

Job Interview

by Joe Sullivan

Coming down the stairs, you didn't see me at all. I watched you lumbering closely. I wondered what they'd done to you to make you move this way.

When you reached the platform, we didn't make eye contact. But we stood close to each other and I knew what you wanted to say. You wanted to tell me about your daughter and the trouble with her ex.

On the train I let you sit, and it was like we didn't know each other. When it stopped, we got off at opposite ends, and I watched you lumbering again.

Outside, I said to you, "So what is it this time?"

"He's been hitting her again," you said. "He broke her cheekbone."

"Is he in the same place?"

"Yes."

"I can go there."

"I have money."

"Don't worry about that, now," I said.

"Do you need anything?" you said, wheezing.

"No, I'm fine."

The sun was bright, and it was cold. I could see the city skyline in the distance, but I knew I'd be moving away from all that.

You lit a cigarette and we stood there on the concrete across from a concrete park. We didn't say anything else.

When we parted, I walked briskly. My right eye began to ache and shooting pain moved to the base of my skull. Then I had to stop. I had to get a drink.

I knew I would need things that I could never talk about.

