

# Behind The Door

## By Philip K. Dick

Modernized For Our Youth By Lin Stone

**Republished By TaleWins**  
**In The Year Of 2011 C.E.**

**All Rights Are Reserved**

This Essay For Our Youth

May Be Copied **ONLY** By Duplicating This File  
As A Whole File, Not in Choosing.

# HEALTHY SMILES!

ENTER YOUR ZIP CODE:



Larry Thomas bought a cuckoo clock for his wife. That night at the dinner table he brought it out and set it down beside her plate. He tapped it towards her with his forefinger. Doris stared at the brightly decorated box with its fancy bows, her hand flew to her mouth. "Is it a diamond, Larry?" She asked him, bright-eyed. "You've never given me a real present before."

Larry jerked the fading smile back onto his face. "Open it, Doris. You'll Love It!"

Doris took her lower lip between her teeth and tore the ribbon and paper from the square package with her sharp nails. Larry stood watching her as she lifted the lid. He leaned against the wall.

"It's a cuckoo clock!" Doris cried. "It's a real old-Time-cuckoo clock almost like my mother used to have." She turned the clock over and over. "Why, it's just like my mother had, Larry, back when Pete was still alive."

Her eyes glistened with a trace of tears.

"It's made in Germany," Larry said proudly. When there was no response he added, "Carl got it for me wholesale. I'll be mowing his yard for a year." He stopped.

Doris made a funny little sound and turned her back on him.

Larry scowled. "I got you a cuckoo clock. Isn't that worth something? What do I have to do for you before I can make you happy?"

Doris sat back down in her chair. Her hands clutched the brown wood to her stomach and she shook her head.

"Well," Larry said, "what's the matter?"

He watched in amazement as she leaped up and ran from the room, still clutching the clock. He shook his head. "Never satisfied. What does a man have to do? That's all I want to know, how much do I have to do?"

He sat down at the table with his mouth still grumbling, but he finished his meal. Then he stood up and made a rush into the bedroom. Larry stopped in mid-stride when he saw that Doris wasn't even aware of him. She was too fascinated with the clock to see anyone.

The cuckoo clock was not very large. It was hand-made, however, and there were countless frets on it, little indentations and ornaments scored in the soft wood. Doris sat on the bed, alternately drying her eyes and winding the clock. She set the hands by her digital wristwatch. Presently she carefully moved the hands to two minutes of ten. She carried the clock over to the dresser and propped it up.

Then she sat waiting, her hands twisted together in her lap—waiting for the cuckoo to come out, for the hour to strike.

She touched her handkerchief to her eyes suddenly and glanced up to see Larry standing there. "Why did you have to say you got it wholesale? Why couldn't you just say you got a bargain on it? Why did you have to spoil it all for me?"

She stamped her little foot and clenched her fists. "You are so mean, Larry, so mean to me I can't stand it."

But Doris watched the little clock sitting there ticking there, ticking to itself just like it was maybe really alive with its funny grilled edges and the door.

Her eyes were glistening again. "Did you know that clocks are the only machines that don't do any work? They don't haul water, they don't wash dishes.. all they do is TICK. Isn't that funny?"

Her gaze swung back to watch the clock. It had to be time for the cuckoo to come out. She imagined the cuckoo bird standing there behind the door, waiting to come out. "Do you think the cuckoo is listening? Maybe his head is cocked on one side, listening to hear the clock strike so that he will know it's time for him to come out?"

Larry moved closer. "Do you think maybe he sleeps between hours?"

"We'll ask him when he comes out." Doris glanced up at Larry's face. "Can I show the clock to Bob? He'll love it; Bob loves old things, even old stamps and buttons. He liked to go with me to the stores. Of course, it is a little awkward, but you've been staying at the office so much."

There was a whirr. The clock shuddered and all at once the door sprang open. The cuckoo came out, sliding swiftly. He paused and looked around solemnly, scrutinizing her, the room, the furniture.

It was the first time he had seen her, she realized, smiling to herself in pleasure. She stood up, coming toward him shyly. "Go on," she said. "I'm waiting to see if you're a real cuckoo."

