

Noah Steals a Kiss

Noah took his first train ride on the Amtrak, Cascade Limited when he was only four. A new train station had been constructed in Stanwood, Washington only five miles from his grandparent's home on Camano Island. It seemed like a perfect opportunity for Noah to spend a day with grandpa and grandma on a train ride, forty miles up the coast to Bellingham.

On the big day of the train ride, Noah arrived at the station early with Grandpa and Grandma. He looked down the tracks expecting to see the train coming, but, there was no train.

"You've got to wait a little," said Grandpa. "The train's probably still ten miles away. It won't be long now, though."

After another ten minutes, Noah began to get bored and walked over to the edge of the platform, leaned over the tracks, and peered down the rails. Still no train.

"Grandpa, where's the train? When's it going to get here?"

"It should be here soon, Noah," Grandpa Larry replied. "I tell you what, while we're waiting, let's put some pennies on the track. When the train comes, it'll run over the coins and squeeze them flat."

"Okay," Noah said quizzically. "But, why will the pennies get flat?"

"Because the train is really heavy, and it'll squeeze the cooper like clay," Grandpa Larry said, as he took two pennies from his pocket and gave one to Noah to place on the rails. They had no sooner put the coins on the rail than Noah heard a train whistle off in the distance.

"Here comes the train, Noah. Hurry and get off the track!" grandpa said. Noah and his grandfather jumped back up on the platform and rejoined his Grandma Jaye, near the edge of the platform, away from the tracks. He didn't want to be too close when the big engine to the Cascade Limited came into the station.

He forgot all about the coins as the locomotive pulling eight passenger cars came whooshing into the station. The train was big and noisy when it got close. And the bells at the street crossing near the station were clanging loudly. As it came to a stop, a door opened two car lengths away, and a conductor in a funny round hat with a flat top stepped out of the train. He called for Noah and his grandparents to come to his door and get on. Noah climbed two metal steps up into the train and began looking for a seat. Grandpa and grandma followed Noah into the train and found a couple of empty seats with a table where they could play cards during the ride to Bellingham.

As Noah squeezed into the seat he scooted over to the window and looked out to see the train station moving by. "Grandpa, is the train station moving!"

Grandpa said, "No, the station isn't moving, we are. The train started moving so gently as we got on, you didn't feel it leave the station. We're already on our way. You can stay by the window and watch for cows in the fields and cars on the road. Oh, look, there's the crossing signal on the road to Mt. Vernon. See the lights flashing and hear the warning bell?"

About that time the engine blew its horn. "Grandma, did you hear that?" Noah said. "The engineer must be telling people to get out of the way!"

Grandma looked at Noah and said, "Yes, we're moving fast now, but we'll be stopping at the train station in Mt. Vernon for more passengers soon. Do you want to play cards now, or just look out the window for a while?"

Before Noah could answer, a little girl in a red, top and pants walked across the aisle from the seats on the other side of the train, and said to him, "Hi, my name's Christy. What's yours?"

Noah turned around and smiled. "I'm Noah. We're going to Bellingham. Where are you going?"

"My parents are taking me to the Spark museum in Bellingham. Do you want to come with us?"

"What's the Spark museum?" Noah replied.

"It's a science museum that talks about electricity and lightning, and stuff. Do you want to go with me? Huh, do you?"

Noah turned to Grandpa and asked, "Can we go too, Grandpa?"

"Sure, why not. We've got the whole day before it's time to catch the return train back to Stanwood. We haven't planned to do anything special."

Noah spent the remainder of the train ride talking with Christy and looking out the window. They saw lots of cows and farms. Noah and Christy talked and played together like they had known each other a long time. Christy's parents seemed amused that they were getting along so well.

The train started moving past the ocean and through the trees along the shore. At one place it went into a tunnel and the train was dark for several minutes. When the train emerged from the tunnel it crossed a lagoon, went through another short tunnel, and then the beautiful San Juan islands appeared to the west.

Finally, the train began to slow, and Noah heard the conductor yell, "Next stop, Fairhaven! All those for Fairhaven, Bellingham, Mt. Baker! Fairhaven!"

"That's our stop," Grandpa said. Get ready to get off the train." Noah and his new friend jumped off the seat together and headed for the door. Christy's parents, and grandpa and grandma gathered around them and they stepped down off the train together into the train station.

Christy's parents led the way to a city bus that was going from Fairhaven to Bellingham. They then led the small group on a short walk to the Spark Museum in Old Bellingham. Noah and Christy led the way through the displays of sparking machines, telegraphs, telephones, radios, and all kinds of electrical gadgets in the museum. It was fun watching sparks move up and down the spark machine, listen to President Roosevelt give his famous speech, "... this day will live in infamy!" and look for enemy aircraft on an old WW II radar.

As they wandered through the museum, Noah and Christy giggled and kidded each other. But, after an hour of reading stories of inventors and toying with old electronic equipment, grandpa said, "It's time to head back to the train station, Noah. We don't want to miss our ride back home!"

Christy's parents also said, "Tell Noah goodbye, Christy. We've got to go too. We're going to the historic, old Mt. Baker Theater for the three o'clock matinee of Peter Pan, and it's almost time."

Christy turned to Noah and said, "I've got to go now. I had fun playing with you," and she kissed him on the cheek.

Noah reached up to where he had been kissed and said, "Christy, would you like to marry me?"

Christy replied, "No, I can't today. We're going to see Peter Pan right now." And, she turned and waved goodbye, as she and her parents walked out of the Spark Museum.

Noah and his grandparents rode the bus back to Fairhaven, had lunch, and just got back in time for the six o'clock train, home to Stanwood. The ride back along the ocean, into the tunnel, through the forest, and past the cows was lonely without Christy, but then grandpa said, "When we get to Stanwood we'll have to look for the pennies we left on the track for the train to run over. They should be really flat."

The train ride seemed to take much longer going back without Christy to talk with, but he could hardly wait to see the flat pennies. Finally, the conductor yelled, "Next stop, Stanwood! Camano Island! Next stop Stanwood!"

After getting off the train at the station, Noah waited with his grandparents for the train to leave the station. Slowly, it pulled away, heading for Seattle. Noah ran over to where he and grandpa had left the pennies on the track, but he didn't see them. Maybe someone had taken them! Noah was disappointed. He had wanted a keepsake to remember his ride on the train. It looked like the only keepsake he had now was the kiss on his cheek from Christy.

But, then grandpa came over to help search for the pennies. Grandpa said, "Maybe the train knocked the pennies off the track when it ran over them. Let's look in the gravel next to the tracks"

Noah looked down the rails to make sure no trains were coming. He looked both ways, but all he could see was a red signal light far down the track. He

stepped over the rail and onto the gravel. Then he spotted them! There were two thin cooper disks lying next to the train track, close to where he and grandpa had left them. But, they didn't look like pennies now. They were paper thin, smooth, and all the writing was gone. And, the coins were now twice as big in diameter. The train had really flattened his pennies!

Then, grandpa quoted his silly poem to Noah again!

A peanut sit'n on a railroad track,

his heart all a'flutter.

Around the curve came a choo choo train.

Whoo whoo, peanut butter!