

The Oak Clock and the Rag Doll

A faerie tale

by Rosemary Van Deuren ©2010

“I didn’t want to do it,” the Rag Doll said, putting his stuffed cotton fists against his yarn eyes. “He made me do it. He made me! He made me so mad!”

“It’s ok,” said the high, oak clock on the golden wall. His voice was monotone and low. “He didn’t feel a thing. He’s not alive like you.”

The Rag Doll scrunched his puckered, overstuffed face until big creases formed on the smooth cotton of his forehead. Gliding his mittened hands on the floor, he gathered up all the lose stuffing he had pulled out of the small, two-sided sock doll. Flat and uncomplicated with only inked-on eyes and an inked-on mouth, the sock doll’s unjointed shape now lay torn and empty, cast aside next to the Rag Doll’s foot.

“I wanted him to play with me,” the Rag Doll whispered. Threads from the navy blue yarn stitching that formed his eyes slowly began to unravel, worming their way down his bunched cheeks.

“Now don’t cry,” the oak clock harrumphed. “You can’t afford to lose any more eye yarn. Do you want to lose your sight altogether?”

“I don’t care,” the Rag Doll said, hunching his back at the clock.

“Of course you care. Now stop crying at once.”

The Rag Doll pressed his mittened hands into his taut, bent knees. The dark blue threads slithered like climbing vines, back up to the round yarn of his eyes. The Rag Doll picked up the sock doll’s empty body and laid it on top of the stuffing pile.

“Why did you do such a thing?” the clock said.

“He wouldn’t play with me. I wanted him to. It made me mad.”

The clock sighed. “You know---you know full well that he can’t ‘play’. He is just a doll; a plain doll. He can’t talk, or play, or feel. You are the only one here who can do that.”

“I want someone to play with.”

“I’m sorry,” the oak clock said, “but there is no-one like you.”

The Rag Doll looked over his shoulder. “You’re like me. You could play with me.”

“I’m not like you. My clockwork gives me excellent reasoning, it’s true, but I am not really alive. When my gears stop, I will stop. Forever.”

“You could still play with me.”

“It’s not in my nature.”

“But the world out the window,” the Rag Doll stood and walked to where the sun brightly hit his face. “You said there might be someone like me in the world out the window.”

“I said might. There are many things in the world out the window,” the clock’s

voice floated down from his high place on the wall. "Some good, some bad. Some indifferent. But it is dangerous. Doubly so for a doll. Plus you couldn't handle it---you haven't got the stuffing."

"I could!" the Rag Doll stomped his soft, rounded foot. "I've got plenty of stuffing! You're so mean."

"I'm not trying to be mean. The world outside the window is a dangerous place. Plus you need things, many things, if you expect to even brave it at all."

The Rag Doll moved to stand under where the oak clock hung. "What kinds of things would I need, were *I* ever to go out the window?"

"It's hard to predict," the clock clacked. "That's what makes the world out the window so complicated. There are things you need to make your way successfully in the outside window world. But they are so numerous, no-one can amass them all or even predict how or when they would need most of them. The best thing you can do is guess at the things most likely to be of help, and collect those. And then just go. And pray. The world outside the window is for gamblers, that's for sure."

"What kinds of things do *you* think are the things most likely to be needed, by someone like me?" The Rag Doll said.

"Well, you don't eat food, so you'd need none of that. You're lucky in that way, because people need food so regularly, they spend most of their time out there looking for it, consuming it, and then looking for it again. It's a sad existence.

"You don't have clockwork, so you don't need oil. Or the little tools they use to tighten my tiniest bolts. But you may need some sort of maintenance. A needle. And thread, and yarn. And some scraps for patches in case you meet an unfortunate experience of some sort. Many people do, you know. Unfortunate experiences are the ones that are the hardest to prepare for."

The doll rubbed his cotton chin. "I can find all those things in the sewing box."

"Yes, the sewing box. Speaking of which, even though the sock doll can't reason--like me---or feel---like you, I would still say we were remiss if we didn't give him a proper burial."

