

## **MIKA'S TIME**

By: Lynn Case

### **Esp. 1: "The Boy"**

The train pulled into the station slowly, puffing smoke as it made its way. The sound of the wheels crossing the railroad ties beating in a slow rhythm. Getting slower and slower until the train came to a full stop. Then it belched a load of steam towards the waiting passengers that had been standing on the platform waiting for it to arrive.

A tall slender man in a long black woolen trench coat, carrying a small carpet bag, stepped off the train and onto the platform. He looked around like he was expecting someone to be there to meet him. The man walked towards the door to the station master and entered.

Mika could see him walk up to the ticket master and say something to him. She couldn't quite make out what they were saying. The tall man seemed to listen to the ticket master then looked out the door to his left to the street. He tipped his tall black hat to the ticket master then proceeded to walk out the front door of the station. Into the blowing snow and cold wind.

"Train for Berka, Lassa and Millen leaving in ten minutes! Yelled the train conductor. Then he looked at his pocket watch and then placed it back in his vest pocket as he made his way into the station.

Mika, still standing behind a thick pillar that was holding up a corner of the station cover, watched him as he went into a back room behind the ticket masters gage. A few minutes passed before the conductor made his way from the room pushing a small wooden cart carrying various pieces of luggage. She watched as he pushed the heavy cart through the old wooden doors of the train station bursting through them making his way to the baggage car. As he got closer to the baggage car the door slid loudly open by another man dressed in black pants, white button down high color shirt and black pin stripped vest, waiting for the luggage. The two men loaded the luggage from the cart to the train car. Then the man in the luggage car slid the heavy door close. There was a loud bang then a loud click locking the door.

Mika watched as the people standing on the platform began to step onto the train. Saying goodbye to loved ones that had come to see off on their journey. A small boy, not much taller than the wooden cart that was carrying the luggage, was crying as a middle aged woman, probably his Mother, held tightly onto his hand.

"All aboard!" the train conductor yelled out as he looked around to platform for any other passengers. He waved his lantern at the train engineer signaling him to go ahead and depart.

The train began to pull away from the station as the conductor quickly jumped aboard. Just as the small boy broke free from the woman's grasp and headed for the moving train.

Mika watched as the boy ran straight towards her and the end of the platform, his mother in full speed pursuit. The train began to pick up speed with each click of the wheels over the rails. The little boy was crying as he was running faster and faster to try and catch the man that was waving goodbye to him from the train window.

Mika noticed the boy was not watching where he was going he was focused only on catching the train. There was no way he could stop in time to avoid falling off the high platform onto the tracks below. She reached out as caught the little boy just as his left foot was off the edge of the platform spinning them around from the momentum. The sound of the steam engine horn could be heard as the last section of the train pulled away from the platform.

"Hold on there little man." Mika said to the clearly upset boy. "Did you think you could catch that train?" she asked the boy. Who now just turned to watch the train move faster and faster out of reach and out of his sight.

"Oh, my gosh!" Said the woman as she finally was able to catch up to them. "Thank you so much. I don't know what I would have done if you didn't catch him." The woman said as she knelt down to the boy's level and hugged him in apparent relief that he wasn't hurt. "Benjamin Arthur Belmont! What were you thinking running off like that? You could have been hurt or worse. What do you have to say for yourself young man?" She asked scolding the boy now that he was safe.

"Papa!" The boy cried out looking down the tracks. Tears running down his face.

"Thank you so much. Is there any way I can repay you for catching him?" Sai the woman.

"Don't give it a second thought glad I was able to catch him before he ran off the edge." Mika replied. Looking down at the young man. "I take it he didn't want to see his Father leave?"

"No he definitely did not want him to leave." The woman replied. "His father placed him in my charge until he returns in a few months. He is just no used to me yet. So I have my hands full as you can see." The woman replied. "I'm so sorry. I didn't introduce myself." She said holding out her gloved hand in greeting. "Sally Smocker, Nanny extraordinaire." She said with a smile;

"Michelle, Michelle Bolding." Mika replied grasping her hand and lying about her identity

"Are you sure there is no way I can repay you?" Sally asked again as she picked up the young Benjamin.

