

Across the clock

By Sinclair D.

“dong...dong...dong...” said a man in vin’s dream...

“ No, that can’t be real!” Vin says waking from a dream. she rushes from her bedroom down the steep wooden stairs that she always slips on. As Vin turns the corner, she notices the grandfather clock has started to tick.

Vin’s body tensed up. She begins to shiver.

“oh, please no...maybe it is coming true,” she whispers. closing her eyes and tilting her head forward, vin’s long hair falls down in front of her face. She falls to her knees in front of the large clock.

The grandfather clock looks normal. It’s made of spruce wood with gold trim. At the bottom of the pendulum is an inscription. Vin has never looked at it closely because being near the clock makes her uncomfortable. The face of the clock has 24 numbers and on the end of the golden hour hand is a black spirit, not an arrow. The spirit has hollow eyes and a frail boney frame. Vin is convinced that as it circles the hours on the clock it leaves wispy trails.

Vin has always hated this clock even though it has been with her family for centuries. Unlike most clocks, this one tells time in years not hours. The hour hand represents years, the minute hand months and the second hand days. Each hand is a key to a code that stops a curse. The curse is that the spirit needs a soul from each generation. But with the right code you can save your soul.

Vin blinks and looks closer at the pendulum, noticing an inscription on it. She reads, “When I strike twenty four, you will fall to the floor.”

Vin moves even closer and notices an old lined piece of paper attached to the wood behind the pendulum. She's nervous to reach into the clock, but Vin needs that piece of paper. Vin moves cautiously back from the clock and gets tongs from the kitchen. Returning from the kitchen, she sits in front of the clock with the tongs raised. Vin lifts her hand up and around the pendulum reaching for the paper. Suddenly Vin feels her fingers being pulled and stretched. Quickly, holding tight on the tongs, Vin pulls the paper out. As the tongs and paper leave the clock, Vin sees a black wispy trail behind them. She immediately drops them to the floor.

The black wisps dissolve. Vin uses the tongs to unfold the paper. Written in black ink is, "prep, mix, bake. 3 steps are required."

Vin wonders if this could be the start of the code. Not wasting any time, she moves to the kitchen and begins looking around. Vin enters the pantry. Nothing seems out of place. She begins to get anxious as the clock continues to tick and chime. Where could the next clue be... in the oven? No, it would have burnt away many meals ago. But maybe near it? Vin looks underneath the oven. She notices one floor board that's loose and higher than the others. Reaching underneath, Vin grips the floorboard carefully pulling it out. Flipping it over, Vin sees a piece of paper that's the same as the one from the clock.

Vin takes the delicate paper that feels like it has been used many times before. Carefully unfolding it, she sees the same handwriting, "there are six steps in the cycle of life and death."

"Yes! Maybe I can crack this code!" Vin thinks with a sense of hope. Only the last number is left to find.

Vin is certain she must go to the grave yard. Heading outside, she walks towards it. Vin touches a tombstone ignoring the fact that she's standing above a corpse. There's no clue, but as Vin looks around she notices a spooky stone that's older

than the others. Walking towards it, Vin hopes she doesn't disturb her ancestors, Vin circles the tombstone and sees a small lever.

Vin presses the lever and a paper message falls out of the tombstone. She read the message, "Each year is made of this many months. Return to the clock before it's too late."

"Yes!", Vin cries out running back to the clock. Taking a deep steadying breath in front of the clock, Vin reads the clues to ensure she has the right numbers. Carefully she reaches for the second hand and moves it to the three second position. The clock chimes louder, but the hand stays stuck in position.

"I hope that's a good sign," Vin says out loud. The clock continues to chime and starts creaking. The minute and hour hands move quicker and quicker around the face of the clock. The black wisps grow, covering the numbers.

Vin pushes the minute hand to the six minute position. The chimes from the clock distort, making odd sounds that cause goosebumps on vin's arms. The black wisps begin to swirl around the eerie spirit riding the end of the hour hand. Vin hesitates to reach for it. But she knows that if her ancestors faced this spirit and survived, She could too.

Vin reaches forward and then suddenly pulls her hand away as the chimes get louder and dong irregularly. the clock rattles and rocks from side to side. Vin grabs the bottom of the hour hand and pushes to the 12 on the clock face.

The chimes from the clock are so loud now that Vin covers her ears. But they begin to chime consistently . The chimes stop at 23. Then there's an eerie silence. The face of the clock slowly creaks open and hundreds of black wispy trails escape circling around Vin and the clock. Vin sees that inside the clock is a scroll with a thin metal chain around it. The scroll floats up and then lands at Vin's feet. As she reaches to pick it up the chain falls away and the scroll unravels. Vin hears the voice of the man from her dream...

“You’ve made it to the end. The curse is now broken, but the spirit stays with your family. You are now tasked with creating clues for the next generation. The clues you write must survive the spirit’s inspection. The next generation depends on you...and you alone.”

Vin listens to the voice and wonders, could she save the life of the next generation?