The sock doll's loose, empty shape lay flopped in a tiny heap atop the fluffy stuffing that used to fill his 2-sided form. The Rag Doll reverently scooped the light, airy stuffing pile and slowly padded his mitten-like feet over the cherrywood floor, to the wicker sewing basket. With some effort he lifted hinged basket lid and looked inside at the packed swirl of colors and textures within. Gingham and paisley fabric scraps, rainbows of thread spools jumbled in no order whatsoever, shiny, pearl-topped pins and of course the white, white stuffing. The Rag Doll envied most of all the brightly-colored fabric swatches and scraps, and wondered why his bunched, lank but overstuffed body was plain white cotton from soft, round head to mitten-toe. Save the navy-blue yarn of his eyes. His mouth and nose was just formed by the puckered, taut stitches of more white thread. Even the destroyed sock doll at his side had one side tan and one side gray.

'If I ever do meet an unfortunate experience,' the Rag Doll thought, 'and I hope I don't, but if I do, I will use some of this brightly colored fabric to patch my pain or sadness, and brighten the world of my plain white body,' the Rag Doll ran his mitten hand over the red and gold paisley. Then he looked at the remains of the ripped-apart sock doll at his side.

“I know you can’t play. And I know you can’t feel. And in spite and because of this---I am sorry.” The Rag Doll picked up the sock doll’s limp form pressed it into the packed corner of fabric scraps in the sewing box. Then he mushed the sock doll’s stuffing back into the center of the mass of stuffing in the wicker box. The sock doll’s remains meshed perfectly into the busy sewing box. When the Rag Doll was finished, no-one would be able to tell that anything was added at all.

The Rag Doll slept, thinking of the world outside the window and what he would bring to go there. The paisley fabric scrap danced in his vision. The Rag Doll played the oak clock’s words over and over in his mind. ‘Tomorrow,’ he thought, ‘I will go tomorrow. I will miss my friend the clock, even though he is very grumpy. And I can always come back. But I may find another friend out there---a true friend! A playmate! If it is so lovely that I never want to come home, I will be sure to send the clock a postcard.’

“You’re going then?” the clock said as he watched the Rag Doll’s mittened hands pull two of the pearl-topped pins out of the pincushion ball in the sewing box the next morning.

“I am,” the Rag Doll replied without looking up.

“Make sure you take your provisions,” the clock said.

“I am,” the Rag Doll waved the paisley scrap triumphantly over his head.

“Don’t forget a needle,” the clock said.

“Got it,” the Rag Doll tossed a big-eyed needle to the floor at his side. It tinged with a musical clatter. Then with a flourish, the Rag Doll unrolled the cotton gingham square and spread it on the floor like a picnic blanket. Inside he laid the paisley fabric scrap, the needle and the two pearl-topped pins. Then he selected a small spool of navy-blue thread. The Rag Doll stood with his stubby hands on his hips, and looked back and forth between the sewing box and the spread of supplies below him. Last, he pulled out the sock doll’s floppy, empty form and laid it in the center of the gingham. Then he wrapped the bundle and twisted the top, tying it with a loose piece of postman’s string. He slung the pack over his shoulder and looked at the clock.

“I have good reason, it’s true,” the clock said, “though I cannot feel. But if I could feel, I believe I would miss you.”

“If I could reason enough to know I should,” the Rag Doll said, “I believe I would miss you too.”

The Rag Doll pushed the sewing box across the hardwood floor until it butted up against the maroon ottoman. He scaled the side of the sewing box, using the crackly spaces between the wicker layers to jam his mitten feet. From the top of the sewing box, he jumped and just barely grasped the side of the velvety ottoman. Atop this footstool, he leapt as high as he could and grabbed the edge of the worn writing desk, swinging for several moments while he adjusted his hand hold and finally pulled himself up.

On top of the writing desk, he was at one of the highest points of the room, except for the window. He looked around from his elevated vantage, wondering if he would ever see this old home again and not sure if he would miss it. He studied the clock.

“You look even bigger from here,” the Rag Doll smiled. “Goodbye,” holding the gingham sack he crouched and made a final, leaping jump, and sailed out the window.

The clock sat still. For he was always still. But now, he felt more still than he had ever been. He watched the light of the sun crawl down the facing wall until the room

became dark. And again, the next day he watched it: watched the light start bright where the wall touched the ceiling, and gradually fade as it crawled to the floor and disappeared. Every day. It was very quiet. Nobody prattled on to him about how lonely they were, or how badly they wanted a playmate. The human writer came in and wrote at her scratched, aging desk from noon until dusk, and then left without a word. The oak clock's world was silent.