"Not at all, glad I could help." Mika replied with a smile. "I'm sorry I didn't realize it was so late. I will miss my appointment. Please excuse me. I have to run." Mika said lifting up her long dark skirt as she walked briskly toward the heavy double wooden doors of the station and out the front door towards the street.

Mike looked up and down the street trying to see if he could locate the tall man in the long woolen coat that departed the train a moment ago. She noticed the top of his hat almost at the corner. She picked up the pace and headed off towards his direction.

The tall man entered the Burley Hotel on the corner. Mika was not far behind. She seen that he entered the hotel so she slowed her pace to a more feminine stride. Not trying to attract attention to herself with the passersby on the dirt street.

Westland was more a town than a city. It had a large population and it was growing by leaps and bounds. In many aspects it was still rustic and wild. The buildings were not made of brick or even concrete. They were all made from planks of wood. The walkway that connected them was made of wooden planks as well. You could hear your boots or shoes clicking with each step. The main road through town and all their other streets for the matter, were dirt. They had yet to lay out brick roads or even paved roads of any kind yet.

Mika reached the double doors to the burley Hotel. Through the decorative glass window in the door she could see the tall man from the train check in at the desk. He was handed a key after signing a book then made his way up the stairs to the second floor. Only when he was out of sight did Mika enter the building make her way to the desk.

"May I help you Miss?" said a thin elderly balding man in a thin striped dress shirt manning the desk.

"Yes, I would like a room with a bath please." Mika requested.

"Sorry Miss" Said the proprietor "We only have rooms with a community bath at the end of the hall."

"I guess that will have to do." Mika replied picking up the feathers pen and writing her name in the hotel register. She quickly looked to see if the tall man was who she was hoping it was. He had signed on the mine just above hers. It read "Carlton W. Woolen" He listed his place of residence as San Francisco. "*That's him.*" She said to herself. Elated that she had located him so quickly. She noted that room number four had been registered to him. "Good, right next to mine." She thought to herself.

"Miss?" Said the proprietor. "Your key." He said holding an old looking key with a small string attached and a round metal piece with the room number at the other end. "Your room is third door on the left at the top of the stairs. Do you have any luggage?" The man said standing on his tip toes to look over the desk to see if she had and placed on the floor.

"I will have it brought over from the train station." Mika told the man. Knowing she had no need for luggage. She made her way up the stairs to the second floor. She walked cautiously down the hall hoping to hear something from the room that Mr. Woolen was occupying. She placed the key in the lock and turned it to unlock it. The door was stuck and wouldn't open. She gave it a gentle push with no luck. She tried to put her knee into it to jar it open.

Just then the door to room number four opened and Mr. Woolen stepped out. "Did you need a hand?" He asked in a deep voice. "Sometimes they stick. You just have to push on it a bit." He continued as he came out of his room and headed in Mika's directions.

Started, Mika tried one again to get the door open. She didn't want to make contact with Mr. Woolen yet. She threw her shoulder into the door and it came open finally. "No thank you." Mika quickly said as she closed the door behind her. "That was close." She told herself as she looked around the room.

It was your typical old room. Iron bed, handmade quilt, flat pillows, one old dresser, a large oval mirror and a lacey window covering. "*Not much for privacy around here,*" she told herself as she could see right through the curtains to the building across the street. She was looking at herself on the mirror admiring the period costume that she was wearing for this trip.

Suddenly she heard the door to room number four close and heavy steps walking down the hall. Then making their way down the stairs. "*Perfect!*" she thought to herself as she opened her door and peered down the hall to see if the coast was clear. She closed her door just enough to hold it still. Not wanting to have to push her way into it again. She walked slowly to room number four, keeping an eye out for any other hotel tenants. She reached the door and pulled a hair pin from her tightly wrapped hair and picked the lock to the room. She quickly entered and closed the door behind her.

The room looked almost identical to here. Iron bed, homemade quilt, old dresser and lacey window coverings. There on the bed was his bag. She quickly make her way to the bag and opened it up. Mika began to pull its contents out and laid them on the bed one by one. White shirt, black pin striped trousers, bow tie and a shaving kit.

