

The Iron Giant

By Rebecca Smillie

The iron giant came to a shrieking halt in front of the tweed jacket standing two feet away from a would-be accident on the tracks. Douglas was going to meet a young Miss Dorothy May Ascott. He was destined not to be late. Every moment he wasted at the train station was a moment he could have spent with Miss Dorothy May. Slightly irked by the time it took for the doors to open, Douglas elbowed his way into a cabin with two young girls sitting inside unattended. Rather than question the absence of a guardian, Douglas stuck his nose out the window, trying to forget anyone else was in the cabin with him.

The two girls were dressed in blue and yellow baby pastels. One was wearing a gaudy, yellow hat adorned with feathers. Douglas wondered why anyone would put a child in a hat that nobody under the age of fifty would wear. The other girl was wearing a similar coat, but in blue, and in place of the yellow hat was wearing a large piece of costume jewelry, a fake pearl necklace.

“Excuse me, sir, that’s quite a nice briefcase you’ve got there,” said the girl in blue.

“Ah yes, it is, thank you,” Douglas replied, his eyes not straying from their resting place beyond the glass.

“I reckon you’re a lawyer or som’ with a fancy case like that,” said the girl in yellow.

“Exactly right.” The young girls’s eyes met momentarily before diverging like two billiard balls broken by the cue.

Douglas sat, examined his wrist watch, and restlessly wondered why the train wasn’t moving yet. He left the cabin and confronted the conductor.

“It is 6:15 p.m. Fifteen minutes after this train was supposed to depart.”

“I’m sorry for the delay, sir.”

“I will not tolerate this. I expected better service from a railway like this.” His eyes looked like they were about to bulge out of his head.

“I’m sorry, sir, we are doing the best we can. Please return to your cabin and we will depart as soon as possible.” With pursed lips Douglas retreated to his cabin to find the door locked. Perplexed, he tried the knob again then began banging on the door.

“Hello. Hellooooooo? Excuse me!” Douglas rested his ear to the door to listen. When it finally opened. He fell into the cabin ear first. His head landed on the windowsill then onto the floor as the young girls watched wide-eyed. Without a word, he shot up, dusted himself off, sat down, and began looking out the window again.

“We’re terribly sorry, Sir.”

“And you should be-” this time Douglas actually looked at the young girls as he was speaking, “-a gentleman deserves not to be locked out of his own cabin. Why did you need to lock it in the first place?”

“Why, I don’t even know how it got locked. Do you?” The girl in blue looked toward the girl in yellow.

“No, I certainly didn’t do it on purpose. I must have slipped as I went to close the door after you left, sir.”

The train stayed stationary for at least ten more minutes and Douglas stayed restless.

“This is a waste of my time,” Douglas muttered to himself.

“Do you have somewhere to be, sir?” the girl in the blue hat asked innocently.

“Why yes, I am going to meet someone.”

“Who might this someone be?”

“A friend of mine...Miss Dorothy May is her name”

“Why, that’s a mighty nice name,” said the girl in yellow.

“Is she pretty?” said the girl in blue

Douglas nodded proudly.

“May we see a picture, Sir?”

“Yes, we would love to see a picture.” Half reluctant, but half glad that they asked, Douglas opened his briefcase to look for his wallet. He loved telling people about his Dorothy May and he loved debuting her picture. A good wallet portrait is worth the hundreds of oohs and ahhs of admiration. Douglas reached into his briefcase and rifled around, before realizing his wallet was not in his briefcase. He stood up, looked in his seat and under his chair, but it was not in the cabin.

“What’s wrong mister?” The words of the little girl in blue were barely audible to Douglas as he racked his mind for where the wallet could be. When was the last time he used it? It must have been inside the train station.

“I’ve left my wallet inside the train station,” Douglas said, mostly to himself.

“Oh no. The train hasn’t moved for this long, I’m sure you have time to run in,” the girl in yellow said, but Douglas was already off of the train, leaving his briefcase, and all his belongings, behind. He asked the man who sold him his ticket if he had seen his wallet. He hadn’t. He looked in the place he had waited for the train. It wasn’t there. Finally, he went back inside the train station, to check the ticketing counter one last time when he overheard a lady beside him.

“Are you sure I didn’t leave a hat here? I didn’t set it down when I purchased my tickets? It was yellow with all sorts of feathers...”

“I’m sorry Miss. I haven’t seen it.” The lady left the counter and the ticking agent remarked to another ticketing agent, “What’s with all these careless people losing things today? First that lady lost her pearl necklace, and now this.”

Douglas stood there in the train station, surrounded by bustling crowds of people weaving around him like the intricate pattern of a handmade blanket, when he had a moment of realization. He ran outside just in time to see the train start barreling down the tracks. He ran alongside the train, trying desperately to stop it, waving his arms like a madman in hopes of getting someone’s attention. He called after the train again and again. He caught up with it just enough to see the girls in yellow and blue poke their heads out the window a few cars ahead of him. They giggled and dropped a piece of paper out the window. Douglas stopped, breathless, as the iron giant left him standing alone. The piece of paper floated towards him. As it caught the wind it seemed to fly, fluttering its wings on the blast of the train like a butterfly. Douglas caught it. It was a wallet-sized portrait of Dorothy Mae, the same one that was given to him as a gift not long ago, and on the back was written, “You were right, she is quite beautiful.”