

Roundhouse Rendezvous

Dee Dee finished her shift at the café and walked the few blocks to the boarding house. She missed Mama and Papa terribly, but felt her independence was important. Besides, widow Hansen made it feel like home with her lumberjack dinners. The radio was always on in the great room; music, soap commercials, and messageas from FDR filled the downstairs almost every evening.

She usually looked forward to hanging out with the girls, though lately things had changed. For the past few weeks, a tall handsome boy from the east coast had been coming in for pie and coffee. He would sit at the end of the counter, always alone and quiet. They began to speak to each other and it was the highlight of her day; they liked eachother.

His name was Anthony and he worked long days at the roundhouse. He had started as a grease monkey but was the fireman on a proud steamer that hauled timber to the south. He left his parents in Michigan by railcar with some hobos who had inspired his love for trains. He missed his big Italian family, the dinners with children scrambling under the women cooking, men gathered on the porch, then coming together in a big loud happy meal.

Dee Dee reached the boarding house steps and tossed her coat onto a hook by the door. Mrs. Hansen called out, "Dee, a feller come by and he leaf a note for you." She raced up the stairs and found a folded sheet beneath a single red rose.

She brought the rose to her face, closed her eyes and breathed in the heady fragrance.

The simple piece of paper read:

Dee Dee, Please come to engine 2011 at 7 when my shift ends. Will you? -Tony."

It was 6 o'clock and she was still wearing her waitress uniform. This would be the fastest sprucing she ever did! The new green gaberdine dress from Main Street was perfect. Hair brushed, makeup freshened, down the stairs and out the door with an excited hi-pitched "Thank You Mrs. Hansen!"

A twenty minute walk felt like twenty hours. It would not be good to appear rushed, so as she entered the expanse of the dimly lit roundhouse, she took a slow breath and calmed herself. Tony was "the one". This is the guy she wanted Papa to meet. She knew Mama would love him as she did.

It was easy to find Engine 2011; she heard it blow every time it returned. Most everybody in town could hear the rotations grinding and the steamy sounds of the trains getting in. She stepped carefully onto the plank floor, watching the rails so as not to trip or get a heel caught.

He was cleaning his hands with a rag and had not yet seen her. She stood for a moment admiring him in the evening light that filtered in through the tall windows. Then softly, "Tony."

The scent of the rose and the familiar rank of engine oil mixed in a way that stirred them both.

In a moment they would remember always, they embraced and fell into a kiss that sealed their love forever in a Roundhouse Rendezvous.



Framed 16" x 22" original watercolor by Christina Paleno

Your auction dollars

will go toward the Timber Heritage Museum & Excursion Train