"*Shaving kit!*" she thought to herself. "*Wait a minute. They didn't have shaving kits back then.*" Mika quickly opened the bag. There inside was exactly what she was sent back here to get. Just then she heard the proprietor address Mr. Woolen. "*He must be on his way back upstairs.*" Mika thought to herself as she grabbed the item she was here to get and quickly placed it in her pocket and threw everything back in his bag and made her way to the door.

It was too late, he was already at the top of the stairs. Mika closed the door and quickly looked around the room. "Dam old rooms. No place to hide." She thought to herself as she opened the window and stepped through onto the small balcony. Mika closed the window just as he was opening the door. She leaned up against the outside wall for a moment then made her way to her window and climbed in and closed the window behind her. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "That was to close" She said quietly to herself.

Mika could hear Mr. Woolen walking around his room. Then she heard him open his window then close it a few moments later. Then the sound of him quickly leaving his room and running down the stairs. Mika heard the loud talking of Mr. Woolen to the proprietor down stairs. This

was her chance to sneak down the back stairs at the other end of the hall and make her way back to the train station.

Mika opened her door and looked down the hall towards the stairs to the lobby then looked to the left at the back stairs. She quickly and quietly as possible on these old wooden floors boards, made her way down the hall towards the back stairs. Just as she was passing the door that read "Washroom" the door opened and out stepped a young cowboy. She bumped into him.

"Excuse me, Ma'am. I'm sorry." Said the young man as he gently grabbed her arm to keep her from falling. "I didn't see you there."

"Not a problem." Mika replied quickly getting her footing and running for the back stairs as Mr. Woolen and the proprietor made their way up the stairs from the lobby. Mika dashed down the stairs to the back alley of the hotel.

"You, cowboy!" Mr. Woolen yelled. "Did someone just run out of here?"

"Yes a beautiful young lady." The cowboy replied with a smile. "Had her in my arms for a split second. Then she ran down the back stairs. Seemed to be in a hurry."

"Quick down the back stairs!" Yelled Mr. Woolen to the proprietor and the young cowboy. "She robbed me of something valuable!"

Mr. Woolen and the proprietor made their way down the back stairs. The young cowboy shrugged his shoulders and continued back to his room.

Mika could still hear the men arguing on the second floor as she looked up and down the street to pick her escape route. She turned and ran down the back alleys of the main center of town towards the train station. She had to get back to the train station as quickly as possible.

Mika turned the corner of one of the buildings just as Mr. Woolen and the hotel proprietor exited the hotel back door. Mr. Woolen just got a quick glimpse of her long shirt turning the corner.

"Here, this way!" He yelled at the proprietor and he headed down the alley way after her.

Mika ran across the street to the buildings on the other side of the main street and headed down the back alleys toward the train station. Mr. Woolen and the hotel proprietor in quick pursuit.

Mika burst through the double doors to the train station, startling the ticket master and a few passengers waiting for their train. She ran through to the platform and toward the column on the far left holding up the platform canopy where she had caught little Benjamin from falling.

Mr. Woolen and the hotel proprietor making their way through to the platform right behind her.

Mika quickly pulled a necklace from her high lace dress and pressed on a small dark purple pendant attached at the bottom as soon as she reached the column. In a flash she was gone.

Mr. Woolen and the hotel proprietor reached the very spot where she disappeared. They looked around for her thinking she fell off the platform. The two men looked up and down the tracks and into the field across the tracks.

“Where did she go?” Asked the hotel proprietor.

“I don’t know exactly, but I have an idea.” Replied Mr. Woolen as he then turned and walked away from the platform leaving the hotel proprietor scratching his head.

Mika opens her eyes and looks out the window of the taxi. “*Where am I going*” she asks herself?” The driver pulls over to the curb in front of a tall apartment building and stops the car.

“Here you are miss.” Says the driver in an Italian accent. “That will be twelve fifty.”

Mika opens her purse and removes a twenty and hands it to him. “Here, keep the change.” She tells him as she gets out of the car and steps out onto the sidewalk. “*What am I doing here?*” she asks herself. She takes a few steps toward the apartment building. The door man standing there in a nice suit quickly opens the one of the heavy glass doors for her to enter.