The cuckoo opened his bill. He whirred and chirped, quickly, rhythmically. Then, after a moment of contemplation, he retired. And the door snapped shut.

Doris was delighted. She clapped her hands, leaped to her feet, and spun in a little circle. "Wasn't he just marvelous, just perfect? Did you see the way he looked around when he came out? He was studying me, I know it. He was sizing me up Larry. He liked me; I'm certain of it."

And Larry backed out of the room, glancing back at her only once, a few steps after he'd gone beyond the door.

But Doris had forgotten him. She loved the cuckoo though, at once, and completely. He was just what she had hoped he would be when he came out of the little door."

Doris went to the clock. She bent over the little door, her lips close to the wood. "Do you hear me?" she whispered. "I think you're the most wonderful cuckoo in the world." She paused, embarrassed. "I hope you'll like it here."

Then she went downstairs again, slowly, down to the living room, but with her head held high and her eyes shining.

As the days passed Larry became sure of one thing – him and the cuckoo clock never really got along well, not even from the start. Doris said it was because he didn't wind it right, and it didn't like being only half-wound all the time.

Larry turned the job of winding over to her; the cuckoo came out every quarter hour for her and it ran the spring down without remorse, and someone had to be ever after it, winding it up again. "I wish I had gotten an electronic version, or an electric."

Doris did her best, but she forgot a good deal of the time. Then Larry would throw his newspaper down with an elaborate weary motion and stand up. He would go into the dining-room where the clock was mounted on the wall over the fireplace. He would take the clock down and then, making sure that he had his thumb over the little door, he would wind it up.

"Why do you put your thumb over the door?" Doris asked once.

"You're supposed to."

She raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure? I wonder if it isn't that you don't want him to come out while you're standing so close."

"Why not?"

"Maybe you're afraid of him."

"What?" Larry laughed at the thought. He put the clock back on the wall and gingerly removed his thumb.

When Doris wasn't looking he examined his thumb. There was still a trace of the nick cut out of the soft part of it. Who—or what—had pecked at him?

Two weeks later, on a fine Saturday morning, when Larry was down at the office working over some important special accounts, Bob Chambers came to the front porch and rang the bell.

Doris was taking a quick shower. She dried herself and slipped into her robe. When she opened the door Bob stepped inside, grinning.

"Hi," he said, looking around.

"It's all right," she said. "Larry's at the office."

"Fine." Bob gazed at her slim legs below the hem of the robe. "How nice you look today."

She laughed. "Be careful or I'll tell the cuckoo on you! Maybe I should anyway."

They looked at one another, half amused half frightened. Presently Bob said, "If you want, I'll just—" and he made as if to go.

"No, Please don't," she said. She caught hold of his sleeve. "Just get out of the doorway so I can close it. Mrs. Peters still lives across the street, you know."

Bob scowled as she closed the door. "It isn't as if everyone else isn't doing the same thing."

"Oh, You!" Doris replied as she tapped him with a forefinger. "You haven't seen my little cuckoo today yet, have you?"

"No, I haven't, and I don't understand what all the fuss is about either." He pretended he was interested though. "Is it an antique? Or what?"

She took his arm, leading him toward the dining-room. "You'll love it, Bobby." She stopped, wide-eyed. "Well, I hope you will. You must; you must love it. It means so much to me—he means so much to me."

"He?" Bob frowned. "Who is he?"

Doris laughed. "You're just jealous! Come on." A moment later they stood before the clock, looking up at it. "He'll come out in a few minutes. Wait until you see him. I know you two will get along just fine."

"What does Larry think of him?"

"They don't like each other. Both of them are just plain jealous. Sometimes when Larry's here he won't come out until 3 or 4 minutes after it's time. Larry gets so mad if he doesn't come out on time. He says—" Doris stopped as if her clock had run down.

"He Says What?"

Doris looked down. "Larry always says he's been robbed, robbed even if he did get it wholesale." She brightened. "But I know the reason he won't come out is because he doesn't like Larry. When I'm here alone with him he comes right out for me, every fifteen

minutes, even though he really only has to come out on the hour. I don't want to wear him out, you know?"