Until the day he heard sirens, shrill and blaring, mounting as they neared the house and fading as they whizzed away with amazing speed. So many sirens. The oak clock wished the writer would leave a newspaper on the desk, as she sometimes did, so he could peek at the headlines. Surely something bad enough to warrant sirens of that number would be reported upon? But the writer didn't come in that day. The oak clock thought hard, and worried. How close to the sirens would the Rag Doll be, he wondered? Is it possible that---no, he was just letting his reason run wild. The likelihood of the Rag Doll somehow being injured in whatever caused those many sirens was low. Low. 'But not impossible,' the oak clock thought. 'The Rag Doll is alone. Alone in the world outside the window. Where danger is rife and varied and cannot be predicted or anticipated. And I am here. Here, safe in this room.'

'And alone as well,' he thought suddenly. Quietly. In a thought so small it didn't even reach his reason right away. Just played and twisted throughout his gears, moving like they moved. Rotating over the jagged teeth of the small, brass disks like a single drop of syrup spreading itself thinner and thinner until it covered an entire plate. For it was quiet in the oak clock's room, with no-on prattling on about how badly they wanted a playmate.

A rip sounded between the clock and the wall. A terrible, breaking, crackling sound. The clock shifted. Creaking filled the empty room as the clock rocked forward and back almost imperceptibly. And then a loud crack, as the oak clock dropped face-first to the floor.

To an outsider, or a human, the sound was noisy but forgettable. Inside the oak clock's reason, the sound was deafening. The clock began to sit up. As he did, loosened and broken gears and springs clattered and rattled like a box full of pennies, all the way down to his base where they heaped in a jumble. It made his oak body feel heavy.

The clock finally pulled himself upright. His glass face was shattered. He turned it toward the open window, where the Rag Doll had bid him a smile before jumping out, so many days before. The oak clock couldn't reach. He tried. What felt like massive effort to him made no movement at all; because he did not have legs, or feet, or even arms to reach and jump and pull himself to the world outside the window. To the Rag Doll. The clock let himself fall back, face-down, onto the floor.

The writer came into her studio the next morning. "Oh!" she said when she saw the clock, face down on the hardwood floor and surrounded by splinters of glass. She lifted it up, hearing the loose and broken gears inside shifting as though she were picking up a box of useless bolts.

"My old clock finally fell," she sighed, looking at the clock's broken face. The clock listened closely to the woman's voice, which he had heard before but rarely. The woman spoke less than the few other people who had ever entered the room. She was generally very quiet.

“Isn’t that amazing,” she touched the splintered glass on the clock’s face, “it’s still keeping the time.” She turned the clock and listened to the broken gears sliding inside again. “I don’t know how that’s possible.” The woman stood, still holding the clock in her hands. She carried it...

Outside! The clock was outside; the world outside the window! The sunlight---so much brighter even than the brightest of hours in the studio---was blinding on his upturned face. He jostled as the writer carried him up the driveway and then gently, she laid him in the grass near the road, next to the garbage can.

Several minutes after he couldn’t hear the woman’s footsteps anymore, the clock strained to sit up again. It took some effort, even more than it had when he first dropped to the floor inside the house. The clock felt very weak. His face was still keeping time, just as the writer had said, but it was beginning to slow.

The clock forced a corner of his body to move. Then another. Mostly he rotated on the grass but he did move forward an inch. He tried it again. He could move; only just, and he could cover very little ground, but he could do it. It would take a very long time but as long as he didn’t have to climb or jump or do anything but shift the corners of his body forward and back, he could do it. The clock started down the side of the street. He moved so slow that no-one passing by noticed he was moving at all, they thought he was just an old clock being thrown away with the trash. The trash at house number 619, 621, 623, as the clock slowly passed them all. And the passer-bys were right: he was just a broken clock being thrown out with the trash, but he was no less determined.

The clock rounded four streets in the neighborhood. It took weeks. Soon he was into the city where houses turned into shops and grass turned to cobbled walks. People on these cobbled walks were mostly happy or rushing, but usually not both.

The oak clock’s time still moved, but had slowed significantly more and was slowing all the time. He now had to judge the time by the place of the sun in the sky and how it corresponded with what he used to remember the hands on his face read. The oak clock knew, starting out, that the likelihood of him finding the Rag Doll before his clock-time stopped altogether was low. Low. But not impossible. And as he turned---which took about a half-hour in itself---into a dim alley, he wondered how much time he had left. To make sure the Rag Doll was safe. As he shuffled on the concrete ground, his broken gears rustled.

