

THE TABLE OF THE HEART

By

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MINETTE is trying to put Assorted Closet Items and Boxes back into the Closet. One Box is set aside, and an Old Brief Case with a Key Lock is seen. JOE enters unseen with Brief Case, Mail, and Flowers.

MIN

I don't get it. There's one less box. Why doesn't this work?

JOE

It's the nature of the universe, as I understand it.

MIN

Joe! You scared me.
(sees Flowers)
Oh, how sweet! Thank you, honey!

MIN and JOE embrace.

JOE

Yeah, happy anniversary.
(looking through Mail)
I'm still getting letters from that Book Club. I haven't ordered anything in, I don't even know, five years. You'd think they'd get a clue. What are you working on?

MIN

I was looking for something. You're home early.

Joe notices his Old Brief Case. During the following, he checks that it is still locked, checks his Key Ring where he finds the Key, then takes Old Brief Case and hides it behind the Desk.

JOE

You're always moving things. Why do you do that?

MIN

Because I'm good at it. What happened at work?

JOE

I can't find anything when you clean. I was almost late this morning because I couldn't find my socks. I like them in the bottom drawer, they're closer to my feet. I had to inspect a new building but the new owners were missing a permit so I sent them right back downtown.

(reading)

Looks like Sue Grafton's nearing the end of her career. "Z is for Zero More Mysteries".

MIN

You always hated her titles. You said they were too boring to make you want to read the books.

JOE

I read her stuff. Just not my thing. I prefer Chandler and Hammett, and Spillane. What is this trend with adult writers now, everyone suddenly writing for kids?

MIN

Why don't you order something and find out.

JOE

These book clubs rip you off. Don't forget we have reservations for tonight.

MIN

I haven't forgotten.

JOE finally notices the Box.

JOE

What's this?

MIN

Happy Anniversary Joe!

JOE removes the Box to reveal an Old Typewriter - it has been customized to include a sword with a heart-shaped hilt.

MIN (CONT'D)

It's Sir Remington, the Swift and Trusty. Able to percy publishing houses in one page.

JOE

I thought I got rid of it.

MIN

You did. I didn't. I had it tucked away so well I almost couldn't find it.

JOE

Why did you do this, Minette? I didn't want it anymore. I told you.

MIN

You were being hasty and I didn't want you to regret it later. Besides, Sir Remington here delivered your proposal to me.

MIN (CONT'D)

I thought it would bring back some romantic memories for us tonight.

JOE

It doesn't.

MIN

Well, give it a minute. It always needed time to warm up. It's peculiar that way.

JOE

It's a worn out steel-plated burden. A museum piece. You should have left it

where you found it. You should have respected my decision and left it at that.

(pause)

Thanks for getting the oil changed, I didn't have time. I'll take a look at the shower tomorrow. I don't want to get messed up before dinner. Were you okay without it today?

MIN

Oh yeah. I didn't go to the office. I just e-mailed The Weekly Neighbor after editing this morning. And I was on the phone with your mom for quite a while.

JOE

Oh. Did you have a nice listen?

MIN

I like hearing her stories about you. She likes to remember. It's sweet. And she likes me to reassure her that I am taking care of you.

MIN (CONT'D)

And that you're taking care of me. What time is the reservation?

JOE

Six o'clock. There's a game on at eight, so that should be fine. Or, was there something you wanted to watch tonight?

MIN

No, there's nothing. I guess I'll go get cleaned up.

JOE

Min, I'm sorry but I didn't ask you to save it. You dig it up after all these years. How did you think I'd react?

MIN

It's been a long time I know, but, you can't simply discard something like this and expect to go on. As if it never existed. That was the heart and soul of your life.

JOE

If it means so much to you, you keep it. Use it for a potted plant or something.

MIN

I don't need a potted plant, Joe.

JOE

I'm sure you'll find some use for it.

MIN

Well at least you're consulting me this time. You know what, fine. It's gone.
(Doorbell is heard)

JOE

It was gone four years ago.

