

Three Twenty

by Wm. Brett Hill

“So are you going to go?” asked Shonna. She stirred her coffee, forgetting that she hadn’t added anything to it.

“I don’t know. It seems so random and weird. Who the hell tells someone to meet them for a date at 6:17? Why such a specific time?” Delia poured an unending stream of sugar in her own drink.

“Maybe there’s a show that starts then. Or maybe that’s when his bus drops him off? Who knows? But what I do know is if you don’t go...” Shonna said. She took the sugar from her friend.

“I just don’t know. You know?”

From the next table came an audible “Ha!” They looked over to see an old woman dunking a cookie into her tea and staring at the two of them.

The two younger women watched as the old woman returned their gaze. Eventually, the stand-off ended when she froze the cookie midway to her mouth to say, matter-of-factly, “320.”

Shonna looked at Delia and snickered. Delia continued to study the woman.

“What does that mean?” she asked.

“I was young once,” said the woman through a mouthful of cookie. “You bet I was. Young and pretty like you two.”

Shonna rolled her eyes.

“Oh, you look at me now and wonder how it could have been, but back in my day they were three deep at the door, my girls, and I had my pick. Imagine that. Dozens of men all begging me to step out with them. A world of possibilities.” The woman stared past them, looking into her own past, and smiled.

“That’s a good story, Miss. Thank you for sharing,” said Shonna. She turned to talk to Delia but her friend continued to look at the old woman.

“What does that have to do with ‘320’?” Delia asked.

“There was one of them, a boy named Victor, tall as the day is long and handsome to boot. He could smile and melt you in your seat. He had it bad for me. Told me so every day. But I wasn’t interested in making a choice. I was enjoying the game.”

Shonna started looking at her phone, but Delia was nodding.

“Then one day Victor comes to me and gives me the ultimatum. He says he’s leaving and wants me to go with him. Tells me he’ll be on the 320 bus that afternoon, heading out of town, and if I join him then he’s mine and I’m his. If I don’t, he’s out of my life forever.”

“How romantic,” said Delia softly.

Shonna snorted.

The old lady didn’t acknowledge either reaction. “So I thought it over, and looked at what my other options were, and by gum, I decided to grab life by the tail feathers and go for it. I got on that 320 bus and Victor and I rode out of town.”

Delia stood quickly and grabbed her purse. "I'll see you later, Shonna. I have something I have to do," she said.

Shonna looked at her watch. "5:59. If she's quick she should be able to get there in time."

"Idiot," muttered the old woman.

Shonna stared at her with surprise. "You just encouraged her to go after him. Why is she an idiot?"

The woman chuckled. "You kids, always in a hurry, never waiting for the story to finish. Victor was a drunken ass. We made it to the next town over, where he got plastered and tried it too hard with me. I kicked him in his nethers and walked back home. Married Tom, in the end. Brilliant man. Kind. Very nice teeth."

Shonna looked out the window at the retreating form of her friend and stirred a tiny spoonful of sugar into her mug.

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