

Christmas Magic by Liz



A crisp yuletide evening. The fireplace crackled as light snow began to fall outside. Only a handful of gifts remained to be wrapped in bright-colored paper. My eyes were weary and my hunched back ached. Sore fingers longed for a reprieve from the seemingly endless cutting, folding, and taping required to bring about Christmas magic. Behind me, the grandmother clock gonged for the first time in years. I turned to stare at it just as a wave of nostalgia made me sway in my seat. Instinctively, I closed my eyes and let the memories overtake me.

I first heard laughter, my Uncle Charlie with his big, booming bellows followed closely by my Aunt Virginia's soft peals compared to his. This soon faded as the smell of sweet and savory foods wafted from the kitchen. Roasted meats and vegetables, fresh bread, pies, and cookies. My mouth watered as I swallowed hard. My grandmother's commanding voice from the kitchen ordered other family members to grate, chop, stir, and sauté. My focus, however, was on the tree. Adorned with bubbling and twinkling lights, strings of popcorn, tinsel, and ornaments I was forbidden to touch lest they break. The cacophony of noise slowly faded into a din as childhood excitement raced inside me as I gazed at the mountains of presents below the tree.

The clock's gongs stopped suddenly as the memories started fading. My eyes drifted open as the foggiest of long-forgotten memories began to dissipate. I was once again in my own home, quiet and dim, my eyes still fixed on the clock. It had been 10 years since my grandmother passed away and left the clock to me. The key had been lost and it hadn't told anyone the time of day since then. Broken, not unlike me some days.

I turned back to my chore of wrapping but I instead greeted the remaining gifts with wonder and a renewed spirit. The reasons for the clock's chime... mice, gravity, temperature variations... began to slip from the forefront of my mind as I set about my task again. My senses swirling with the childhood magic of Christmas, still circulating with every beat of my heart.