She turned and gazed up at the clock. "He comes out for me because he wants to. We talk; I tell him things. Of course, I'd like to have him upstairs in my room so I could lie in my bed and talk with him, but Larry said it wouldn't be right."

There was the sound of footsteps on the front porch. They looked at each other, horrified.

Larry pushed the front door open, grunting. He set his briefcase down and took off his hat. Then he saw Bob for the first time.

"Chambers. I'll be damned." His eyes narrowed. "What are you doing here?" He came into the dining-room. Doris drew her robe about her helplessly, backing away.

"I—" Bob began. "That is, we—" He broke off, glancing at Doris. Suddenly the clock began to whirr. The cuckoo came rushing out, bursting into sound. Larry turned away from Bob and moved towards the cuckoo.

"Shut that din off," Larry snapped. He raised his fist toward the clock. The cuckoo snapped into silence and retreated. The door closed. "That's better." Larry studied Doris and Bob, standing mutely together.

"I came over to look at the clock," Bob said. "Doris told me that it's a rare antique and that—"

"Nuts. I bought it myself. I paid 750 Euros for it, and I got cheated. He isn't worth it." Larry turned around and stared at Bob for a long moment.

"Why don't you go on home, Bob? I'm really not up to company right now." He glanced over at Doris, "You too. Why don't you go over to Bob's for a while? And take that hand-chiseled clock with you."

He paused, rubbing his chin. "No. Wait a minute. Leave the clock here. It's mine; I bought it and I paid for it."

In the weeks that followed their separation, Larry and the cuckoo clock got along even worse than before. For one thing, the cuckoo stayed inside most of the time, sometimes even at twelve o'clock when he should have been busiest. And if he did come out at all he usually spoke only once or twice, never the correct number of times. And there was a sullen, uncooperative note in his voice, a jarring sound that made Larry uneasy and more than a little angry.

But he kept the clock wound, because the house was very still and quiet and it got on his nerves not to hear someone running around, talking and dropping things. And even the whirring of a clock sounded good to him.

But he didn't like the cuckoo at all. And sometimes he spoke to him like the cuckoo was a real live person.

"Listen," he said late one night to the little closed door. "I know you can hear me in there behind the door. I ought to give you back to the Germans—what do you think of that? I'd let them sneak you back into the Black Forest."

Larry paced back and forth. "I wonder what Doris is doing with Bob now? You know her better than I do, Is she 2-timing you too?"

He paced to the front door and glanced across the street to see if Mrs. Peters was watching his door. "That young punk with his books and his antiques. A man shouldn't be interested in antiques; that's for women."

He set his jaw and turned back to scream at the cuckoo. "Isn't that right?"

The clock said nothing, but Larry could see that the door was clicking back and forth, almost as if the cuckoo was summoning up some vast well of strength to burst through those doors. Larry walked up in front of it. "Isn't that right?" he demanded. "Speak up. Don't you have anything to say?"

He looked at the face of the clock. It was almost eleven, just a few seconds before the hour. "All right. I'll give you thirty more seconds. I'll wait until eleven. Then I want to hear what you have to say. You've been so quiet the last few weeks you'd think you were the bereaved, instead of me."

He grinned wryly. "Maybe you don't like it here since she's gone." He scowled. "Well, I paid for you, and you're coming out of there whether you like it or not. You hear me?"

Eleven o'clock came. Far off, at the end of town, the great tower clock boomed sleepily to itself. But the little door remained shut. Nothing moved. The minute hand passed on and the cuckoo did not stir. Larry knew the cuckoo was someplace inside the clock, beyond the door, silent and remote.

"All right, if that's the way you feel," Larry murmured, his lips twisting. "But it isn't fair. It's your job to come out. We all have to do a few things we don't like."

He went unhappily into the kitchen and opened the great gleaming refrigerator. As he poured himself a drink of cold Almond milk he thought about the clock. "I hate it enough to kill it. Why don't I kill it?"

