

Past

by

Vixxy Fox



**Monument Park
Corry, Pennsylvania**

Inscription: Erected in memory of the nation's dead who gave their lives to preserve the union; may they rest in peace.

The side cannon bear the markings: Post 70 GAR (*Grand Army of the Republic*)

“So what was it like back then?” James asked, his tablet at the ready and pencil poised to take notes.

Adam thought about this, his head resting upon hands that rested upon a musket. It wasn't loaded and acted well as a walking stick during the moments it was needed. The pair sat upon a park bench in the shade of a huge oak tree planted at the time the monument was dedicated. The day was bright and clear. What traffic noise there was seemed to be in the distance and not the hundred or so feet away that it was.

“It was a lot quieter,” the soldier finally replied. “People talked to each other more. Music was all handmade and horse poop was a common place odor.”

“I'm being serious,” James told him. “I have to do this report and if I don't get a passing grade I'll fail the class. If I fail the class I won't graduate High School. If I don't graduate High School...”

“You’ll be left behind by your classmates and forgotten; doomed to live your life in the reflections of a past which nobody seems to take much notice of,” Adam finished for him. “I sort of understand that one.”

“So be serious then,” James pleaded. “We’ve been friends now ever since I can remember. Help me with this report.”

“Who’s your teacher?”

“Miss Bennet.”

James smiled. “She’s damned near as old as me,” he mused, “And still a Miss. We used to speak a bit too, back when my metal wasn’t so green and she was but a young thing all full of life and the thought of changing the world. I asked her once, ‘You’re a female, how do you expect to change the world when your world will consist solely of the kitchen and the bedroom?’” He thought about this and then chuckled. “Mind you, the use of those two rooms is inversely proportional to the age of the occupants and the length of the marriage.”

Adam jotted this down figuring it might get him extra points when she read it. “What else?”

“To spite me, Miss Bennet became a teacher and quoted the words of Abraham Lincoln when I asked her why. ‘The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next,’ where after she added; And that is how I will change the world. She’ll remember an era when there were still more horses on the streets than cars. The city, and it was far more a city then than it is now, actually had a sanitation department that pushed large cans up and down the street picking up horse poop which they would deposit in the flower beds of this park.”

“They did have cars?”

“Yes they had cars, but those were the new generation’s toy. The rich could afford them and the poor folks all made fun of the fact that they were constantly in need of fix’n.”

“What about the city? I’ve always wondered about its layout.”

“All right then,” James told him, “I’ll tell you that only if you promise to write it all down and then you research it. Talk to the old people and they’ll fill in the gaps for you. It’s important for a community to know their roots. There’s a reason this place happened and it’s called the railroad.”

“Trains?” Adam looked up in disbelief. The only trains he was familiar with were the mile long freighters that rolled through town occasionally making a lot of noise and disrupting traffic on Center Street.

James sighed. Things had so changed since the Civil War. “I came to be around 1870. I was to be a monument for the remembrance of those men who gave their lives in order to protect the union

of the states. If they had not done this, there would be two countries on this continent. Quite possibly each state might have reverted to being on their own and you'd now have a whole bunch of little countries just like they have in Europe. Trains are the main thing that helped the industrial north beat a largely agricultural south."

The man of bronze shifted his position on the park bench, knowing he would soon have to resume his silent vigil over a park that had not much changed since its creation; except it no longer was used as a central gathering place for a quiet evening's concert.

"This city came about because of the railroads. Three different rail heads came through this same small valley at the same small place. Back then there were no 'real' roads connecting the cities of this great country so transportation of any type fell to the steel rail. That being said, industry grew up around the trains because that was how their products were shipped. This industry needed workers, workers needed homes, and so the town, as it built up around the industry, spread out in order to support those living here."

He pointed off in the direction of where the railroad was located. "The first proper street was built parallel to the tracks and because it was the first it was called Main Street. This street came along later and was known as Center Street because it cut Main Street in half. Since it led to the new housing area they actually had a horse drawn trolley, also on steel rails, so the workers had a convenient way to get into town."

Adam wrote this all down.

"You fill in the rest," James told him with a pat to the boy's knee, "But end it with this poem:

Too little are those who can see.
Fewer still are those who understand.
Even less are those who care.

Those few are all that stand in the way
Of a bloody past repeating itself."

The boy looked up at a friend who did not truly exist as existence is known by the majority. "I like that... who said it?"

The statue smiled and then stood for a stretch before going back to his silent vigil.

"You did, just now in your report."

James looked down at his notebook and found the words written there; though he did not remember writing them.

