

The Gingerbread Clock



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Gingerbread Clock

Yavuz DEMİRKİRAN



In the cozy village of Sugarstone, the most wonderful smell drifted from the town square. It came from a giant gingerbread clock, baked long ago by the village's first bakers. Every hour, the clock puffed out a different delicious scent: cinnamon at nine, peppermint at ten, and warm chocolate at eleven. Everyone in Sugarstone knew the time by the smells alone.



Pippa lived right next to the square with her family's bakery. She was nine years old, with springy black curls in two puff buns and a cherry-red apron over her mustard sweater. Her gap-toothed smile appeared whenever the clock chimed. She loved guessing the next smell before it arrived. 'Vanilla!' she would shout, and the clock would puff vanilla.



Tobi, who was eleven and tall and lanky, worked at the bakery too. He wore a teal baker coat with flour-dusted cuffs and a tool belt full of tiny screwdrivers. His round green glasses fogged up whenever he leaned over a hot oven. Pippa and Tobi were best friends and the youngest bakers in Sugarstone. They dreamed of making something as wonderful as the gingerbread clock.



The winter festival was only three days away. Everyone was busy hanging paper snowflakes and stringing candy lights. The gingerbread clock would be the center of it all, puffing out smells of ginger and nutmeg for the whole celebration. Pippa and Tobi were helping Gran Biscuit, the village's oldest baker, mix a giant batch of festival dough.



Gran Biscuit was short and round, with silver-white hair in a braided crown and a lavender shawl over her floury apron. She stirred the dough with her candy-cane walking stick and told stories of the clock. 'Long ago, the first bakers filled its gears with candy so it would never stop,' she said. 'But every clock needs a little care.'



Suddenly, the clock made a strange sound. Clunk! Whirr... stop. The hands froze at two o'clock, and no smell puffed out. The village fell silent. People gathered around, whispering and worried. 'The festival needs the clock!' cried the mayor. Pippa and Tobi looked at each other. 'We have to fix it,' Pippa said, her hazel eyes bright.



They ran to the clock's base and found a tiny door. Tobi pulled out a screwdriver and gently opened it. Inside, the candy gears were sticky and stuck. 'The sugar has hardened,' Tobi said, studying the colorful wheels. 'We need to clean and reset them.' Pippa nodded. 'Then let's do it. But how do we reach the top?'



Just then, a tiny voice squeaked from a shadow. 'Who dares enter my clock?' Out stepped Mister Crumb, a living gingerbread man no bigger than a palm. He had icing hair swirls, gumdrop button eyes, and a peppermint-striped bow tie. His frosting smile was cracked, but his voice was fussy. 'I am the guardian of this clock. Only the worthy may fix it.'



Pippa and Tobi introduced themselves politely. Mister Crumb sniffed. 'Very well. But you must pass my test. Find the three golden sugar keys hidden in the clock. Only then can you reach the main gear.' He handed them a miniature brass key on a ribbon. 'This is your first. The others are up there.' He pointed to a maze of candy pipes.



Pippa climbed inside the clock while Tobi studied the gears. 'I see a key in that caramel cog!' she called. Tobi used tweezers to pull it out. 'One more,' he said. They found it stuck in a licorice spring. Now they had all three keys. Mister Crumb nodded. 'You work well together. But the main gear is still stuck.'



Meanwhile, Gran Biscuit rallied the village. 'Everyone, bring warm water and clean cloths!' she called, waving her candy-cane stick. The villagers formed a line, passing supplies to the clock. Some brought ladders, others brought lanterns. The whole community joined in, eager to save their tradition. Pippa and Tobi felt a warm glow inside.



With the village's help, Pippa and Tobi cleaned the sticky gears. Mister Crumb watched, his gumdrop eyes softening. 'You have passed the test,' he said. 'Now, use the keys to wind the main spring.' Pippa turned the first key, Tobi the second, and together they turned the third. The clock shuddered, then began to tick.



The hands moved again! The clock chimed three o'clock, and a puff of gingerbread smell filled the air. The village cheered. Mister Crumb did a little dance, his icing hair swirling. 'Well done, young bakers!' he cried. 'You have saved the clock and the festival.' Pippa and Tobi grinned, their faces covered in sugar and flour.



The winter festival began with the sweetest smells yet. The gingerbread clock puffed cinnamon, nutmeg, and honey every hour. People danced and sang, and Gran Biscuit handed out warm cookies. Mister Crumb sat on the clock's ledge, wearing a tiny party hat. 'Traditions are best when shared,' he said, and everyone agreed.



From that day on, Pippa and Tobi became the clock's official caretakers. They checked the candy gears every week, with Mister Crumb supervising. The village learned that keeping traditions alive takes teamwork and love. And every hour, the gingerbread clock reminded them of that, filling Sugarstone with delicious smells and happy hearts.



As the festival ended, Pippa and Tobi stood by the clock, watching the stars twinkle above the square. 'We couldn't have done it without everyone,' Pippa said. Tobi nodded, adjusting his glasses. 'That's the secret,' he said. 'Traditions bring us together.' And the gingerbread clock ticked on, sweet and steady, in the heart of the village.