

THE MOONLIT PAGE

The Clock-Shop Auditor



Leena repaired clocks in a shop so narrow that customers had to pass sideways between the counter and the tall grandfather clock. Her budgerigar, Nib, lived in a spacious cage by the back window and knew three sounds: Leena's greeting, a kettle whistle, and the shop bell.

On Tuesday a customer brought in a wall clock that had begun chiming before the hour. Leena set it on the testing shelf. At ten fifty-nine it struck eleven.

Nib rang out his version of the shop bell, three quick notes, just as the clock finished.

"An auditor," Leena told the customer. "He checks our work."

She reset the clock's striking mechanism and waited for the next hour, doing the repairs that could be done quietly. The shop filled with the soft ticks of dozens of different clocks.

At noon the wall clock chimed exactly on time. Nib listened, then offered the kettle whistle instead.

The customer grinned. "Does that mean it passed?"

"No," Leena said. "That means he'd like me to make tea."

Leena switched off her bench lamp and put on the kettle. All the clocks, for once, seemed content to wait.

To remember

1. An early-chiming wall clock reaches Leena's shop
2. Budgerigar Nib adds an unsolicited audit sound
3. Leena repairs the strike timing
4. Correct noon chime earns a kettle whistle and tea.