

They called him the Firefly. Not because of the way he looked, or the way he acted but more because of the type of energy he always carried around him. His aura. It was full of this energy. Those who were in tune would feel or see it. Others, the oblivious ones would get nothing from him.

Number Three O Six. The small placard of worn metal attached to the door by a novelty children's glue. A worn door and a room hidden up on the third floor. Also the self-taken name of the girl. She needed an alias. She was just now realizing the full potential of her gun collecting habit. A hobby that later would very much help the Firefly. But, for now just a hobby that granted the need for her an alias. Number Three O Six.

The City was of concrete. Low hanging damp clouds that had recently moved in blanketed its gray cold construction. Gray on Gray. One man-made, the other by nature. Lights on buildings sometimes cut through this fog. Wheels on cars made cutting noises through the wet streets. The city was full of districts, of ways of life and of cultures. Different worlds existed between different blocks. And sometimes people from one world would fall into and get lost in another.

The Firefly was lacking of motivation. He was a musician. His instrument was an extension of him, of his physical self. He was gifted and he was driven, a rare combination. Well, he was driven until recently. About a day prior to the day the big storm had moved in the Firefly had to pawn his instrument. He had fallen on some hard times and needed the money for medicine. Besides being a brilliant musician he was also a diabetic. The system wasn't working for him. He had to make a tough choice. His musical appendage, which gave a voice and meaning to his life or a chemical injection, which would merely keep his life going. He opted to keep going. In these dark rainy days since he has often questioned why.

So his motivation was gone. His reason to keep pushing temporarily away, He had felt as if through one mistake he had lost his soul. A wrong choice of one of the two doors to go through and now he's lost. Lost without the way to communicate, lost without his musical instrument.

The Firefly stood under a dripping stoop to someone else's doorway. He huddled away from the rain trying to keep his energy and his firefly wings from the wet. One thought overwhelmed the front part of his brain. One thought ruled over his world. HE MUST GET IT BACK. No matter the money, no matter what he must do, he must get his voice back. The Firefly pulled up his hood, tucked in his dreads and darted out into the rain. He had once again found his motivation.

On the wall was a torn poster. It was a sample of art from the forties. A time long ago in which propaganda posters were produced to give woman a feeling of pitching in for war effort. Painted over the poster in black dripping letters was the word "Strength". A piece of art and a piece of graffiti from number three o six. Besides her habit of collecting firearms she was also partial to buying art and then adding her own touches on top of it. Usually she would paint the word strength over the existing images. "Strength", a word that described everything she tried to be. And tried successfully at that.

Her frame was that of something so fragile and beautiful as porcelain. Her spirit was something much less brittle than porcelain. Her soul was strong and tenacious, hidden inside the clever package of a small and seemingly innocent girl.

Off to the streets. Twice a month Three o six would hit the local thrift stores, pawnshops, and vintage markets. Anywhere she might find a collectors firearm or maybe a rare print or piece of art. Rain coat on, hand bag under arm and semi automatic under the other she was off.

Rushing down side street after side street she splashed though puddle after puddle. It was a good day for her. These gray days always are. The smell in the air and the vibe in the people on the streets, that's all it would take to bring a smile on her face.

After a transaction for the right cup of coffee she was off again on her way to continue her search, her income, and her way of life.

"I'm sick of the mist and cold always smashing up against my face." This was a regular thought that ran through the head of the Firefly. He missed his young days farther south. So did his body, it never quite adjusted to the cold city life. Neither did his mentality. That's why most people liked him. The Firefly always represented warmth and the people he'd run into knew that.

And now it didn't matter. The rain was still coming down. He was still poor and his instrument was still behind lock and key across the street.

"Damn the whole situation!" the Firefly thought to himself. He was not a criminal by nature and detested the idea of what he must do. But, he knew very well, that without the instrument the very life in him was draining away just as the water in the gutter near him. He had to move quickly.

Firefly crossed the street. As he entered the shop he placed his hand in his pocket in the form of a gun. The Firefly had no real weapons to use for a stick up. The Firefly had no weapons. Not the way he lived his life.

He arrived at the counter in an instant. A clerk he hadn't seen before turned to find him. "This was good" he thought, "Hopefully no one to trace it back to me."

The clerk being a regular in this profession knew the drill.

Hands up.

Keep calm.

The same ole thing.

As the clerk assumed the position the Firefly saw his beloved case behind the counter. It was hung on the wall with little or no care. "Come back to Papa" he thought.

"Give me the case! Right now!" he barked at the clerk.

Surprised the clerk motioned to the case," But, sir, there's nothing in it."

