

## THE TIN HEART

by

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Minnie is putting boxes back in the closet. Joe enters unseen carrying his briefcase, flowers, and the mail. He puts the flowers on a table.

MINNIE

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

JOE

It's the nature of the universe.

MINNIE

Joe!

(sees  
flowers)

Oh, how sweet! Thank you,  
honey!

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?

MINNIE

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

JOE

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

MINNIE

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.

(pause)

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

MINNIE

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. What is this trend with writers now, everyone suddenly writing for kids?

MINNIE

Why don't you order something and find out.

JOE

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

MINNIE

I haven't forgotten.

Joe finally notices the box.

JOE

What's this?

MINNIE  
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 and dubbed Sir Remington.

MINNIE  
It's Sir Remington, Dauntless  
and tenacious. Able to pierce  
publishing houses in one page.

JOE  
I thought I got rid of it.

MINNIE  
I kept it. I had it tucked away so  
well I almost couldn't find it.

JOE  
Minnie why'd you do that. I  
didn't want it anymore. I told  
you.

MINNIE  
You were being hasty and I  
didn't want you to regret it later.  
Besides, Sir Remington here  
delivered your proposal to me. I  
thought it would bring back  
some romantic memories for us  
tonight.

JOE  
It doesn't.

MINNIE  
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?

MINNIE

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?

MINNIE

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. 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?

MINNIE

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

JOE

Minnie, 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.

MINNIE

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.

(doorbell  
is heard)

JOE

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

Joe answers the door - a roguish looking man with a clipboard and  
blue recycling bin is revealed.

MINNIE

I don't need a potted plant, Joe.

JOE

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

MINNIE

Well at least you're consulting  
me this time.

PERCY

Hello. I'm here for the  
recycling.

JOE

Excuse me?

PERCY

Percy's Pick-Ups. You have a  
typewriter, sku number  
57M94/Q? Sir Remington  
Something?

JOE

Yeah.

PERCY

I'm here to collect. 5521  
Rosewood Drive? Thursday?  
Maybe this is a bad time.

JOE

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

MINNIE

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.

MINNIE

I didn't call him.

PERCY

She didn't call me.

JOE

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

PERCY

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

JOE

Minnie's taken good care of it. Who sent you here?

MINNIE

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?

MINNIE

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 to her to keep this around...

PERCY

Great. If you two could just sign here. This will make some nice chess pieces. Or golf clubs.

JOE

(not  
signing)

You're going to melt this down?

PERCY

You have any objections?

JOE

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

MINNIE

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

(she  
exits)

JOE

Women.

PERCY

Will she be gone long? I actually 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

Minnie'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. Hopeless romantics.

JOE

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

Halleluiah. The Key to Bliss.

They clink glasses & drink. Percy chokes, coughing up a key.

PERCY

I did it again.

JOE

You coughed up a key. This is the key to my chest- where did you- ?

PERCY

It was an accident, I didn't mean to do that when I said that, but you were thinking it, that was not a solo miracle, just sign here and I can Leave You in Peace.

JOE

What do you mean solo...? How did you get this? Did you say "leave me in peace"?

PERCY

That's generally what we do.

JOE

Uh-huh. Do you mind if I have another...? So you're, recycling.

PERCY

Retribution. Of minimal proportions. Oh, I'm not avenging or ministering. No rapturous production number with me. I'm the household variety, and I'm just here for the signatures. And a hundred and fifty-seven points.

JOE

What are the points for? Some kind of commission?

PERCY

You could say that. See I can't get back up until I 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. I've got until six o'clock tonight to walk that baby over the threshold.

JOE

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

There are no second chances for us. It's you lovely creatures down here that get all the breaks, whether you know it or not. If for some reason I fail tonight, I roam the earth a souless man, never to return Home. A Living Hell. Everyday reminded of what I could have had, and everyday unable to forget why it isn't so.

JOE

Do I sign here?

PERCY

Yes, Sir.

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 slipped. I was visiting and I met a beautiful creature, a woman. We "fell in love". But I couldn't have both worlds. I chose God. It, I, broke her heart.

Got grounded. But that little beauty gets me my wings back.

JOE

Sounds like someone's lucky day.

PERCY

You have no idea. In a little while I'll be basking in the Light, completely restored. Pure Joy.

Minnie enters.

MINNIE

Would you mind looking at the shower. Please.

JOE

Yeah. Sure.  
(exits)

MINNIE

Aren't you taking this?

PERCY

Sure. If you could just sign here.

MINNIE

Didn't Joe sign it?

PERCY

I need signatures from both parties.

MINNIE

I don't know why you want to melt this down. You could get a lot of money for it as is. 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.

MINNIE

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.

MINNIE

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 a small chest.

MINNIE

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.

Minnie 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.

Percy places typewriter on table and moves toward the door.

JOE  
Aren't you taking that with you?

PERCY  
That tin bucket's still got a pulse.

JOE  
But your task. No second  
chances.

PERCY  
Happy Anniversary.

MINNIE  
Joe, what are you talking about?

Joe opens the chest with the Key. He takes out an envelope and  
gives it to Minnie.

JOE  
It's an I.O.U. I wrote it a long  
time ago. I just never felt like I  
could honor it. Until now.

MINNIE  
(reading)  
"I owe you One Revision". You  
misspelled revision.

As Percy steps into the doorway a white light shines on him.

PERCY  
I was wrong about that  
production number.

JOE  
Are you seeing this, Minnie?

MINNIE  
What is that?

JOE

Pure Joy.

CURTAIN