

The Lost Story

By: Terrence D. McLean

The fog was the thickest the young writer had ever seen. He loved to drive but was glad he didn't have to in this dreary weather. A publisher had sent him a letter expressing some interest in a book he had written and requested that he rush to the city immediately to see him. His mother who had dropped him off worried about driving home in the fog so she left before it got any worse and that was almost a half an hour ago. The young writer waited for the train; he looked up the tracks for the train but couldn't see to the end of the platform. He was dressed in his best suit, in reality it was his only suit. He had no luggage, just a leather envelope with his manuscript. The publisher would meet him at the train station in the morning when he got there and he'd be on his way home before dinner. He checked his watch the train was late, but with the weather the way it was he only hoped that the train would be there.

He heard the faint sound of someone crying; he turned around to see a pretty young lady crouched over a suitcase. Her dark blue dress was wrinkling because of her position. He walked up to her to see if there was anything he could do. He went to place his hand on her shoulder to let her know he was there, but before he had a chance to she looked up at him. The tears rolled down her face. It was hard to notice the cut under her right eye. "Are you all right miss?" The cut was fresh and still bleeding. He pulled out his handkerchief and handed it to her. She took it in her hand and pressed in against her cheek.

"Thank you." She said in a soft frail voice. The tears slowed but didn't stop. She tried to sit up but stumbled. The writer grabbed her hand and helped her to her feet. She gave him the best smile she could through the tears still rolling down her face. He said nothing more, believing that she was just happy to have a kind person there to help her.

The train arrived fifteen minutes late. They were the only two to board the train at this stop. They found their way to a compartment that would hold four people and sat down across from each other. The writer had picked up her bag at the train station and now placed it above her head. He hung onto the leather envelope which contained his manuscript. They were silent as the train roared through the fog to its next stop.

This time one lone passenger boarded the train. He limped down the thin hallway of the train aided but an old hand carved cane, given to him as a gift. He opened the door of the compartment that contains the writer and the young lady. "May I join you?" He asked. The writer nodded and the old man who looked surprisingly young for his age stepped in and closed the door behind him. "Thank you. I so hate sitting by myself. I am an old foolish man who likes the company of others to whom I can tell my stories to." He settled down beside the writer noticing the young lady was crying, and decided it would be best if he rambled on to the writer instead of her. He set his cane down resting it on the chair beside his left leg "So what brings you here." He asked. The old man always let the other person get the first word in because he knew once he started it would be hard to stop him.

The writer looked over at him. "I'm off to see a publisher. He thinks my book might be good enough to be published." He tapped the leather envelope with his

manuscript in it.

The old man leaned over and whispered "Is she with you?" in the writer's ear. He shook his head 'No'. "Do you know what the matter with her is?" Once again the writer responded by shaking his head. The old man sat up in the seat and fixed his jacket. "Well I'm off to say goodbye to an old friend." The old man said loudly. The young lady looked up with interest in her eyes. "It's really strange how we met. In fact I have him to thank for this." He pointed at his crippled leg. "You see we were in the war together. I didn't really know him at first. He was there and I knew that I had to watch his back and he'd watch mine." The old man reached into his pocket and pulled out a small medal. It wasn't to show it off; he just found he always needed something in his hand. "Anyway, one day we were set up in the trenches. It was quiet, the Germans laid across from us waiting for us to make the move. My friend beside me jumped at a rat passing by and his gun went off." The old man moved so that both of his companions could see his entire right leg. "The bullet entered her and came out here." He pointed at two spots on his leg, the first above the knee and the second below. Lost in the old man's story none had noticed that the train had stopped; another man had opened the door.

"May I sit with you?" He asked. "I could help but overhear you telling these two young people a story and I just love a good story." Everyone nodded and the man sat down beside the young lady.

The old man reached out his hand and shook hands with the new comer. "So what brings you to us?" The old man inquired.

"I'm just a traveller." He said. "Out to see this fine country of ours. The fog is pretty bad out there." They all just nodded in agreement. "I'm sorry." He said to the old man "I interrupted your story, please continue." The old man continued with his stories and the next two hours passed before they knew it. After the old man finished his last story the young lady nodded off to sleep.

The writer closed his eyes shortly after he saw that the young lady was sleeping peacefully. The other two must have thought he had followed the lady's example, for he managed to catch part of their discussion. He was half dazed but it seemed to him that the two men knew each other.

The old man was the first to speak. "I'm not going to make it am I?" It seemed that the old man had been expecting the traveller.

"No my friend, I'm sorry but this...." It was at this time that the young writer fell asleep, he can remember nothing else that was said. He never thought much about the conversation as he fell asleep. He assumed that they were old friends that did like each other or something like that.

He woke up to the old man shaking him. "Wake up this is your stop." He said. He was dazed and just took his word for it. The young writer looked over to see the traveller waking up the young lady. He noticed that it was still dark outside but didn't think anything about it; it should have been well past dawn before they reached the city. He picked up his book and helped the young lady with her luggage.

It all happened so quickly and before the writer knew what happened he was off the train standing on the platform. It wasn't until they stood on the platform, as the train started to pull away, that either of them realised that they had got off at the wrong station. They watched as the train disappeared into the fog and listened as the train's

whistle got softer as it rushed away.

The young lady, who the writer had forgotten was with him, turned to him and started to speak, "This wasn't my stop?" She said in a confused voice.

The young man turned to her. "I know, I wonder why they pushed for us to get off here." He would never have the answer to that question, well not one for sure.

The writer called his publisher later that morning. He was surprised when he found out who it was. He said that the train never reached the city; there had been some sort of accident.

The writer continued on to the city the next day. He arranged another meeting with the publisher. The young lady was happy to join him the rest of the way. Even before they reached the next station they crossed over a bridge and far below lay the remains of the train. There was only ever one body found on the remains of the train, that of the old man. All the people that were to work on the train, all woke up late for work, and the train left without them. They would never find out what happened after the two got off the train, the writer guessed maybe they were lucky that the old man and the traveller mistook their stop, if they truly did. There have been times that the young writer has thought he saw the traveller but when he turns around he would always be gone. Something told the young writer that the traveller was still out there roaming the country and that someday they would meet again. Maybe on a train to some far off destination, but only I know for sure what happened that night.