

Hair Loom

by

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Baloosa frimped up the big wig in the front window. It was an all white affair with lots of curls down the back, straight sides and a beehive looking top some twelve inches high. It had been freshly powdered and looked, though a bit worn, at least serviceable. It actually wasn't a new wig. In fact, it was quite old, having belonged to someone who died long before. The silly old Collie dog was half blind and I hadn't the heart to tell her how hideous it was when she purchased it the week before at market for near nothing. The thing had been out of style for at least two generations.

"Baloosa my dear," I asked, peeking out from the back, "Do you really think we should place that raggedy old item in the window? Surely I have others in better shape."

"You are such a silly old puppy," she replied without turning. "You watch and see how fast this piece flies out the door. It's an heirloom... a real treasure."

"Hair loom," I replied, thinking of a job I had to be about. Turning, I went to my work table and sat heavily. "Yes... I could use it. Can you fetch it for me please?"

She dusted the wig again with talcum, (my nose told me it was so) and then pranced to the back of the store to do as I requested. She was a good old girl... twice my age, but who cared. She was good company and the world be damned.

Oh yes... my name is Wilfred... Wilfred the Wig Maker. I'm a Golden Retriever with long beautiful hair. No; I'm not speaking these words through ego. I'm simply being practical in the description of myself. I am actually as bald as a boiled egg; and thus my occupation as wig maker. I've made wigs for the very rich, collecting a coin or two, and for the very poor, making nothing at all. This is my part in tithing to the church; helping the poor.

The loom clattered to the table next to me. I jumped; and then cringed as it was old and worn. Had it broken the means of my livelihood would have been lost. I was about to snap out something stupid when Baloosa cut me off.

"Here you go silly dog," she told me cheerily. "Do you wish to make a wager on that wig walking itself out the door?"

"Walking as in 'all the fleas holding hands and moving it along', or as in 'an actual sale'?"

I picked up the loom and began pursuing my craft. This wig was for a very old Chihuahua whose dieing wish was to finally have hair. What little there was originally

had, long since fallen out. The poor old girl was one of the few dogs I've met in my life as bald as I was myself... and thus the present I was to make as she was also quite penniless.

"A sale," Baloosa told me with a smile. She was up to something but the thought passed through my mind so quickly it didn't stick.

"And what is your wager?"

"If I sell it, you have to make us dinner tonight."

"Really?" I asked without looking up at her. I was now busy pulling through strands of hair I'd purchased from a German Shepherd that morning. I'd gently shaved him, and in return he accepted his coin gratefully. "And what if you lose?"

"I'll rub you entire body with warm oil, brew you your favorite tea, and make you something very fancy for dinner."

She was pressing all the right buttons. If I hadn't been so busy at my loom, I would have seen this and been a little more wary.

"Done," I told her.

I then lost track of time as I concentrated on my job.

Later that afternoon, with the Chihuahua wig almost worked to completion, I heard the shop's bell tingle. Baloosa greeted the customer. The music of her voice was soothing to my ears as it always was. The customer's voice was male, and rather deep. This would signify royalty... or perhaps someone with a very bad cold.

The bell tingled again, and another voice joined it without so much as a greeting. My ears perked up. It was not odd to have two customers at a time, but it wasn't all that common either. I continued working, ignoring the voices. The vision of that poor old shivering Chihuahua was haunting my thoughts and there wasn't room in my head for much else. The priest told me she could go at any time, and the possibility of her ghost haunting my shop because I had not fulfilled my promise, was very disconcerting.

The bell rang again, and a third and fourth voice joined the conversation. One offered a fair amount of coin... and the next upped the offer. The bell rang again and more voices arrived. The volume rose considerably. That was when I heard old Baloosa bark a command, and all the voices became still. She then began what sounded like a chant of numbers; all of which grew steadily larger and larger... until all the voices but the Collie's were still.

"Once," I heard her say.

“Twice,” I heard her say a bit louder.

“Three times... and sold!”

Placing my old hair loom on the table, I rose with but a little difficulty, my arthritis getting the better of me once again. As I poked my head out of the back, I saw the last of our patrons leaving. As suspected; all of them were Great Danes and dressed to the nines. As this last one left, another Dog came through the door. He was a Greyhound bearing the crest of the Royal Messenger Service.

“Baloosa Collie?” he asked briskly.

The Dog in question smiled at him, accepted the package he presented, and then pressed a coin in to his waiting paw.

“Thank you,” he told her, pocketing the coin without looking at it; bad luck if he had, and as strong a superstition as there could be. I knew he would be in for quite a surprise when he finally did look at his tip; I’d seen the color of gold disappear into that uniform.

“Here now,” I said to her. “Baloosa... what just happened?”

Seeing the messenger out the door, she turned to me and smiled in a large fashion. “Do you remember, Wilfred, that I once told you I had a cousin in the employ of the King?”

“Yes, yes... an assistant to the assistant of chamber pots or some such thing.”

“Almost correct, but that’s all right. I forgive you your bad memory. He heard from Willy his mentor, who heard from Gwen the cook’s assistant, who heard from Arthur the potato peeler, who heard from Tosta the King’s wine server... who heard it from the Queen herself; that there was to be a ball at the castle this weekend.”

“Yes... and so? They have a ball every weekend, so what?”

She smiled, and swished her tail, enjoying the game very much. “This ball is a very special ball, as all the Dogs are to dress as Dogs did in the time of the King’s grandfather.”

“The wig?” I asked; and I will admit here that I was indeed impressed.

“A bonified heirloom which belonged to the King’s grandmother,” she informed me.

She then held out the package looking so much as she must have when no more than a pup... her smile was absolutely adorable.

“And what’s this?” I asked, accepting the package. Tearing the paper open, I found myself holding a brand new hair loom.

“Your old one has been mended so many times Wilfred, and your fingers are not what they used to be. I wanted to give you something special.”

Honestly, I didn’t know what to say. I had no words that could possibly come close to conveying what I felt. I think the old girl understood this.

Holding up a paw to me, she giggled and then said, “Tell me nothing, if you please, Mr. Wig Maker; but do cook me a very plump and juicy goose for my diner. Oh... and some of your tea would be much appreciated too.”