“Oak clock?!” a familiar little voice said. The clock turned, slowly---which was as fast as he could---toward the sound. Running out from behind a cluster of bent garbage cans nestled next to a rust-colored doorway, was the Rag Doll. He wore a small paper hat on his head, folded into a point, and a red piece of yarn tied jauntily around his waist, with the paisley fabric scrap doubled-over through it like a waiter’s waist-towel. But he was the same old Rag doll. With a speed the oak clock couldn’t imagine, the Rag Doll rushed up to him.

“What are you---how did you?---” the Rag Doll said, and saw the oak clock’s shattered face. The Rag Doll’s own face went stricken.

“I found you,” the oak clock creaked, “I found you.”

“How did you get here?” the Rag Doll breathed. “What happened to you?”

“There were sirens,” the oak clock’s gears shifted noisily with the effort of his speech, “I had to see, that you were ok.”

“Sirens?!” the Rag Doll said. “But those were months ago! That’s when the haberdasher burned down. It was very sad. But you are hurt, clock, so hurt. Let me help you. How do I fix you?”

“I had to see---that you were safe,” the clock said again and his body began to sway. “Take care. Take great care,” and the oak clock fell face-forward onto the ground.

The Rag Doll trembled. He took off his paper hat and crumpled it in his mitten hands. “How do I fix you?” he whispered to the oak clock’s prone form. “Oak clock, I don’t know how to fix gearworks. I don’t have the oil, or the tiny tools.” There was no reply. “How do I fix you?!” The Rag Doll shook. “I only have a needle. How do I fix you?!” he yelled. To outsiders---especially humans---the Rag Doll’s voice was very quiet. But inside his head, it was deafening.

The Rag Doll dropped to his rag-knees over the broken clock. And he began to cry. Navy thread unraveled from his yarn eyes and poured down his cheeks. It kept coming, the threads flowing down his face and growing longer as they unraveled more and more. Within moments, all the yarn that made up his stitched eyes laid, pooled, on the oak clock’s overturned back. And where the Rag Doll’s eyes used to be, there was nothing. A blank, white slate of a face as if he had never had eyes, or sight, at all.

The Rag Doll laid his eyeless face on the oak clock’s back, feeling the wood. “My friend,” he said. “You were my friend.” The Rag Doll thought he heard a little sound inside the oak clock’s still body. The broken gears and screws shifting again, no doubt. But the doll heard it again. Faint. Indistinct. Almost nonexistent. But it was there: ticking. The smallest, tiniest ticking. The Rag Doll bolted up.

He felt the oak clock’s body all around. He couldn’t see it anymore. He ran his mittened hands down the side until he felt where the clock rested against the cement. The doll pressed his blunt hands under the clock’s body and tried to lift. He couldn’t budge the heavy timepiece. He pulled again, straining, until he lifted the wood enough to get his hands beneath. The weight pressed into his cotton stuffing. The doll stood and braced his soft feet, and lifted. He strained, and grimaced, and would’ve grit his teeth if he’d had any. Finally, he got the clock up on it’s side. Then, ever so carefully and with the greatest effort, the Rag Doll lowered the heavy clock onto it’s back, wincing whenever the broken screw and brass bits made their horrendous shifting sound inside. The clock’s heavy back pinned the Rag Doll’s soft hands, and it took a few moments for him to pull them out without tearing them clean off. The clock’s shattered face stared at the heavens.

The Rag Doll felt all over the clock’s front. Bits of broken glass stuck in his hands and he had to pull and shake to dislodge them. Carefully, the Rag Doll began remove the shards of glass from the clock’s face until it was bare---bare hands open to the air. And the numbers on the clock’s face, which the Rag Doll never realized were just numerals printed on paper.

The Rag Doll felt the clock’s hands gently. Even if they were moving he wouldn’t have been able to tell; for time, as he knew it, always moved slow even when it was at its fastest. But the doll lowered his head to the fragile paper face and he could still hear the tiny, weak ticking. He was sure it wasn’t his imagination.

The Rag Doll tore off the paper face of numerals and threw it aside. He felt around down the clock’s body for the little door-like plank of wood he remembered was there. Hoping it would open like a small door, the doll instead had to pry it off, which

sent him flying backward when the nails finally let loose. The doll ran back to the clock and listened again, hoping he hadn't hurt the littlest ticking noise. It was still there, deep inside the clock and covered by broken debris.