There was no doubt about it—the cuckoo should come out, Doris or no Doris. He had always liked her, from the very start. They had got along well, the two of them. Probably that cuckoo liked Bob too—probably he had seen enough of Bob to get to know him. They would have been quite happy together, Bob and Doris and the cuckoo.

Larry finished his drink. He opened the drawer at the sink and took out the hammer. He carried it carefully into the dining-room. The clock was ticking gently to itself on the wall.

"Look," he said, waving the hammer. "You know what I have here? You know what I'm going to do with it? I'm going to start in on you—first." He smiled. "Birds of a feather, that's what you are—the three of you."

The room was silent.

"Are you coming out? Larry began giggling.  
"Or do I have to come in there and get you?"

The clock whirred a little.

"I hear you rustling around in there. You've got a lot of talking to make up for, you're going to make up for the last three weeks. As I figure it, you owe me—"

Larry stepped up on the stool and jutted his chin straight at the little door. "I'll count to three, and then I'll let you have it."

The door flashed open. The cuckoo leaped out fast, straight at him. Larry froze at the sight of the bird... and the cuckoo caught him squarely in the eye.

Down Larry went, hammer and chair and everything. The hammer hit the floor with a tremendous crash and bounced up, turning so that the head clipped him square between the eyes. Larry didn't even grunt, just fell forward and lay very, very still. For a moment the cuckoo paused, its small body poised rigidly. Then it went back inside its house. The door snapped tight-shut after it.

Nothing moved or stirred after the door snapped shut. The room was completely silent, except, of course, for the ticking, the tick, tick, ticking of the self-satisfied clock.

Mrs. Peters found him; for she had come over to wake him up when he didn't leave for work at his appointed time.

After she screamed and nobody noticed Mrs. Peters had went flying to tell Doris and Bob.

"I see," Doris said, her face tight. Bob put his arm around her, steadying her.

"Doctor," Bob said, "can I ask you something?"

"Of course," the doctor said.

"Is it very easy to break your nose and your neck, falling from so low a chair? I mean, it wasn't very far to fall. I wonder if it might not have been an accident. Is there any chance it might have been—"

"Suicide?" the doctor rubbed his jaw. "I never heard of anyone committing suicide that way. Let's just call it an accident; I'm positive. Why hasn't that cuckoo sounded off, I wonder."

From far behind the closed door they heard a strange, weird sound. "Sounds like he's laughing at us," said the doctor. Then he reared his head back and laughed hard enough to shake the house on its foundation.

"What a silly idea!"

The end

**[Finding Great Health Insurance](#)** \* [Doctor's Visit](#)  
[Only Insurance](#) \* [Essentials](#) \* [Women And](#)  
[Health Insurance](#) \* [Men's Health Insurance](#) \*  
[The Gender Gap](#) \* [Health Insurance For](#)  
[Seniors](#) \* [Health Insurance For Children](#) \*

[Unhealthy Kids](#) \* [Uninsured Children](#) \* [The Uninsured](#) \* [Insurance Fraud](#) \*

[The Fascinating Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie](#). **This is easily the most wonderful reading experience I have ever tried. I have read every word and appreciated every sentence in this book. Carnegie was a child genius. While still a child he was making major decisions in the lives of men. Carnegie was a major player in Lincoln's war office. He was responsible for railroads, he moved into producing cast iron in a big way, then Carnegie brought his company into the production of steel. Look around you today and you will still see numerous items made of steel.**

His company was the first to hire a chemist. His company ushered in the concept of paying employees twice a month. Andrew was friends of numerous presidents, magistrates, kings, dukes, emperor and many other noble and great ones that walked the earth in his time.

This book may feel over your head when you begin, but I promise you, it will be well worth all the time and attention you can give to it.

**[Alice In Wonderland](#), by Lewis Carroll and Lin Stone, a slightly different version than you might have read previously.**

\*\*

NEVERLAND the [Story of Peter Pan](#), for adults to read to their children.

[The Little Gingerbread Man](#)

[Pied Piper of Hamelin](#)

Small children will love you for reading this one to them.