JOE answers the door - a Man with a Clipboard and blue Recycling Bin is revealed.

PERCY

Hello. I'm here for the recycling.

JOE

Excuse me?

PERCY

Percy's Pick-Ups. You have a typewriter, black, not seen the light of day in four years,

PERCY (CONT'D)

listed here as 57M94/Q? Sir Remington Something?

JOE

Yeah.

PERCY

I'm here to collect. 211 Longfellow Drive? Thursday? Maybe this is a bad time.

JOE

Oh no. My wife was just dragging me through the mud of Memory Lane.

MIN

It's right over here. Do you need a hand with it? Joe give him a hand with it.

PERCY

I got it. She's my final pick-up, then I'm going Home.

JOE

You saved it all this time to give to me on our anniversary and then have it taken away? Oh that's romantic.

MIN

I didn't call him.

JOE

Then what are you...? Who are you again?

MIN

He's a godsend, solving all our problems.

PERCY

Will you look at that. It's a classic. Really good shape, too. Mind if I, uh...

PERCY strikes a key.

PERCY (CONT'D)

I love that sound.

JOE

What is all this? Who sent you here?

MIN

What difference does it make? You want to get rid of it. He wants to take it. I'll get the door.

JOE

Wait a minute. I thought you wanted it. Isn't that why you've kept it all these years? Sentimental value?

MIN

Yeah, maybe. But there's been a change of heart.

PERCY

Sounds like you're having second thoughts Joe.

JOE

I am not having second thoughts. But if it means something...

PERCY

(overlapping)

Great. If you two could just sign here. Someone will be really happy to get this.

JOE

You're going to give this to just anyone?

PERCY

You have any objections?

JOE

No. It's just, my mother'll be disappointed. It's an heirloom.

MIN

I thought it was a worn out steel-plated burden. I think I'll skip dinner Joe.

MIN exits.

JOE

Women.

PERCY

Will she be gone long? I'll need her signature as well.

JOE

Why do they get so attached to things? They save everything. They won't let go. You should see the closets around here. You need a hard hat just to hang up your coat.

PERCY

Who's idea was knighthood?

JOE

Min's. We used to have this...idea...I don't know. It was stupid. She said something about guaranteeing it serve faithfully, or die trying.

PERCY
Women. Helpless romantics.

JOE
I think it's "hopeless".

PERCY
Oh, I don't know about that.

JOE
Where's your clipboard, I'll sign that
paper.

PERCY hands Clipboard and pen - Feather Pen - to JOE.

JOE (CONT'D)
Wait. Let's have a drink first. We'll
commemorate the evening. Something lost,
something gained.

PERCY
What exactly are you losing?

JOE
A false future. I mistook talent for
vocation. An amusing mistake. To your
real self be true.

PERCY
"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:
write them upon the table of thine heart."

JOE
Halleluiah.

PERCY
The key to bliss.

THEY clink glasses & drink. PERCY chokes, coughing up a Key.

PERCY (CONT'D)
Oh no.

JOE
You coughed up a key.

PERCY
Yeah. I wonder what it's for.

JOE examines the Key. He suddenly checks his Key Ring; one is missing.

JOE
Oh this can't be...

JOE retrieves his Old Brief Case. The Key unlocks it.

JOE (CONT'D)
How did you get my key?
Who are you? What do you
want here?

PERCY

(Overlapping)
It was an accident, I didn't mean to do that when I said that, but then you said, too, that was an Assisted Miracle, if you could both just sign here I can Leave You in Peace.

JOE
I want the truth! Did you just say "leave you in peace"?

PERCY
That's generally what we do.

JOE
Uh-huh.

PERCY
You're having a little trouble with this, aren't you? It's because I'm not numinous. Or luminous, even. Although, technically, halos are a result of a fourth century artist movement. Many people don't know that.

JOE
Halos. So you're...well, are you...am I in big trouble?