This was unexpected to the Firefly. How could this be? These crooks sold off a piece of his soul in a most premature manner. "What do you mean empty?" the Firefly asked. Worry started to pour from the clerk.

"Some guy came in and bought the horn, he didn't want the old dingy case. Insulted and disgusted the Firefly was loosing up from down. "Give me the case now!" The clerk handed the worthless treasure over. He began to see how unstable the Firefly was. He then saw something else.

“FREEZE!” came from a voice behind him,” Put your hands where I can see them.” A world came shattering with that female voice. The Firefly turned slowly to find Number Three O Six. Her most prized nine-millimeter aimed right at him. Slowly the Firefly raised his hands.

So troubled with what was going on in front of him the Firefly didn't take notice on the activity behind the counter. The once pathetic clerk had found a new air of confidence along with a sawed off rifle he kept under the counter.

“No one's pushing me around no more!” The clerk shouted excitedly as he swung the rifle around. He held it like an obvious novice, he had probably never even fired a gun. Until that moment at least. An accidental shot rang out. A rack of sporting good near Three O Six was instantly destroyed and sprayed into the wall with a wave of scatter shot. She instantly took for cover. The Firefly instantly made for the door.

In half of one of the longest seconds of his life he was out the door. Outside. He was in the free air. The cold, misty, damp, and beautiful free air. The Firefly darted down the street. Number Three O Six emerged only to see the silowet of the man and his case turn a far off corner. As always in her life she followed. She always chose to push forward.

Street sounds echoed through his ears. Once again the tires of cars were hissing on wet streets. Horns, helicopters, people, life. All the sounds the Firefly would hear but not register. The only sound that mattered, the only sound that seemed to be following was the sound of her voice. Every now and then she would shout at him with some kind of authority.

“Stop!” she would yell, “Stop running!” He continued. He continued up a street, down a street, veering off into and alley. Through a delivery door, he continued, out a side door, by a whorehouse, and finally up some concrete stairs.

He had run as far as he could.

Out of breath and clearly out of patience Number Three O Six arrived at the top of the stairs. Instead of an ambush spot, instead of a pre strike position she found something else. The Firefly had decided to set his case down. He was sitting there waiting for her.

This was probably the only move that would catch her off guard. And as she came around the corner with her weapon drawn it did. The Firefly spoke, I'm not carrying any weapons I can only tell you my story.”

As the police sirens in the distance grew near the Firefly began his plea. Three O Six was intrigued by him. She was intrigued by his energy and his delivery. For someone she had just chased down the street thought to be carrying a gun she almost trusted him. People were always like that with him. So she listened.

A natural entertainer, a natural story teller. Those were his gifts. If politics would of ever let him in he would have been at the top of the game. Charm was the Firefly's unknowing weapon. She would let him go. She would let him do anything. Within minutes it was clear to her that he had the soul of some kind of poet. Not a criminal or crook. He was no villain and definitely not someone she should take down. If anything was the case here she knew she was most likely guilty of more than him in this life.

Closer now than ever the Sirens were now right on top of them.. “Come on, we should get out of here, I'll help you.” she said. She was just as surprised as him to hear those words come out of her mouth. So they fled. They got out of the area and for the time being out of danger.

Brick on brick. Glass windows, reflections, old signs, old print, people, faces, strangers. Storefront after storefront, building after building, brick after brick. Three O Six and the Firefly hurried by. Visions of the street life blurred by them. The entire concrete world surrounding them blurred by as they hurried to a safe and neutral location. Then they found it.

A hole in the wall of a coffee shop tucked away from modern life. It was also well concealed from life on the street. It was a warm and cozy place filled with goodwill thrift couches and forgotten board game tables.

It was quickly evident that along with her addiction to firearms was an addiction to coffee. Three O Six was at the counter in no time tossing down an order. The Firefly held back. He hovered in the doorway. Three O Six caught this.

“No money for your instrument no money for coffee either right?” She asked. The Firefly flashed and embarrassed smile and nodded.

“Then when all of this is said and done you’ll owe me a cup of coffee as well.” she said turning to order a second.

They sat and talked for a long while. Tucked away from the wet streets. Away from the world outside, away from both of their realities. The two agreed they would go back to the pawnshop after dark. They would break in and find the bill of sale for the Firefly’s instrument. That much was certain. After that they didn’t know what they would do. For now they would enjoy the room, the old stale couch, and the company.

