

The Cuckoo Clock Caper

by *Tony Burton*

M' name is Bill, and I'm a burglar. Yep, I admit it. I'm pretty good at it, too.

My wife has always wanted one of those Black Forest cuckoo clocks. You know the kind... lots of carvings, birds, deer, big honkin' weights on chains that hang down to the floor, and a little bird that pops out once an hour to tell you how much closer you are to the end of your life. They drive me nuts, but the wife, she likes 'em. So, I broke into this pawn shop where I saw they had this huge one hanging on the wall, and stole it for her.

I wrapped it up all pretty and the next day after breakfast (it was her birthday), I gave it to her! "Surprise, honey!"

Matilda is fit to wet herself, so she grabs up a table knife, licks the butter off it and uses it to cut through all the tape and such on the box. Finally, she rips the box apart and just stood there, mouth hanging open. "Oh, Bill! You shouldn't have! What a wonderful present!" She gives me a hug, then goes back to looking at the clock. She's oohin' and ahhin' and then she gets the Fledge dusting wax to make it look better. She wipes it all down with wax and a rag, and I gotta admit, it looked pretty.

"Bill, you gotta hang it!" she says, looking up at me from the floor beside the clock. I go out to the shop and bring in the drill, some screws, and pretty soon I've got it hanging on the wall, the pine-cone-shaped weights dragging on the floor.

I pulled the other end of each chain, getting the weights up from the floor, and started it up. I could hear it sorta making a whispery sound inside, then it started tickin'.

But that's all it did... tick. No, I don't mean it didn't cuckoo. It did that just fine. But a big clock like that is supposed to go "tick-TOCK, tick-TOCK." This one just went "tick-tick, tick-tick."

Now, after spending time finding a shop with one of those clocks in it, and risking the burglary, I figured it oughta work right. So, I called around to clock shops in the Chattanooga area, and told them about the problem, and asked if they could fix it.



Nobody was interested in it, though. Finally one feller told me why. “You see, all those clocks are handmade. When you open one up, you take a chance on messing something up and that makes the repair person liable. Plus, they’re just a pain to work on!” But he did tell me about a German guy in Nashville who worked on Black Forest clocks, a guy named Otto Schultz.

So I contacted this guy, Herr Schultz, and told him the problem. He hemmed and hawed around, but said he thought he could fix it if I could bring it to him the next day, because he was about to head back to Europe to visit family for a month.

The wife and I climbed into the pickup truck and took off for Nashville. We found the guy’s Shoppe (you know it’s bad when it says “Shoppe”, ‘cause that little “pe” at the end stands for “Pay Extra.”) We got there at about 11:00 AM, so he said to leave the clock and come back after lunch, when he could let us know one way or the other.

Matilda and I went and ate at the little cafeteria at the Grand Ole Opry, and looked around at all the photos on the wall, then went back to the clock repair shoppe. When I went in, the clock was setting there on the counter right where we left it. I figured he hadn’t even touched it yet and was kinda aggravated! But Herr Schultz came out of the back, wiping his hands.

“Ah, Herr Bill! It iss good you came back! Ya, ya... your clock now verks as it zhould!” He reached over and hung the weights off the edge of the counter, and started the clock.

“Tick-TOCK, tick-TOCK...”

Well, I’m right tickled with all this, but I’m curious, too. I mean all these other guys didn’t want to touch it, and here this fella from Germany gets it to working exactly as it should over my lunch hour! Impressive. So, as I’m whipping out my American Distress card to pay for the repair, I ask him, “Say, what did you have to do to this thing to get it to work right? None of the other clock repair shops wanted to mess with it when they heard all it did was “tick-tick, tick-tick.”

He looks at me over his spectacles, looks around like he wants to make sure nobody else is listening, and leans forward. He crooks his finger at me, so I lean forward, too.

In a stage whisper he says, “Ve haff *vays* uff making dem *TOCK!*”