The Rag Doll's whole world was dark now that he had cried his eyes out, and this occurred to him most strongly when he realized he had to find his way back to his home behind the bent garbage cans. The doll walked toward what he thought was the correct wall and felt along it with his hands, past the rust-colored doorway---waiting until the voices near the door faded away so he wouldn't get stepped on by an outrushing worker--and all the way to the familiar ridge that indicated the trash-can home he'd selected as cover months ago. The Rag Doll felt the brick behind him, and the ground, and finally found his trussed, gingham kit-bag.

The Doll felt his way back to where his friend lay on the middle of the alley, and placed the gingham bag at his side. Then he carefully began to---

Hollow out the clock.

It took a long time. Since the Rag Doll could no longer see a thing, he had to move forward completely by touch. He pulled out handfuls of springs, saw-edged brass disks and tiny bolts, and piled them at his side. He worked quickly but cautiously, with his sightless head low over the oak box, listening. The lower he got into the clock's casing, the larger the tiny ticking grew. The Rag Doll shifted his mitten hand through the remaining fragments, still listening. He could touch the back of the clock's inside now, and feel the wood through the scattering of brass bits that were left. The Rag Doll scrutinized them with his hands. He couldn't feel any movement. He began to touch each piece in turn, feeling for any sound of life.

It didn't seem like it should make noise; it didn't at all. But deep inside the middle of the broken oak clock lay a small, spool-shaped piece of brass. And this spool, this small, strange spool, was moving; rotating around a narrow, stationary spring threaded through its center. The ticking the Rag Doll had heard wasn't a ticking at all but more of 'plinking', for every time the brass spool turned, its edge caught on a bent coil at the top of the spring. Plink. Plink. Plink. The Rag Doll took his hand off the spool, and left it inside. He untied his gingham bag and laid out its contents---two pearl-topped pins, the navy blue thread and the needle. And lastly, the empty body of the old sock doll.

The Rag Doll felt around the alley ground and used his mitten-hand to separate the smallest parts of the clock's innards from the heap. Then he began to empty these gears, disks and pieces into the unstuffed body of the old sock doll he'd so long ago torn open. Shoving the miniscule bolts and circles into the doll's arms and legs, and the saw-tooth disks into the torso, he filled the tan and gray sock material until it crunched like a bean-bag from the rubbing of the brass pieces packed inside. The hard edges of the broken clock debris made the sock doll appear jagged and lumpy, but no less doll-shaped, with crunchy arms and crunchy legs. The Rag Doll squeezed the sock doll in his hands. It was almost full, but not quite. Gingerly, the Rag Doll lifted the ticking, plinking spool from the gutted oak box. As carefully as he could, he pushed this spool into the sock doll, over the other scratchy and jagged clock pieces, until the spool rested in the sock doll's chest, where the doll's heart would've been, if he'd had one.

The Rag Doll felt out his needle and navy-blue thread by touch. After many, many tries and misses, he managed to thread the needle. Using one mitten-hand to grip the sock

doll together, he sewed closed the torn fabric on the doll's side, stretched out even bigger from all the metal the Rag Doll had pushed in while he was filling it. Nervously, he tied off the thread. He placed the sock doll on the alley ground, so the doll's inked-on face looked at the sky. The metal clock parts shifted and crunched as he laid the sock doll back. The Rag Doll clasped his mittened hands together, and waited.

"Oak clock?" he whispered. "I have fixed you."

There was no reply.

"I used my needle," he whispered again.

The doll with the inked-on face was silent. The Rag Doll put his own hands over his face, even though he had no sight to cover anymore. Then the voice came.

"You have saved... my reason."

The Rag Doll let go of his face. "Oak clock?" he breathed excitedly.

"I feel funny," the clock's voice drifted out of the sock doll as the ink eyes blinked slowly.

"I have fixed you!" The Rag Doll grabbed the Sock Doll's shoulders. "You're alive!"

"I feel funny," the oak clock, sock doll said again.

"I put you in the sock doll. I'm sorry," the Rag Doll added quickly, "It was all I knew how to do."

"In the sock doll?" the clock-sock doll said. He put his new sock hands stuffed with minute screws against the concrete and began to sit up. He bent his fabric knees and looked down as the brass bits ground against each other, inside the cable-knit sock material.

"I'm sorry," The Rag Doll moved his eyeless head toward the sound, "but your clock body was quite broken."

