

The Amber Clock



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Ben was a boy with messy sandy-brown hair that flopped over his forehead and a scatter of freckles across his nose. He loved to run, jump, and chase excitement from morning till night. One day, his Grandpa Walter called him into the garden. The old man wore a soft green cardigan and a kind smile. 'Ben,' he said, 'I have something special for you.'



Grandpa Walter held out a small clock made of warm amber, smooth and glowing like honey in the sun. Its hands were thin and golden, and they did not tick like other clocks. 'This clock measures happy moments,' Grandpa said, his grey eyes crinkling behind round glasses. 'It only moves when you are truly happy.' Ben's brown eyes went wide. 'Really? Let me try!'



Ben shook the clock and held it to his ear, but the hands stayed still. 'How do I make it tick?' he asked. Grandpa Walter chuckled, his white moustache twitching. 'You will find out,' he said. 'Just remember, happiness is not something you can force.' Ben nodded, though he wasn't sure what that meant. He tucked the amber clock into his pocket and ran off to play.



First, Ben tried wild games. He raced around the garden, jumping over flowerpots and climbing the old oak tree. He shouted and laughed, but when he checked the clock, the hands had not moved. He spun in circles until he was dizzy. Still, nothing. 'Maybe I need to run faster!' he thought, and he dashed down the path.



Next, Ben built a giant fort out of blankets and chairs in the living room. He crawled inside and pretended to be a brave explorer. He made roaring noises and waved a wooden spoon like a sword. After all that fun, he peeked at the amber clock. The hands were as still as a sleepy cat. Ben frowned. 'Why won't you tick?'



Ben decided to try a big adventure. He put on his red sneakers and ran to the park. He swung on the swings as high as he could, then slid down the slide with a whoop. He played tag with some kids and raced until his legs were tired. But when he checked the clock, the golden hands hadn't budged. Ben sat on a bench, puzzled and a little sad.



Just then, his best friend Mia came skipping over. She had two puffy hair buns and a bright smile that made Ben feel a little better. 'Hi, Ben! What are you doing?' she asked. 'I'm trying to make this clock tick,' Ben said. 'It only moves when I'm truly happy.' Mia sat beside him. 'Maybe you're trying too hard,' she said.



Mia pointed at a fluffy cloud shaped like a turtle. Ben looked up and smiled. They watched the clouds drift by and talked about silly things. Mia told a joke, and Ben laughed so hard his gap tooth showed. For a moment, he forgot all about the clock. Then he felt a gentle warmth in his pocket. He pulled out the amber clock. One hand had moved a tiny bit!



Ben's eyes sparkled. 'It moved! It really moved!' he shouted. Mia clapped her hands. 'See? You were happy just talking!' But Ben was not satisfied. He wanted the clock to move more. So he jumped up and said, 'Let's do something really exciting!' He grabbed Mia's hand and pulled her toward the playground.



They raced to the merry-go-round and spun until they were dizzy. They climbed the jungle gym and pretended to be pirates. Ben shouted and laughed loudly, but every few seconds he checked the clock. The hands stayed still. 'Why isn't it working?' he groaned. Mia shrugged. 'Maybe you're too busy checking,' she said. Ben didn't want to listen. He tried a game of tag, then a race, then a game of hide-and-seek. Nothing worked.



Finally, Ben flopped onto the grass, out of breath. The amber clock lay in his hand, its hands frozen. Mia sat down beside him. 'Ben,' she said gently, 'maybe happiness isn't about doing the most exciting thing. Maybe it's about enjoying the moment you're in.' Ben looked at her. He thought about the cloud turtle and the joke. That had felt nice. He put the clock back in his pocket.



Mia pointed at the setting sun. 'Let's just watch,' she said. They sat together on the grass, watching the sky turn pink and orange. A soft breeze ruffled Ben's messy hair. Mia hummed a quiet tune. Ben felt calm and warm inside. After a while, he checked the clock. Both hands had moved forward, smooth and steady, like a gentle heartbeat. Ben smiled.



'It works!' Ben whispered. 'It really works!' Mia grinned her bright smile. 'What did I tell you?' Ben looked at the amber clock, its warm glow matching the sunset. He understood now. The clock didn't care about racing or shouting. It cared about quiet moments with a friend. 'Thank you, Mia,' he said. 'You're the best.'



Ben ran home to show Grandpa Walter. The old man was sitting on the porch in his green cardigan, sipping tea. 'Grandpa!' Ben called. 'Look! The clock moved!' Grandpa Walter examined the amber clock and smiled. 'What made it move?' he asked. Ben thought. 'Sitting with Mia and watching the clouds,' he said. 'And just talking.'



Grandpa Walter nodded wisely. 'That's right, Ben. Happiness isn't found in rushing around. It lives in simple moments—a kind talk, a peaceful afternoon, a good friend.' Ben looked at the amber clock, its hands still moving softly. He felt a warm glow in his chest. 'I think I understand now,' he said. 'It's about enjoying what's right in front of you.'



From that day on, Ben carried the amber clock everywhere. But he didn't try to force it. Instead, he noticed the small things: a ladybug on a leaf, the smell of cookies baking, Mia's funny stories. The clock ticked steadily through peaceful afternoons and meaningful experiences. And Ben smiled, because he knew that true happiness was always close by.