

## KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

She looked shocked, as she sat on the wall of the front garden, of a Victorian terrace. Dressed in a short sleeved top, capri pants but no shoes. Her slender arms covered in goosebumps as she shivered. She felt dejected, but no tears ran down her cheeks.

Just then, an old gentleman wearing a dapper suit, warm tweed overcoat and a trilby hat, looked down at her and asked why she was sitting there in the freezing cold. She said, she had locked herself out, whilst throwing out the bin.

She did not want him to know the real reason why, in fact, she herself could not process the predicament she found herself in.

He asked if she'd like to come home with him, as he lived just a few doors down the road. He explained, he lived on his own and that she could warm up and wait there, until someone could let her back into the house.

The young girl followed him into the dining room, where she found herself surrounded by different types of clocks. It seemed to her that he might have an obsession with clocks; all the clocks displayed different time, some were chiming, some cooing and some making musical tunes.

Being surrounded by clocks made her feel like she was in a different world. As if, though the clocks were ticking, time stood still.

He explained that it was his hobby to restore old clocks and that since his wife died couple of years ago, he spent much of his time tinkling with clocks or at the local library reading books and newspapers.

He lit the fire, made her tea and brought some biscuits. She felt warm and cared for. She felt she had entered a completely different world, his world and not her own, and she was glad of that!

He showed her the black and white photographs of his wife and their wedding day, and he shared many happy times they had together over the fifty years they were married.

She had completely forgotten about her dire situation, as she empathised with his plight.

It was almost 5pm, she said her mother would be home by now. She thanked him for his kindness and wished him a good evening. He replied that she was welcome any time. She smiled back at him as she left.

She rang the doorbell, her mother answered with hands covered in flour, she

was too busy making dinner to notice her daughter was not wearing any shoes or appropriately dressed for the time of year.

She ran up to her bedroom and threw herself on the bed, crying unconsolably.

She thought about the kind gentleman, as she looked at the miniature silver clock he had given her and remembered his advice, time is most valuable, use it wisely.

The following day, she packed a small suitcase and left.