"I---can move?" the Clock Doll said. "I can walk?"

"Well, yes," the Rag Doll replied. "I suppose so."

"I can walk!" the clock doll leapt up excitedly. He jumped high and landed joyously on the hard ground with his weighted, brass-filled feet. His metal clock parts crunched happily with each move he made. "I can jump! I can---" he stopped, and looked at the Rag Doll. "And you," his ink mouth smiled. "You're alive. And safe. Except---" his ink-eyes squinted. "What has happened to your eyes?"

"I cried them out. I cried them all out," the Rag Doll said. "Because I thought you were dead." The Rag Doll couldn't see the Clock Doll's reaction to this, but there was silence between them for several moments. The Rag Doll began to grope around for his needle and navy blue thread. "But I thought maybe---you could make me some new ones? Some new thread eyes?"

"Bring the needle and thread," the Clock Doll said. "But I have something better than thread eyes," his metal filling made a 'crunch-swoosh' sound as he plodded his sock feet over to the pile of his brass remains. Rummaging through the heap, the Clock Doll pulled out two similarly-sized brass disks, with tiny saw-teeth edges. "Come here," he said. He took the needle from the Rag Doll's hands and threaded it. "Stand closer," he waved. The Clock Doll held one of the brass circles over where the Rag Doll's right eye had been. Deftly, he sewed it into place. Then, positioning the other where the left eye had been, he sewed it to the Rag Doll's face as well.

“There!” the Clock Doll said happily, and tapped the hard metal of one of the new, brass eyes.

“I can see!” the Rag Doll said, “I can see you!”

“Gear eyes!” the Clock Doll exclaimed. “Tough, durable and un-cry-out-able!”

The Rag Doll touched the hard circles. “Oh thank you! Thank you.”

The Clock Doll smiled. “You like it here, in the world outside the window?”

The Rag Doll kept touching his new eyes. “You know, I do. I like it very much.”

“And I suppose,” the Clock Doll said, “you have more playmates now than you know what to do with?”

“I have playmates, yes,” the Rag Doll said. “Everyone here is very friendly. But the truth is, I haven’t met anyone I like talking to as much as I liked talking to you, Oak Clock.”

“Well,” the Clock Doll said, “if you aren’t busy, or don’t have any plans for this moment, perhaps---you and I could play?”

“You---want to play?!” the Rag Doll said. “I thought it wasn’t in your nature!”

“Yes, and no,” the Clock Doll said. “I am---was---a clock. When I said it was not in my nature, I meant it was not possible. I had no arms, no legs, no way of running or movement. The truth is, there is nothing I wanted more in the world than to be able to play with you.”

“Why didn’t you tell me that?!” the Rag Doll yelled. “All these years you insisted you didn’t *want* to play! Why didn’t you just tell me you wanted to, but couldn’t? I would’ve understood!”

“You would’ve understood, yes. But if I told you how badly I wanted to play with you, and how much it broke my heart that I couldn’t, you would’ve known I was sad. If you knew I was sad, that would’ve made you sad. And if you were sad, then you would’ve cried your eyes out.”

The Rag Doll touched his new, brass eyes again. “You said you couldn’t feel, but you can. And you said you weren’t alive, but you are, aren’t you? How else could your clicking spool, or your reason, or whatever you want to call it, have survived when the rest of you was broken? You lied to me.”

“About that part, I didn’t lie. I didn’t suspect I was alive. It didn’t feel like it, most of the time. And I guess I should say, there is one thing I wanted more than to be able to play with you: I wanted you safe. There is nothing in the world I ever wanted more than that.” He smiled. “And now I have it.”

The Rag Doll was quiet for several moments, folding his lank, overstuffed arms and rubbing a cotton foot on the cement. Finally he said, “Is it true that you really want to play with me?”

“Yes,” the Clock Doll replied. “Very much yes.”

“What do you want to play?” the Rag Doll asked.

“You pick,” the Clock Doll said, “you know all the games.”

“Well, my favorite game is called ‘kick the pebble’. First you find a pebble, and then you kick it! It’s great fun.”

“I think I would like to try,” the Clock Doll said.

“Okay! Let’s find a pebble!” the Rag Doll took the Clock Doll’s hand, and paused, looking at his sock-face. “Oak Clock?”

“Yes?”

“*You* are my true friend.”

“Rag Doll?” the Clock Doll said.

“Yes?”

“You are my true friend, too.”

THE END

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