



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Cuckoo-Clock

Mary Graham Bonner

Julius was dreadfully sleepy, though it was the middle of the afternoon. The trouble was that he hated being on time. He didn't like going to bed when he was supposed to, and he never, never wanted to get up when his mother called in the morning. The consequences—afternoon drowsiness, bleary eyes—were entirely predictable, but Julius found it difficult to connect them to anything he'd done.

Outside, rain hammered the windows. Inside the library, a fire crackled. Near the fireplace was a cuckoo-clock, and Julius loved to watch the little bird come out with his stiff little bow to announce the hour.

"Almost five o'clock," Julius murmured, fighting to keep his eyes open.



He made it through the first cuckoo, the second, the third, the fourth. Then—instead of retreating behind his little door after the fifth—the bird kept bobbing, kept calling, until the sound blurred in Julius's ears into something very like his own name.

Julius. Julius. Julius.

"Yes," Julius said, blinking. "You're calling me by my right name. How are you, Mr. Cuckoo?"

The little bird was made of wood, but he seemed so certain of himself that Julius half believed him alive.

"I am well," said the cuckoo. "But I don't need to ask how you are. I already know. You are sleepy, and it is not the time for sleep."

"I am not a clock," Julius said, somewhat crossly, "and I'm glad of it."

"Tut, tut. Too little sleep will do that. But imagine, Master Julius, if you had to live in a clock."

Julius glanced nervously at the little door.

"In a clock," continued the bird, "six o'clock means six o'clock. Seven-thirty in

the morning does not mean a quarter past eight. We live on the moment. And every hour we come out to remind the world that time is passing and must not be wasted."

"Do you believe in sleeping at all?" Julius asked.

"Of course—at the right time. Not in the middle of the afternoon because you stayed up too late the night before."

Julius felt his face go red. He wished very much that the cuckoo would go back behind his door.

"Suppose I came out at six o'clock and told everyone it was eight. Can you imagine? I have the training of a clock. I help keep the time. And if you do not learn to take time more seriously—" The cuckoo bird banged his little door firmly shut.

Julius started awake, rubbing his eyes.

"I shall always do things on time from now on," he said, to no one in particular. "How dreadful it must be to live behind a clock, with all those hours depending on you."

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom