

## **The Cuckoo Clock**

**By Anna Rose Walter**

Once upon a time in the Middle East there lived a wealthy Sultan who had three sons. The oldest was named Danzig, the middle son was named Dorral and the youngest was named Denard. Denard was a handsome youth with black hair and bright eyes. He was courageous and smart unlike his dull older brothers who were envious of him and constantly mocked and teased him. The Sultan was sad at both his sons' behavior towards Denard, but was far too weak and feeble to correct them. He mourned that his sons had had to grow up with no mother as his Sultana had died in giving birth to Denard.

It was the night before the Sultan's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration and he was sitting in his private room with his vizier.

“How I wish I could make my youngest son Sultan!” he sighed, “But I know that it is almost impossible while my oldest Danzig lives.”

“My dear sire, while you are living, you still have the power to choose who should be the next ruler,” the vizier said. “Remember the clock that the Sultana gave to you on her death saying that whatever you wished for Denard would come true with it?”

“Ah yes. I have thought about the clock many a time, but I can't quite conceive how an ordinary clock could give my youngest son the throne.” the Sultan said hopelessly.

“There is no harm in trying. At the worst we will find that it really is just an ordinary clock, but at the best it will answer your wish!” the vizier persuaded.

The Sultan thought. “Very well.” He nodded to his attendant with a turban who stood continually at his side. The man left the room and after a few minutes came back holding the small clock. The Sultan eagerly reached out his hand and took the clock into his own. Much to his surprise, as soon as he touched it a little bird popped it's head out of the top of it.

*“Sire, Sire*

*What is it you desire?”*

The bird sang in a light delicate voice. The Sultan was so surprised that he dropped the clock and the servant caught it just before it hit the ground. He was embarrassed and quickly took the clock back into his own hands again. He cleared his throat and said in a theatrical voice, “I wish my youngest son Denard to be Sultan.”

*Your wish has been granted  
As I am enchanted  
Give me to your son  
And all will be done.*

The little bird popped its head back into its hidden place when it had done singing.

The Sultan called his sons into his grand reception room after his birthday feast. He was wearing his sumptuous long robe trimmed with green jade and gold bells and a large maroon turban that he wore on especially important occasions covered his head. His sons came into the room one by one. Danzig and Dorrall were wearing their usual gaudy attire, but Denard came in wearing a light colored plain suit. His brothers looked at him scornfully as he came in the room, but the Sultan smiled. Denard was so simple and handsome that he made his brothers look ridiculous next to him. The Sultan, after making sure that they were listening, cleared his throat, "My sons, my hair has been white for many years now (though you cannot see it today) and it is time that each one of you take part of your inheritance. However, instead of the usual tradition of making the oldest son ruler, I would like to present you with a test to decide who will be the most worthy son to wear the crown. All of you must leave this palace for a year and each in your own way double or triple what you have received in your inheritance. Whoever gains the most will be the next Sultan."

Danzig's face darkened at his father's words and he was about to protest when the Sultan held up his hand for silence. He continued, "Now I will give you each your portion." The Sultan motioned for Danzig to come up to him. He bestowed him with a large amount of land from all over the kingdom. Danzig was satisfied and cast a scornful glance at his brothers. He had no doubt that he would be the next ruler. Dorrall went up to his father and was given beautiful gems and the purest gold. "Is that all you have to give me?" he asked, "Danzig has been given more than I." The Sultan sighed, "To the oldest must be given the most." Finally, it was Denard's time and before his father could summon him he spoke. "You need not give me anything father," he said, "I will show myself worthy even without my part of the inheritance." The Sultan smiled, but still called Denard to himself. "My son, even if you will not have money or land please take this special gift showing my love. The Sultan took from his attendant an odd shaped object wrapped in white cloth. Denard took the package and opened it. Inside was a very small clock that did not look unusual save for a few jade jewels on the top of the

clock in the shape of crown. When Danzig and Dorral saw the clock they burst out laughing. Denard, though surprised, thanked his father and held the clock carefully. "Use it well," the Sultan said and looked at his son fondly. Then as it was growing late he hurried them out of the room not to see them again for a year.

An hour later Denard found himself outside in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the town. He was standing amidst hundreds of stalls selling shawls, cardamon and other spices. Women were buying bread and walking with baskets balanced on their heads. Children were running from stall to stall and Denard even spotted a boy stealing a piece of fruit. The business made Denard feel lost and dizzy and he wanted to think. He spotted an empty wooden box near a stall where a woman was yelling at shoppers trying to sell her flower petals, and he sat down. He was glad that his brothers were not there to bother and mock him. They had already left and were most likely spending their money. Then Denard's thoughts turned to the clock he had been given. He took it out to examine it and as he was doing so, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned quickly around and saw an old woman with missing teeth facing him. "What a fine clock!" she murmured and took it into her own hands. Denard jumped up and was about to grab it back when the lady silenced him, "Come with me," she said and led the way. She led the way all through the city through many streets and finally they arrived at the edge where there were fewer houses and stalls. The old woman sat down to rest and motioned for him to do the same. Denard was surprised that she was not out of breath and could easily talk after the long walk.

