

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
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The Banjo

by Tina Blower

Most people have one story to tell and this one is mine. I was hanging by the neck in a shop full of different kinds of musical instruments. Some voluptuous and very full bodied, some smaller and rounder like me. We all had different types of strings, different tones and different stories to tell. My story started in the 1920s. I was crafted by a very gentle, quiet man. He spent hours cutting, sanding and shaping my long thin neck. He took greater care bending my body into a perfect round, lacquering me, adding some ornate details and stretching the steel strings out across me.

The first time he played me was very special. As soon as he placed his fingers around my neck, we connected and the music came out of me. He had put a lot of himself into me and the playing was effortless. He closed his eyes in rapture. I stayed with him for a while until he brought another banjo into being, similar to me but not quite the same. He then sold me to a local shopkeeper in Kansas. I wasn't there very long when a farmer came up to the window and peered in straight at me. He looked kind of sun-burnt and dusty but had kind, intelligent eyes. He walked into the shop at a leisurely pace and asked the shopkeeper about me.

I liked his grip on me and the music flowed, slightly differently, but I was happy with him. He bought me and I spent the next few years on a dusty farm playing to the moonlight on the porch every evening. Then everything turned red. Clouds of dust descended, getting into everything and choking us. My owner and his family packed up all their things and we moved through the dust. I was played a lot more after that. The farmer could not make a living that way anymore so he became a full-time musician. We travelled a lot on the railroads and had fun together making the beautiful ladies and smart gentleman dance. The music had changed then and was lively and vibrant.

We had got to know each other better as well so I could tease music out of the kind farmer's soul. The music was tinged with green plants growing through red soil, the sweat of a horse's back and the ache of the farmer's muscles after a day ploughing the earth. We had many more happy years together until he died in the 1980s. I was taken to a music shop where I stayed for many years until I met my new owner. A tall gentle soul came up to me wearing clothes outside his era. They suited him and he looked completely comfortable in his own skin. He reminded me of my farmer.

I didn't see him again until he had saved up a lot of money to buy me. When he picked me up for the first time, I knew he was the right one and made sure that I made the loveliest music I could. He took me on an old steam train and seemed to instinctively know that I belonged there. All of my old memories came flooding back and for both my new owner and I, it didn't get any better than this.