

Three Thirds

by Joe Sullivan

On a night in the city before David's brief departure to Mexico, he and Lilah were at a club. Her art school friends were in a band that was going to perform.

As her friends prepared to take the stage, a stranger across from David was perched on the edge of a pool table. The stranger struck up a conversation.

"Would you believe it if I told you I was hit by an Amtrak train?" the stranger asked.

"No. Well, yeah," David said.

"I was hit by an Amtrak train and dragged a hundred feet, and I'm going to die from smoking cigarettes."

David took the bait and said, "Well that's how it goes. What kind of injuries did you get?"

"I broke this hand in seventeen places," the stranger said motioning, "And this arm was almost ripped off. It only moves this far," he showed him by moving it. "I broke my pelvis and some ribs and punctured a lung. You wanna see my scars?"

"Yeah, sure."

The stranger lifted his shirt and there were two huge scars at different places along his back where the doctors had apparently operated on his lung and pelvis.

"Wow."

"I was gonna get a couple of tattoos over the scars that made them look like I was ripped open," the stranger said.

"Wow. How long did it take to get back on your feet?"

"Five months. And now I'm gonna die from smoking cigarettes."

The stranger left to get another drink and came back with a rum and coke.

"Oh, I should've gotten you a drink," the stranger said.

"No, that's all right. I'm driving tonight."

"You are? I have no way of getting home tonight."

There was a long silence and finally David said, "I guess I could probably give you a ride."

"Really?"

"Yeah, sure."

Then the stranger asked him how old he thought a pretty girl in pink next to him was. He guessed nineteen. The stranger asked her. She was twenty-four.

As the night progressed, Lilah's friends played their set. David noticed the stranger had two rum and cokes with him at all times. The man was getting loud. He kept coming over and asking him if he'd still give him a ride. David said, yeah, sure, then he consulted the shy redhead.

"I told that guy we'd give him a ride. He was nearly killed by an Amtrak train, so I think he probably has some appreciation for life

and wouldn't try to kill us."

"Well, if you think so."

The night wore on. The stranger got louder and drunker. David watched as the stranger bumped heads with the cute girl in pink while talking to her. She freaked and ran off.

Finally David said to Lilah, "I don't think we should give that guy a ride. I feel bad because I told him I would, but look at him."

The set ended triumphantly. They followed her art school friends across the street as they loaded their equipment into the car. They told them the situation. The stranger was still inside talking to whomever would listen. Her friends agreed they shouldn't take the man. At the very least, the stranger would be a loudmouth in the backseat. At the worst, the train victim could be dangerous.

Lilah's friends crossed the street. Suddenly the stranger popped out of the club. Her friends began talking to the guy. One of them motioned for the two of them to get moving.

David and Lilah walked quickly to the end of the street, looking over their shoulders to see if the stranger was following. The stranger was still talking.

They turned the wrong way. To get to the car they'd have to cut across the street the stranger and her friends were on.

Lilah peered around the corner. The train victim was still talking.

David burst into a sprint across the street fearing the stranger would see him. The shy redhead followed suit and they ran looking over their shoulders.

They jumped into the car and sped off into the night.

David was worried about karma.