"You must be wondering who I am and why I brought you here," she said in her crackly voice. Denard nodded and she continued. "It may interest you to know that I knew your mother and made that clock you have," she said. "Before she died she asked me to make an enchanted cuckoo clock for her son she was about to bear. When she died she gave it to the Sultan to keep till you would at some time use it."

"How is this clock enchanted?" Denard asked, "All my brothers did was laugh at it and I have not seen anything particularly unusual about it."

"You will know soon enough in the test that is waiting for you." The old woman got up and once again walked, this time in another direction which led to the desert.

It was evening and Denard was all by himself sitting in the sand. The old woman had left after bringing him to the desert. Her last words had been, "Mind the cuckoo clock!" Denard felt hopeless.

After all, he had not even seen the cuckoo in the clock yet and many hours had already passed by. He felt hot and the sand felt so very soft. "It's been a long day," he thought, "I need my rest." he rolled up his shirt into a pillow and just as he was lying down a surprising thing happened. A beautiful little bird popped out of the top of the clock lying next to him. It sang in a delicate high voice, however, the words were filled with urgency.

*"Don't sleep! Don't sleep  
Or in the end you will weep  
If Sultan you wish to be  
Please obey me."*

Denard jumped up and saw a bright red spotted snake near where his head had been. He quickly walked away thankful that his life had been saved and the little bird popped its head back into the clock.

Denard continued walking. He trudged on for two miles when he was forced to a stop. He was too weak from thirst to go on. "Was I put in this desert just to die?" he almost wailed and sat down with his head in his hands. The little bird once again popped out of the top of the clock and spoke, this time in a more lighthearted tone.

*"Come, come,  
What is this desperation from?  
Turn around and you will see  
A drink enough for two or three!"*

Denard turned around and sure enough a tiny puddle that looked like crystal shining in the sun was there waiting for him to drink from. He ran over to it and scooped the water up with his hands. He drank till his thirst was quenched. As he drank up the water in the puddle he saw a shiny object shimmering at the bottom of it. He picked it up and looked at it. It was a plain silver ring with no jewels on it. Denard looked at the inside of the ring and on it was inscribed "King Tibus". Denard's heart jumped. King Tibus was the richest king in the world. Recently he had lost his ring when his parrot had flown away with it and dropped it no one knew where. The ring was the most valuable object to the king and he had proclaimed that whoever found it would be greatly rewarded. Denard immediately set out to the North where the castle of King Tibus was. Denard walked many days and slept many nights in the desert. Any time he was hungry or thirsty the little bird in the clock gave him directions where to find what he

wanted and any time Denard wanted to know the direction he was walking the cuckoo would say “North!” in a clear little voice. Finally the day came when Denard left the desert and came to the populous area that King Tibus ruled over. Denard was administered into the castle only after much hesitation as after his long journey he looked more like a ragged peasant beggar than a prince.

Denard was made to look presentable, and was finally allowed to see the king who sat at the bottom of a long hallway on his golden throne.

“What is it you want.” the king asked in an absent tone of one who is preoccupied with much more important matters than a peasant.

“I have found your ring your highness.” Denard said bowing one knee on the ground to the king. The king jumped off his throne and excitedly went to Denard, “Where? When did you find it? Show it to me!”

Denard reached into his tattered coat to take the ring out of his pocket. He himself had not looked at it for days. It was not there. He searched his other pocket. Empty.

“You fool! Show me the ring!” the king said getting nervous.

“Here is the ring.” A soft sweet voice replied. Denard turned around. A beautiful maiden with long golden hair stood there, her little white palm turned out to the king. In it was the ring. The king grabbed it eagerly and examined it. “It is it!” he said and loudly called his attendants to hear the good news.

When the king had left Denard and the maiden were left alone. Denard looked at the young girl closely.

“Who are you?” Denard asked, feeling like he had met her already.

“Truly you must remember.” the maiden said with a tinkling little laugh. “Who has saved you from the thirst and hunger of the desert? Who has given you the directions?”

“Surely you are not the bird from the magical clock the king gave me?” Denard said feeling unsure.

“And why not? Where is your clock?” she asked smiling.

Denard thought, “it was right in my coat's back pocket when I saw the king, but . . .” Denard stopped. He was convinced. He had put the ring in his back pocket along with the clock which was now gone.

King Tibus kept his word and Denard was rewarded even beyond his expectation. He went back home at the end of the year and was made Sultan after his father with great joy and celebration. Both Danzig and Dorral never came back. They had killed each other after a terrible argument they had regarding

money. Denard married the beautiful girl who had guided him in the desert and they lived happily ever after and ruled well. Denard never saw the old woman again who had made the clock, but Denard was told by his Sultana that she was the old woman's daughter and was enchanted as the cuckoo in the clock.

The End