“First step, make sure your glove is leather. It has to be tight like a second layer of skin. Make sure your sleeve covers from your glove all the way up the rest of your arm. The entire arm has to be covered. The right sliver of glass can cut through anything. The second thing to remember, hit with the edge of the butt of the pistol. No sense banging up the loading mechanism of a good pistol just to gain access to a locked window. Final thing, don’t hang your arm around in the broken window frame. Get the lock undone quick and get your arm strait out. All of that jagged glass is just waiting to catch and slice something open.”

The Firefly stood in darkness pondering this break in advice from Three O Six. The two of them were in the back alley behind the Pawnshop. As humble as possible he responded back to Three O Six hoping not to kill her recent enthusiasm.

“Why don’t I just use the end of my case to break the window? That way neither of us gets cut.” he said. A pause then a reply.

“That will work too.” Three O Six said concentrating on the pane of glass. And with that the Firefly acted quickly. He rammed the empty case through the window. The sound of glass breaking and falling to the ground echoed off the walls of the alley. The rushed in quickly. “The case was still good for something.” he thought to himself.

No sooner than they were in the building that the alarm sounded. It sounded like an old school yard bell. Loud and annoying. This was expected. The two entered the shop working together like seasoned pros. They went only for where they thought the records would be. No time for reading them, sirens were already haunting the distance. A sound The Firefly was tired of. They would grab them and go.

A drawer opened, a cabinet forced open, and they found it. The target, the truth, the treasure map to the Firefly's prize. The receipt book. It had a coffee stain in the form of a ring on the cover. Three O Six quickly placed it into her bag and they were gone. Once again running a short street marathon.

In the old days they would have called them flatfoots. Whatever charming name you gave them it didn't make it any less concerning. Right outside the door the Flatfoots were near. You could almost hear the sound of their feet traipsing on the cement. The police were near and they were looking for two suspects. Suspects who had just broken into a near by Pawnshop. That was outside the door. Inside, bathed in bad juke box music and soothing red light, were the Firefly and Three O Six. They sat in a dark booth that was dim and hidden in the run down bar.

A great location to hide, look through the receipt book, and maybe get a stiff drink. Three O Six preferred plain tonic water, she was always looking to be in complete control. The Firefly however had found his turf. He sat very comfortably behind a whiskey and coke. Although dirty, and under unusual circumstance this dive served just the right atmosphere. Even with the cops just outside on the streets looking for them.

The Firefly had hope. He felt his instrument was much closer to being in hand. Three O Six was living in the moment, she couldn't remember the last time her heart raced this fast. She was having fun with this. She was having fun with it until she got to page five nineteen of the receipt book. That's when she discovered just who the purchaser of the Firefly's horn was.

It just so happened that the purchaser of the instrument was also a spirited and passionate musician. He didn't work for the orchestra, or a marching band, or even a street corner like the Firefly. They should be so lucky. This musician worked in a nightclub. One that happened to be owned by the local area mob, and would be hard to enter let alone steal from.

Unfortunately more and more evident was the fact that the Firefly was losing his glow. It was like his life force was connected to that instrument. The more he went on without it the weaker he would become. So a risk would have to be taken. Not only by him but also by Three O Six.

The Firefly sat in silence. It was one thing for him to go and risk his neck, but for her, he just didn't like it. This was his mess, not something to involve her in anymore than she already was.

"I should go alone." He stated. She looked at him. She could tell he meant it. She could also tell he'd never walk out of there alive without her assistance. Besides this is the kind of thing she lived for.

"I'm going." She said flatly back to him. Before he could interrupt her to argue he heard the sounds of clips being unloaded and loaded in her pistols under the table.

"Besides" she joked, "What good are all of these guns if I never get to use them?" The Firefly understood. They had come together not only for the need of him using his instrument but also for her need to use hers. They would embark on this together.

They called him the Fatman. Looking at his size it seemed like an obvious nickname. But, to those on the street it was well known that the nickname didn't come from his size but rather his temper. He was feared and had a reputation for blowing up

big like a bomb. Fatman didn't necessarily like things to go his way. He didn't necessarily like things at all. But he always made sure things went his way. He also made sure that when he was at work, in this case the nightclub that the background noise was filled with jazz music. He was somewhat spiritual about it and felt that the music would protect him and his room. As long it was always playing things were fine.

Fatman was criminal by nature. Criminal was in his bones and his blood. From this nightclub, which he never left, he controlled the underbelly of crime in this part of town as well as every thug running through it.

Every mean and nasty cutthroat willing to take orders. It just so happened that this night two of the worst were sitting in the audience, Undead Ted and Joe Tamale'. Undead Ted had more bullets taken out of him then he had ex-wives. Joe Tamale had earned his nickname through some locker room idle chat. They were both dangerous men. They were also sitting, having drinks, and listening to jazz. Ups and downs, zags and zigs. Music coming from the band and none other than the Firefly's instrument.