PERCY
Oh, no, no, no, no, no. You're thinking of Azreal. No, I'm just the household variety. Although we are in the same triad.

PERCY (CONT'D)
Third. I'm just here for the signatures, and a hundred and fifty seven points.

JOE
Do you mind if I have another...?

PERCY
No. Do you mind if I don't join you?

JOE
Of course not. Don't drink and...What are the points for? Some kind of commission?

PERCY
You could say that. I have until tonight to reach my quota.

JOE
Which is?

PERCY
Five hundred million and three.

JOE
Jesus! Where are you at?

PERCY
Four hundred ninety-nine million, nine-hundred ninety-nine thousand, eight hundred and forty-six. And I'm kind of on a deadline here.

JOE

If it's not too personal, what is it you did? I mean I didn't know you could do anything wrong.

PERCY

I was sent to answer a prayer. And when I saw her, I wanted very much to be the answer. She threw away her dreams for me. I got scared.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Maybe it's the gravity, the gravity of responsibility. Does something to us down here, it's really overwhelming. Of course, you're born to it.

JOE

I'm not so sure that it makes it any easier. Just out of curiosity, what happens to you if you don't get all your signatures tonight? Do you have to start all over?

PERCY

If, for some reason, I fail tonight, I roam the earth a soulless man, never to return Home. Everyday reminded of what I could have had, and everyday unable to forget why it isn't so.

JOE

What's it like? When you're, you know, up there?

PERCY

(pause)

Do you remember the moment that you knew you were in love? It's like that moment, times infinity. Great phrase, "in love".

JOE

Do I sign here?

PERCY

Yes, Sir.

JOE signs, MIN enters.

MIN

Would you mind looking at the shower. Please.

JOE

Yeah. Sure.

JOE exits taking his Old Brief Case with him.

MIN

Aren't you taking this?

PERCY

Sure. If you could just sign here.

MIN

Didn't Joe sign it?

PERCY

I need signatures from both parties.

MIN

I don't know why you want to give this away. You could get a lot of money for it. I mean without the decorations.

PERCY

It's not about the money. I collect broken dreams and recycle them. This typewriter is an ugly duckling about to become someone else's swan.

MIN

I see. Percy. That's short for Percival, isn't it, I like it. Do you believe in 'happily ever after', Percy?

PERCY

It's kind of an occupational hazard.

MIN

We had it coming to us. The story book romance. The fairy tale ending. We struggled at first, but we knew where we were headed. We could always just see it on the horizon, that sunset we were riding into. Then one critic slammed him.

JOE enters unseen with Old Brief Case.

MIN (CONT'D)

Said his material read like a "lovesick antiquity". One critic. You know I pulled this out of the trash. I kept it at his mother's house for a couple of years, I didn't dare risk him finding it here. Why are men so stubborn? And selfish. He tears his heart out, locks it up and throws it away! Only he forgot that it's not his to dispose of. He forgot about the day that he gave his heart to me.

MIN signs the Form.

JOE

I was trying to protect you. I wanted you to be the wife of a successful, well-respected writer. Not some joke in the Book Review. I was embarrassed. I couldn't write and you took a job to pay the bills. Not the life we dreamed of.

JOE opens the Old Brief Case. He takes out a Manuscript and gives it to MIN.

JOE (CONT'D)

I started writing it while my last book was being published. I put it away when the review came out.

MIN

(reading)

"For Min, my Faithful Defender".

JOE

I've kept this locked up long enough.
Forgive me?

MIN

I did, a long time ago. You just need to
forgive yourself.

PERCY crosses to door with Typewriter.

JOE

Hey, wait a minute with that.

JOE strikes a key.

JOE (CONT'D)

Go Home, Percy. And thank you.

PERCY

My pleasure.

As PERCY steps into threshold a warm, white light shines on him.

PERCY (CONT'D)

I'm feeling a bit luminous.

PERCY disappears.

MIN

Joe, did you see that? It was like he
just...like he walked into...

JOE

Pure joy.

CURTAIN