

# THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK

## AS TOLD BY THE CLOCK

Tick tock, tick tock, ding dong, ding dong.

First of all I think I should tell you that I am a very old and in keeping with most old people I like to share past recollections, particularly those of the festive season. I'll start my story in 1943 after the death of my owner Jesse, with whom I'd lived for many a long year. His house was cleaned out and along with a few other items we were transported in a hand cart to the cottage of his daughter Grace. It was about three weeks before Christmas and on arrival I was hurriedly placed in a spot between a cupboard and the door that led to the closed in staircase. I might add this became my permanent home as there was nowhere else to put me except for short periods when I was moved to make room for a party.

It appeared at first glance there were only two people living in the cottage, Grace and her 5 year old daughter Janice but it soon became evident Grace was expecting a baby in February and Ted her husband was away fighting fires in Luton where there was a big factory producing army vehicles and other armaments.

On the day I arrived Janice was sitting at a big round table in the middle of the room making paper chains from coloured strips of paper which she glued together with a flour and water paste. It was taking a long time because the chains frequently came apart, causing a lot of tears. Eventually the job was finished and viewed with much satisfaction. Because Grace couldn't climb on a chair to hang up the decorations they had to wait until some handy person visited, which I must say was quite frequent. Neighbours were always ready to help.

Over the next few days I noticed great activity. People kept popping in for a cup of tea and a chat, most admiring my steady tick tock and decorated face. It seemed there was much to discuss about what to have for Christmas lunch. They said rationing made it almost impossible. Apparently meat was in short supply not even a humble rabbit could be bought, the only hope was a little mutton. Grace said she was very lucky because Gran next door was providing a chicken. All agreed their rations

had been carefully saved over the weeks so that a pudding could be made. One visitor, a very large lady who went by the name of Aunt Nell, read out a recipe from a magazine which used breadcrumbs, grated potato, carrot and 6oz of fruit. There was much tut tutting by the assembled group.

One evening I saw Grace unravelling an old jumper and thought that very odd but the very next evening she sat at the table making crocheted tea cosies to give as presents. I heard that Ted, while off duty, had been doing his bit to help. From some pieces of leather and thonging he had made several purses. A friend of his at the Fire Station was adept at making wooden dolls with legs and arms that could be moved up and down. Two of these had been commissioned for Janice's present and Auntie Helen had provided dresses for them made from some old spotted net curtains.

One week before Christmas I saw Ted; he was home for a quick visit and had brought the purses and dolls. Where to hide the dolls! Ted and Grace looked around and settled their eyes on me. They opened the door which housed my pendulum and weights and saw there was plenty of room in my base for the purpose. So started the tradition of hiding presents each year until in time the children knew but pretended they didn't.

It was very exciting when Grace and Janice started to decorate the tree. There were silver balls and chains which had been saved from past years and other baubles made from wood and felt, next came tiny candles stuck into cardboard discs. These would only be lit if Ted was able to get home to supervise and then only for a very short while. Finally holly was placed around the picture rail and a piece of mistletoe on the central beam of the room. They didn't forget me. A colourful paper chain was draped around my top with a piece of holly in the centre. All was set for the big day and of course I had a secret hidden inside me.

One of the biggest joys for me at the festive season was New Year. The family, as many of them who could make it, apparently everything depended on the weather, gathered around the piano while Grace played all the old tunes from her Community Song Book but on the stroke of 12 it was my big moment. As loud as I could my 12 chimes rang out; everyone cheered, kissed, hugged and drank ginger wine.

Tick tock, tick tock, ding dong, the years rolled by and life improved. I saw Janice and young Ted go off to school then to college and eventually to work. Janice got married and had two children, Abigail and Gareth and young Ted became a cabinet maker and musician. One thing remained the same though, my joy of the festive season. I always felt important, a little put out I must say when a thing called a Television first arrived and Grace didn't play the piano at New Year. However, the family still crowded around me on the stroke of midnight.



Some of the family - Ted and Grace in the front, Helen at back, Sister-in-laws and brother of Ted. Cousin Joan with boy friend far right and of course me.

Suddenly it seemed all over. What was going on? Two men came and picked me up and put me in a van. Tick tock, ding dong, my insides didn't like it at all. After a short drive I was taken into a different house. Grace and Ted were already there and I heard them discussing where I should go. There wasn't room for me and they said I would have to go into the back bedroom for the time being. Well, I can tell you that bedroom became my home for the next 30 years. I didn't know much about what was going on because I was covered by a dust sheet. From time to time either Grace or Ted would uncover me and give me a quick dust. Now and then Janice came. She stayed with me a bit longer and reminisced about the past. She said she now lived in Australia; perhaps one day I could go and be with her.

Tick tock, ding dong, I'm on the move again. This time I'm taken apart and put in a big container. I don't know what's happening, I seemed to be in that box for a long time and think I'm never getting out. Wow, where is this place. I can't believe my clock face. I'm in a big room being put back together. I look around. I can see the sun shining outside but there's a Christmas tree in the corner with sparkly lights and decorations. Cards are hanging round the room. This can't be right. There are children everywhere. Really I must get my tick tock around this situation, if only they would wind up my weights I could get going.

I hear names. Two people are standing admiring me, saying how wonderful it was that I'd arrived in time for Christmas. I realize its Janice and her daughter Abigail, goodness they look different. Good thing about being a clock you don't change much. I've been like this for at least 100 years.

Here I am starting my new life in Australia with Abigail holding Emma and Janice by her side.



They start to oil my workings, polish my cabinet and wash my face. Now they wind my key and put my hands in the correct position. I'm alive, tick tock, tick tock, ding dong. When I start to look around I see old friends. There's the warming pan, the burr walnut table and the horse brasses from my old home. This is wonderful. In the quiet of the night I see photographs of the family, Ted and Grace, Auntie Helen, young Ted, Abigail and Gareth and lots of children.

Tick tock, tick tock, ding dong, I'm back in the fold and it feels so good. I determine that when it's time for me to do my job and welcome in the

New Year and rejoice in my new life, my chimes will ring the loudest yet.  
I can't wait.

DING DONG, DING DONG, TICK TOCK

