

The Antique Clock

by MaryAnn Diorio

The flashing sign on the side of the road caught Becca Jordan's eye: "Largest Flea Market This Side of the Mississippi." Not one who could pass by a good bargain without stopping, she pulled her pearl blue 2010 Honda Civic off the road and onto the gravel parking lot in front of a huge tent. Dozens of cars were already parked there, making it a bit difficult to find a parking space. To her delight, she found one right in front of the main entrance.

"Thank You, Jesus!" She smiled to herself as she whispered a prayer of thanks.

The October day was brisk and beautiful as she exited her car. She slung her tote bag over her shoulder, a relic of her college graduation three years earlier, and hurried toward the entrance. Several shoppers preceded her into the large tent.

As she entered, the appetizing smell of baked beans and grilling hot dogs floated through the air. She hadn't eaten since she'd left her grandmother's house earlier that morning, and it was now almost noon. She'd pick up a hot dog to eat before resuming her two-hour trip back home to Virginia.

Dozens of long tables filled with all kinds of wares offered row after row of exciting possibilities for exploration. Becca ventured down a row in the middle and scanned both sides. A table of antique clocks caught her eye. Ever since her parents had purchased an old grandfather clock at a yard sale when Becca was six years old, clocks had always fascinated her. But what fascinated her even more so was the countdown of time that clocks represented.

She stopped in front of the table, her gaze immediately drawn to a black onyx mantle clock. Its graceful hour-glass shape, trimmed in gold, would look perfect on her mantle back home. A slight crack on the façade marred the face, but other than that, it was a stunning work of art.

Becca glanced at the price tag: \$100. Perhaps she could get the seller to reduce the price a bit. She turned to the lady sitting behind the table. "Can you tell me something about this clock?"

The elderly woman leaned forward, adjusting her glasses on her nose. "To be honest with you, dear, I bought it myself at a yard sale but never did ask about it."

Becca's heart sank. Surely this clock must have sat in the home of some notable figure. "Do you know how old it is?"

"There's a date engraved on the bottom that reads 1890."

Wow! One hundred thirty years old! "Is there any chance of a discount?"

The woman hesitated and then replied. "I want to get it off my hands, so you can have it for \$85."

Just then, the antique clock struck the hour. Its rich melodious sound sent a shiver up Becca's spine. "What a beautiful sound!"

The woman smiled. "Its sound is its best feature."

Becca drew in a deep breath. "I'll take it."

The transaction made, Becca carried the clock back to her car and carefully laid it on the floor of the back seat so that it would not tip over as she drove. Once home, she brought it into her house and set it on the kitchen table to wind it up before placing it on the mantle.

Taking the small thick key that came taped to the back, Becca inserted it into the two openings on the front and slowly wound them. She then turned the clock around to make sure that the pendulum swung properly.

When she opened the circular door on the back that housed the pendulum, her hand brushed against a small slip of paper taped to the inside of the little door. Frayed at the edges, the paper had a yellowish tinge to it, as though it had been hidden in the clock for many years.

Becca's curiosity piqued. Perhaps it was just a set of instructions on running the clock. Perhaps not. She carefully dislodged the piece of paper, unfolded it, and read the words scribbled on it.

"Rebecca, my love, I am hiding this note in the clock as we arranged. Please deliver immediately to Captain Richard Morehead. He will know what to do. No matter what the outcome of the war, my heart is yours forever. – William".

Under the signature was the date August 11, 1853. A shiver ran through Becca. The woman in the note bore her name. Who was she? And what had happened to her? Obviously, the piece of paper had never been found, nor had it ever been delivered to the said Captain Richard Morehead.

She sat down on the couch. Who was Captain Morehead? Why was it important that he receive the note? What had happened to him since he did not receive it? And who was William who'd written the note and placed it in the clock? Now her clock.

Becca had to know.

But how to find out? Question after question bombarded her mind. What should she do? What could she do now, more than 180 years later? She would contact the lady who'd sold her the clock to find out where she'd purchased it. Becca would trace its history back to William and to his lost love.

And she wouldn't stop until she discovered the answers to her questions.

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