

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Clockface

by Mari Syrad

Bursting through Grace's cheeks with sharp and deliberate velocity, the intricate metal hands extended to their four and six inches, respectively. Alarmed, she twisted her head attempting to shake off the unsolicited appendages, but in doing so must have activated the mechanism. The minute hand accelerated rapidly before halting a moment later at her hairline while the shorter hand somewhat more laboriously drooped down from a confident right angle to a sagging 4 o'clock. The girl stood dead still and waited.

Then, she heard ticking. Wildly, she rotated her eyes accessing their full periphery, attempting to gauge the source of the sound without setting the hands off again. But her pupils were drawn back again and again to the black metal amongst her and she couldn't see any other sign or cause of the event.

Pausing to rest her eyes, dizzy from the effort, but still keeping her spine rigid, she continued to listen. After a moment she began to feel a tugging at her right cheek, and then a tickle as the thin spider's leg of the second hand pierced her skin and scuttled out along her cheekbone. Immediately, it began its rotation, an animated whisker, the sensation that of a breathy whisper in physical form.

They hadn't told her this was going to happen when they'd bought her the pink unicorn clock for her birthday. They just said it was time for her to learn. That all children have to at some point or another and that it wasn't all that hard anyway.

It had taken her a year to learn to tell the time but the previous night she had glanced at the clock before bedtime and realised with barely a second thought that it was seven minutes to eight. At last she had mastered time.

So quite understandably she was stunned that after a full year of encouragement, of studying the clock, counting with her parents, and being asked the time at random, that they never once mentioned that when you actually know how to tell the time, a fucking clock would grow out of your face.

Grace was eight years old and livid. She began to redden, her eyes hot and wet, enraged further by the second hand with its endless lethargic hiccup, she marched towards her parents' bedroom. She no longer cared that moving caused the clock hands to swing wildly and whirl around her face, she wanted answers.

Small but formidable, she threw back the door with a bang, waking her parents. She opened her mouth to scream but as she did so, the hands of the clock united in the centre of her face and instead, a cuckoo sprung from the back of her throat, warbled its tick tock song, and retreated just as quickly as it came. All three of them fainted from the shock, and only time will tell if they will ever recover.