

# Mama Clock

by Jim Gold

Mama Clock led her son Ben down the road. She had his wrists tied to a watch and his brain strapped to a schedule. Although Ben lived in a lovely village surrounded by trees, fresh air, and flowers, he couldn't see its beauty. Too tied down, he dwelt in Time Prison, handcuffed and ruled by Mama.

She controlled him. There was no deviation from her schedule. Every day was exactly the same; changes came only once a month, on Sundays. If Ben avoided his schedule, Mama Clock would shake her rusty fist, twist her tin face into a scowl, and shout: "Moron, get back on schedule! I'm not ticking away here to amuse you. You can only pull yourself out of your swamp by following my schedule. It will tell you exactly what to do, and your wristwatch will tell you exactly when to do it. Follow my advice. Until you can run your own life, I will run it for you!"

Mama Clock called Ben stupid so often that he eventually believed it. He became a docile and willing prisoner. The thought of freedom frightened him.

One day he met a thin, lively girl with dancing blue eyes. Her name was Frieda. She had a spirited way of talking, laughed easily, seemed unafraid, and had a good time wherever she went.

"Why can't I have fun, too?" he asked Mama Clock.

"You're too dumb for fun."

But Frieda thought Ben was just as smart as anybody else. "Mama Clock wants to keep you prisoner by convincing you you're stupid," she told him. "If she keeps you handcuffed to your wristwatch, you won't find out how smart you are."

Ben had many talks with Frieda. After lunch, they'd walk in the park or sit by the ocean, watching the waves roll in. As he began to understand he wasn't stupid after all, belief in himself grew.

So did his fights with Mama Clock. Fearing he might break out of Time Prison, she hurled one accusation after another at him. "Stupid, blithering, blundering idiot! Your brain is softer than an egg yolk. How can a moronic, loathsome creature like you expect to succeed in the world?"

Ben defended himself, fought off each accusation with his newfound belief. The more he fought, the more he emerged from Time Prison. He unlocked his wrists, dropped his wristwatch in the gutter, and tore up his schedule. Soon he was able to say goodbye to Mama Clock.

He held Frieda's hand as they danced down the road together.

Mama Clock screamed when she lost her son. When that didn't work, she shook her fists. When that didn't work, she calmed down. Taking a few easy breaths, she muttered, "Finally," to herself. She smiled.

Then she waved to her son. "Good luck, Ben," she said. "And have a good Time!"

*from Carlos the Cloud*

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