

Company for BoCo

Written by: TheBuriedTruck

BoCo enjoyed taking the night goods. The evening air was crisp, and it was nice running with no other engines around. Best of all, the trucks were too busy sleeping to cause any mischief!

One foggy evening, he arrived on the Other Railway right on time. He parked his trucks, and made his way to the shed. The yard was big, but BoCo never had any trouble finding his way. Tonight, however, the fog was so thick that he had completely lost his bearings.

“Strange,” he muttered to himself, “I’m certain the sheds were around here.”

Suddenly, BoCo could see the outline of a building ahead.

“Finally,” he smiled.

His relief was short-lived. As he drew closer, he saw it wasn’t the big shed where the mainland diesels slept. It was smaller, and more akin to the old sheds on Sodor. It was shabby, and looked as if it had been vacant for a long time.

“A shed’s a shed, old fellow,” sighed his driver. “We’ll go mad trying to find our way in this fog any longer.”

BoCo was uneasy - something felt odd - but he didn’t want to navigate through the fog any further. He rolled silently into the shed, and said “goodnight” to his driver.

Now, BoCo was alone. He stared out into the yard. All was silent - no trucks being pushed around, not even the distant sound of diesel horns. It was as if the fog muffled the world around him.

“Why, hello!”

BoCo jumped - beside him was an old tender engine! His blue paint was marked with soot, and his face was smudged. Dark, heavy bags hung under his eyes - he looked like he hadn’t slept for days.

“It’s not often I have visitors,” he said in a warm-but-weary tone.

At last, BoCo found his voice.

“I-I’m very sorry,” he stuttered, “I didn’t mean to intrude - my driver and I got lost in the fog and-“

“No need for apologies,” chuckled the engine, “fog can lead you places you don’t expect to be! Besides, it’s nice to have company for a change.”

“Well, thank you!” smiled BoCo. “I must admit, I am surprised. I’ve been taking the night goods for years, but I’ve never seen this shed before - or you, for that matter!”

The old engine chuckled again.

“You’re not the only one - seems I’m invisible to most who work here!”

The engine eyed BoCo up and down.

“You’re a Sodor engine, aren’t you?”

“How did you know?”

“You’re different from the diesels that live around these parts - much more courteous, for a start! I was a Sodor engine too, many moons ago.”

BoCo was surprised!

“Yes, it’s true,” laughed the engine, spying the look of shock on BoCo’s face. “Used to work at the big station - lovely place, it was.”

The engine sighed, and looked down at his buffers.

“Only wish I’d appreciated it more at the time.”

“Why don’t you return?” asked BoCo, “I’m sure the Fat Controller would welcome you back with open arms!”

“Oh, no,” stammered the engine, “he didn’t have the patience for an engine like me.”

“Nonsense!” smiled BoCo, “he certainly wouldn’t want to see you in a state like this! Tell you what, come back with me tomorrow!”

The old engine ignored this.

“Tell me,” he asked, “is Edward still around?”

“Oh, yes!” replied BoCo. “I work on his branch line!”

“Ah, I’m glad to hear it,” smiled the engine. “A kind soul, he was. I only wish I’d been as kind to him...”

“What did you say your name was?” asked BoCo.

“It’s getting late,” yawned the old engine, “we’d better get some sleep now. We’ll finish our chat in the morning.”

BoCo was curious why the engine wouldn’t answer his question, but had to admit he was feeling drowsy, and it wasn’t long before he fell asleep.

BoCo’s sleep was anything but peaceful. All night long, he dreamt of scrapyards. Old engines were lined up in the sidings, their shadows dancing in the flicker of the cutter’s torches. Violent red light illuminated the inside of a shed, and all BoCo could hear were the muffled pleas for mercy, drowned in the sound of searing metal.

BoCo woke with a start. It was daylight now, the fog burned off by the morning sun. He breathed a sigh of relief that his dream was over!

“I hope I didn’t keep you up,” he said, addressing the old engine, “I had an awful-“

He stopped - the old engine and the shed were gone!

At that moment, two of the mainland diesels rolled past.

“You’ll do a number on your engine staying out in the cold all night!” said one.

“B-but,” stuttered BoCo, “w-where’s the shed? And the engine?!”

“Batty old BoCo!” laughed the other diesel, “strange breed, those Sodor engines!”

The diesels rolled away, laughing. When BoCo’s driver arrived, he was surprised too!

“Sheds don’t just disappear!” he said, scratching his head. It was then that he noticed something on the ground beside the rails. He bent down for a closer inspection.

“I think it’s a number plate,” he said, “87546.”

“Could we take it back with us?” asked BoCo.

The driver brought the number plate into the cab. BoCo set off for home with much on his mind. He didn’t know what to make of the old engine, the disappearing shed, or his dream - he *did* know, however, that he’d be having a long talk with Edward!