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Time Piece

by Richard Lewis

She knew the relationship was wrong from the start. What had she ever seen in him? Ami didn't find him attractive and there was something odd about Thomas she couldn't quite put her finger on. He was just always there, popping up unexpectedly with his long face and shock of blonde hair.

Little did she know he'd been watching her, planting himself in her path, waiting for his chance. In the end it was Ami who had spoken first. "We seem to keep bumping into each other", she said. She'd agreed to take that walk with him only because she couldn't say no.

The first time he took her to his parent's house she had the same thought, this is odd. From the outside, 6 Western Road looked ordinary enough and you would never have guessed what lay behind that dark red front door.

A grandfather clock can be a fine thing but three, standing guard in the hallway, she'd found unnerving. Their flat numbered faces, peering out of mahogany and walnut frames, ticking away like soldiers, slightly out of step with each other.

The old time-pieces were lovingly tended to by Thomas's father, Jim, who was an engineer.

He had acquired them from various second hand and antique shops in Bristol, along with other numerous clocks that inhabited every room of the house. He bought them for next to nothing, most having not worked for years, take them to his small workshop and breathe life back into them with his clever hands. Precision was the watch word, though obsessional would be the word his wife used.

Jim operated somewhat like clockwork himself, making his twice daily patrols, armed with a large bunch of keys. All that winding up, cogs turning, weights and pullies working, so much checking and synchronising, as if reflecting a part of himself.

Jim's mind ticked away happily enough until, just like one of those clocks striking the hour, he could explode, sending the younger Thomas running for cover. As a child Thomas associated clocks with fear, possibly due to his father's frustration. Jim couldn't understand how it had taken him a year to learn to tell the time.

Thomas remembered thinking, clocks are supposed to tell the time but they don't say anything, they just stand and stare with their ticking and clanging. All that fuss was just a waste of time.

Now he could see he'd been rebelling against his father's fixation with those dam clocks.