



# The Cuckoo

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*A story for Narelle.*

The dream of all young Cuckoos is to be the master of their own clock.

This dream was about to come true for one young cuckoo and this is his story.

After the necessary training, at which he'd done very well, he was chosen to be the resident cuckoo in a clock in a small village.

He flew down to the village with the Master Cuckoo to be given his final instructions.

“There is only one thing you need to know about being a great cuckoo,” said the Master, “When the time has come, when that clock is about to strike the hour, you shall stand upon this platform and you shall step out into the world and tell them who you are.”

“Be proud to be a cuckoo. That is the mark of a great one.”

The student was inspired by these words, but also a little scared and uncertain.

“What if they laugh at me?” asked the young cuckoo.

“Whether they laugh or applaud, the mark of a great cuckoo is one who never misses an opportunity to stand up in front of the world and tell them who you are.”

“And, may I remind you,” continued the Master, “when the clock strikes the hour, you only have one chance to act.”

"Many go through life waiting for things to be right before they act."

"You are a cuckoo, if you do not act when the time is right, your opportunity will be gone forever. You are ready now. It is time for me to go."

They said their goodbyes and the Master Cuckoo flew off into the distance leaving the younger cuckoo alone on the platform.

He stood there somewhat stunned by the silence.

‘Wow, I’m now the master of my own clock,’ he said to himself.

The time was several minutes to three o’clock. It was almost time to step forward into the world.

But rather than celebrate this opportunity, the cuckoo began to panic.

‘I can’t do it,’ he thought to himself, ‘I just can’t do it.’

As the cuckoo stood on the platform shaking with fear, the clock began to whirr and its cogs began to turn.

It was three o'clock.

The doors in front of the cuckoo swung open and the platform upon which he was standing moved forward, out of the clock and into the town square.

The cuckoo stood there silently, hoping that no one would notice him.

Nobody did, except for a small girl standing a short distance away.

The cuckoo and the little girl looked at each other for the full three seconds the cuckoo was out in the world.

Then the clock whirred and the cogs turned once more, the platform slid back inside the clock and the doors closed.

The cuckoo gave out a huge sigh of relief.

‘Phew! I’m glad that’s over. I never want to do that again,’ he said to himself.

The cuckoo was exhausted after that ordeal. He sat in the corner of his clock and soon fell asleep.

After several hours, the cuckoo awoke.

The time was quarter past seven.

‘Oh my,’ said the cuckoo to himself, ‘I’ve missed four o’clock, five o’clock, six o’clock and seven o’clock. I hope nobody noticed.’

The cuckoo then stepped upto the platform and peeked out a crack in the front of the clock and peered into the town square.

It was dark and there was nobody around.

‘Perhaps nobody noticed,’ thought the cuckoo.

That night was particularly cold and the wind swirled freely around the square.

Almost all the villagers stayed inside that night.

Several minutes before each hour the cuckoo peered through the crack to see if anybody was about.

Seeing nobody, the cuckoo stayed inside too.

That night, the cuckoo continued to practise, but did not dare step out onto the platform.

‘If there’s nobody there, then nobody will notice that I’m not there either.’

thought the cuckoo, 'I'll stay inside tonight and practise some more.

Then when tomorrow comes, I'll step out onto the platform and then I'll tell the world who I am.'

The next morning was also frosty and cold and since it was a holiday almost nobody ventured out.

As each hour approached, the cuckoo peered out of the crack and could see that none of the villagers were about.

'Phew!' said the cuckoo to himself,

‘I’ll stay inside and practise today as well. Perhaps nobody will notice.’

The next day the sun was shining and the villagers were all up and about doing their daily tasks.

As it approached eight o’clock, the cuckoo peered out the crack.

There were people everywhere, busily going about their jobs.

‘They all look too busy to me,’ said the cuckoo, ‘nobody will notice if I stay inside today and practise.’

And the cuckoo did just that.

For the following weeks, the cuckoo continued to stay inside and practise.

By this time, the people in the village had become used to the clock not having a cuckoo.

The cuckoo was right, nobody did notice.

Then one day, a month or two later, something happened.

One sunny morning just before nine o'clock, the cuckoo could hear someone calling out his name.

He stepped up to the platform and peered through the crack in the front of his clock.

Down below, standing a short distance away was the small girl that had watched the cuckoo when he stood out in the town square that one and only time before.

The young girl was calling out, “Please Mr. Cuckoo, will you come out?”

The cuckoo began to panic, ‘Oh no, what shall I do? She knows I’m in here.’

The cuckoo stood there for several moments only too aware that it was almost nine o’clock and the little girl was expecting him to come out.

The little girl continued to call out, “Please Mr. Cuckoo, will you come out?”

The cuckoo was thinking fast.

‘What shall I do? I have been practising. I am much better than I was before. Maybe today could be it. Today I could...’

Just at that moment, the cuckoo could hear more voices down in the square below.

He looked through the crack once more and could see the little girl talking with her mother.

“Yes there is a cuckoo in the clock,”  
cried the little girl.

“No, there’s not,” said her mother,  
“and it’s time to go.”

“But there is Mummy, I know, I saw  
him.”

“Don’t be silly,” said the girl’s mother,  
“Nobody has seen a cuckoo in that  
clock for a long, long time. I don’t  
want to hear any more about it.”

The mother then grabbed the little  
girl’s hand and they walked away.

The cuckoo was shocked by this scene.

‘That little girl does know I’m here, thought the cuckoo, ‘and I made it look like she was lying.’

The cuckoo sat in the corner of his clock.

He felt sad about what had happened.

Several days later the little girl was outside the clock again.

Once more she was calling out,  
“Please Mr. Cuckoo, will you come out?”

The cuckoo really wanted to come out and show the little girl that he was still there, but he didn't.

'No, I can't do it. I'm not ready yet,' thought the cuckoo.

At least once or twice a week for several months, the same thing would happen.

The little girl would stand outside the clock and call out to the cuckoo to come out.

Her mother would then come along, tell her there was no cuckoo in the clock and then take her hand and lead her away.

Then, one fine sunny day, the little girl returned.

She called out to the cuckoo as she had done previously.

But, this time, her message was different.

“Please Mr. Cuckoo, today is my Mummy’s birthday. If you won’t do

it for me and you won't do it for yourself, would you do it for my Mummy? Please come out today Mr. Cuckoo.”

The cuckoo stood on the platform and watched through the crack.

He was so struck by her passionate plea that he lost track of time.

As he stood there, the clock struck nine.

It whirred and the cogs turned and before the cuckoo could move, the

doors swung open and the platform upon which he was standing was thrust out into the town square.

The little girl squealed with delight, “Mummy, Mummy, I told you there was a cuckoo. I told you there was a cuckoo and he’s come out for your birthday.”

With all the noise the little girl had created, her mother and a handful of other villagers stood and stared up at the cuckoo on the platform of the clock.

There was a moment of silence and then it happened.

“Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo.”

At first the cuckoo offered a mere whimper, but with each cry he grew louder and more powerful.

By the ninth call, the cuckoo could be heard above the loud cheers of the villagers who had gathered below.

“Our cuckoo is back,” they yelled.

From that day on, the cuckoo was  
great.

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