took it and gently placed it on her own head. She pulled Julia into a big hug. "Thank you, Julia," exclaimed her mother. Julia wrapped her arms around her mother as a warm feeling filled her body. They were just there for a moment or two until Julia's mother pulled away. Julia was almost disappointed.

Years passed and Julia grew older. Julia had become a beautiful, and curious teenage girl. Her love for nature never grew old. She attended a high school not too far away. She would wake up bright and early to walk to school on the dirt road.

Julia woke up on a bright, sunny Sunday morning as the aroma of sweet blueberry pancakes filled her nose. Her mother was making her favourite breakfast again. Julia practically leaped out of bed and got dressed and raced downstairs for breakfast. Julia sat down at the kitchen table and saw a plate of blueberry pancakes stacked on one another before her. Warm maple syrup was drizzled on top. Her mouth began to water as she cut a piece of pancake.

When Julia was finished, she did her dishes and headed back upstairs. She was about to open the door to her room, when she saw another door open across the hall. Julia felt her focus being drawn away from her room to the open door across the hall. Without thinking she started walking toward the brown door. She came to a stop and peeked into the room. The room was

empty, dust was everywhere, but it sparked something inside of her and she walked inside. Against a wall was an old clock.

Julia's eyes shot toward the engravings in the wood. They were carefully carved cursive words written across the bottom of the base of the tall, towering clock. Julia came closer until she could read the words. *Make a wish upon this clock, when the clock strikes twelve, look for the elves.* Julia was confused on what the words were trying to say. She thought for a moment and then made a wish. "I wish my father would be home more often," she said with her eyes closed. When she opened them, she looked at the time. It was eleven twenty-two. She let out a soft sigh. *Now what shall I do? Is it twelve at night or the afternoon?* she thought to herself. She decided to just forget it, that it was some silly joke. *But why would someone go through all the trouble to carve words into such a beautiful clock just for a joke?* Julia pushed those possibilities out of her mind. *It's none of my business,* she told herself forcingly. She couldn't help that curiosity was flaming in her head like a wildfire, one that wouldn't burn out.

She left the room to get away from the clock, so her curiosity wouldn't burn hotter. She headed toward her room, shutting the door behind her. She face-planted onto her bed, stuffing her face in the mess of blankets and pillows. She shoved all thoughts about the clock out of her mind. She sat up, running her fingers in her silky-smooth hair. She brushed out her simple blue dress so it wouldn't have wrinkles in it later. Julia picked up her book from her wooden bed-side table and let her mind drift off into the fantasy.

About an hour later she heard a knock on her door. "Julia?" Julia recognized her mother's smooth, soft voice, though it was muffled from the door between them.

"Yes mother?" she called back. She set her bookmark in her book and went to open the door. She opened the door slowly. To her surprise there was nobody there. "I could've sworn I heard —"

She was cut off by a small squeaky voice. "You heard me," the voice said in a sing-song like voice. Julia looked down to find a small man in bright green clothes and a funny blue hat. Julia almost screamed and kicked the little man, but held back. "Your wish has come true," the little man said with a bright smile spreading across his face. "You may visit us anytime in the forest, just say, 'With my eyes I see what others may not.'" And with that he disappeared.

Julia was left speechless. Did a little man just show up at her door? Or was she imagining things? She stood there for a moment or two until she heard the front door open downstairs. "Julia?!" a deep voice called. Julia raced downstairs to see her father taking off his shoes and jacket.

"Father!" She cried racing into his arms. She buried her face into his sleeve as he laughed.

"You haven't changed one bit, Julia," he said, smiling. Her mother stood behind her smiling as well. They talked for a while, catching up with each other. They had a wonderful dinner that her

mother cooked up. Julia was so happy to have her father back home again. He had been gone for three months, but to Julia it felt like three years. When they were all well-fed, they headed to bed. Julia's mother and father tucked her in like she was only 10 years old again. It felt nice to have both her parents home.

Julia woke up at exactly twelve that night. She felt her mind drift to what the little man had said earlier. *With my eyes I see what others may not.* That sentence buzzed like a bee in her mind. It was nice and calming. But she was afraid of it. Without thinking, she threw on her slippers and went downstairs to collect her lavender-coloured jacket. She slipped on her jacket over her light pink nightgown and opened her front door. The cool air swished past her as she stepped outside. She went to the forest and closed her eyes. "With my eyes I see what others may not," she whispered. She opened her eyes. The forest had changed into a wonderland of tiny people and bright trees that seemed to glow in the moonlight.

There were plants in every shape and colour. Julia stared at the forest in wonder. She cautiously stepped closer and closer. Until she was surrounded by the mysterious world. Little people stared and whispered. "It's a human!" a small woman with bright blue clothes exclaimed.

"Julia?" The small man she saw earlier stood before her. Julia jumped as he appeared. *How can they do that?* she asked herself.

The little man introduced her to many of the other elves. She had no idea that is what elves looked like. The new surroundings were overwhelming. The glowing fungus that the elves call Glow Pumpkins shone like the sun. The place smelled of sweet honey and cotton candy. Soon, without knowing it, she drifted off into sweet sleep.

Julia awoke the next morning to see she was back in her own room. *Was it all just a dream?* she thought disappointedly. She dragged her stiff body out of bed and headed downstairs. And there was her father, sitting at the kitchen table.