“Good afternoon Miss Burnam.” He says tipping his hat.

“Good afternoon.” Mika replies as she enters the lobby of a rather plush building. Mika notices her reflection in the glass of the door. She was now wearing a jeans and her favorite pullover sweater. Her hair is now shoulder length and not up in a bun behind her head.

Mika looks to her right, there is a bank of elevators. Then Mika look to her left. There are a few tables and plush cushion chairs in the lobby as well as a desk and a man behind it.

“Good afternoon, Miss Burnam.” The young man behind the desk said smiling in her direction. “Your father has just arrived and said he would meet you in the bar. I will just ring him and let him know you are here.” the young man said picking up the phone.

Mika, still not sure of her surroundings walks over to one of the tables and takes a seat. A waiter immediately comes over to the table and asks for her order. Mika takes a wild guess and says “The usual.” As she removes her coat and lays it on the chair next to her.

The waiter quickly makes his way back to the small dark wood bar in the corner and places her order. The bartender immediately goes to work preparing her drink then places it on the waiter’s tray as Mika looked out the large glass window overlooking the busy city street.

She was beginning to feel the fog in her head lifting. Things and places starting to make sense. By the time the waiter had brought her drink she was almost sure of where she was.

He placed the drink on front of her on a small white napkin. "Will there be anything else Miss?" He asked standing almost at attention.

"No, thank you." Mika replied to the young waiter. Then he turned and went back to the bar and struck up a conversation with the bartender.

"How was your trip?" He asked as he took a seat across from her at the table and motioned for the waiter to bring his drink. "Did everything go as planned?" He asked.

Mika looked at the older gray haired man now sitting across from her. Then her memory came flooding back to her as if a tidal wave had come through the window.

"Yes, task completed Father." Mika said as she finally relaxed and let out a sigh of relief. Then picked up her glass and took a drink.

"Nicely done my dear." He replied. "Ready for the next assignment?"

"Father" Mika replied "Let me recover from this one first." She smiled as she took another drink from her glass.

"When you're ready." He said as he removed an envelope from his breast pocket and slid it across the table towards Mika. He drank down the last of his drink in one gulp and made his way to the front door of the apartment building. Mika could see him exit the building. He looked up and down the busy city street then made his way uptown and out of sight.

Mika picked up the envelope and placed it in her handbag and closed it. She sat back in her chair and watched as the city passed by the window. She finished her drink and paid the bill before making her way to the elevators. She pressed the button to go up and waited for an elevator to arrive.

A few moments later she was walking through the door to her apartment. Her calico cat meowing at her feet and rubbing itself on her legs as she closed the door behind her. Mika hung her coat and purse on the coat rack just inside the door.

"Sissy" Mika addressed her affectionate kitty as she picked her up and petted her long fur. "You probably want a treat don't you?" She carried the cat into the kitchen and placed her on the counter as she opened a cabinet door and removed a canister of cat treats. Mika removed one from the can and gave it to Sissy purring on the counter.

"I think I deserve a treat too." Mika said as she removed a glass from another cabinet and retrieved a bottle of wine from her fridge. She poured herself a full glass and set the bottle on the counter. Picking up sissy as she walked towards her living room and sat down on the sofa. Mika kicked off her shoes and placed her feet on her coffee table as she petted her cat with one hand as sipped her wine with the other hand.

Mika then sat up, removing her feet from the table, placed her wine glass down instead. "Shall we see what our next assignment is Sissy?" She asked her cat as she got up and retrieved the envelope her Father had given her downstairs in the bar. She opened the envelope as she walked back to the sofa where sissy remained licking herself.

She pulled a letter from the envelope as she sat down, tossing the envelope on the table. Mika read the assignment then tossed the letter on the table as well. "Well, Sissy" Mika said to her cat. "Looks like I get to go to Paris!" she said. "But a shower first and some dinner, hey Sissy?" Then headed for her bedroom and a hot bath.

Mika came out of the bathroom, wrapped up in a towel, drying her hair with another towel. She made her way to the kitchen counter and a small stack of takeout menus. Mika flipped through the stack until she found just what she was looking for. Then picked up the phone and placed an order for Chinese food from her favorite little Mom and Pop shop nearby.