A conflict was just moments away. There would be no civil way of entering the place. Three O Six stood preparing to cross the street and rush inside the doorway past the doorman. She hoped the down pour of rain on top of them would be enough to distract the doorman from his usual search. The Firefly would just stick close to her acting as a guest musician on his way in.

They came rushing across the street and she flashed her most attractive grin to the guy at the door.

"Sorry we're late, damn weather." she said. The Firefly nodded as they rushed to enter. The doorman grabbed him by the shoulder. Three O Six new this meant they were going to have to do everything the hard way. As soon as she had a clear shot she kicked the doorman as hard as she could in an appropriately painful location. As he staggered down she popped him in the back of the head with the butt of her gun, the edge of it anyway, no reason messing up the loading mechanism on some guys head.

The commotion started unwanted activity in the room and before they new it bullets were flying by. Grazing by one after the other. Splitting through the air like whispers from ghosts. Death was everywhere in the room just waiting. Waiting to impact, waiting to enter.

Three O Six was in her element. She had trained for this and it showed. She had a pistol in each hand. Squeezing rounds off in beautiful strokes, like a painter with his brushes, and the room was her canvas. Bullets would fly. Joe Tamale and Undead Ted fired off rounds as well. They had an undeserved gift for marksmanship.

The band, taking cover, were shocked. So was the Fatman, no one had ever dared to go after him or his boys in his own place. His fat criminal brain struggled with the idea that someone could be so bold. He was almost impressed. First his was pissed. Then impressed.

The Firefly took low to the ground. His line of vision ignored the bullets passing overhead and focused on one thing. One goal. His instrument was across the room lying on the floor. It appeared almost to be looking back at him. Waiting for him to come and take it. It gleamed on the floor like the eyes of a lost child. This was the time for him to get it back.

Gravity took empty clips to the floor as Three O Six advanced new ones into her guns. Joe Tamale took the moment to move across the floor. Three O Six reacted. One bullet. One moment. It entered Tamale's leg just above the knee. Not to kill him, just to give him a limp for the rest of his days.

Going into a pained slump he fell to the floor. His cheap navy blue dress pants developed a maroon wet stain. His gun was dropped, he was now clutching his leg. This gave the Firefly the moment needed to cross the room. He made his move. Three O Six's bullets had no effect on Undead Ted. The way bullets would pass through and around him seemed unnatural. She couldn't keep him pinned down. He had a shot and he took it. One Bullet. One moment.

As the Firefly was bending to pick up his horn he felt it. It entered his back with a sting warmly slicing into his body. Pain. But it didn't matter for his hands were on the instrument. Whatever was to happen now was fine. He was whole again. Three O Six didn't know this. All that she knew is that her new friend just took a bullet from Undead Ted. She stood quickly crossing the room. Getting a new angle on Ted. He might have had luck dodging a bullet but not twelve of them. She unloaded most of each clip in his direction. A wall of bullets showered him. His clever nickname would no longer fit.

The Firefly held it in his hands. It glowed of brass and gold. He could once again hear the music surrounding him. As his hands clutched the sacred metal something cold and wet began to run down his arm and hand onto the instrument. He was bleeding. Three O Six arrived at him still aiming a pistol across the room. She was aiming at the Fatman who was cowering in the corner. She was helping the Firefly up as Joe Tamale made once last attempt to get even for his leg. As one of his hands held the bloody leg the other was aiming a pistol at Three O Six. He began to pull the trigger. Before the bullet could leave the chamber the Firefly took notice pushing his way in between the bullet and Three O Six. The bullet imbedded itself in his case. Three O six returned fire from behind the Firefly and the shielding from his case. She used the last of her ammo covering them as they made it for the door.

Once outside the Firefly turned to her speaking, and obviously in pain, "This ole case is always good for something." he declared. And with that they escaped. The last thing Fatman saw was the glow of the Firefly in the doorway as he staggered away with his horn in hand.

Early Morning Grey. The world and the city hadn't really woken up yet. It was the end of the night but right before the beginning of day. Somewhere behind all of those low hanging clouds the sun was up and perhaps trying to get through. The streets still appeared wet and foggy. Grey. It had taken well over an hour for Three O Six to get the Firefly safely out of Fatman's turf. The Fatman quickly had men searching the streets, sniffing for blood.

Although slowed down by the loss of his blood the Firefly wore only a look of pride. But still he was in pretty bad shape. The damage was done. Three O Six managed to get him as far as the torn up bridge where they first met. For lack of a better place to hide out from those searching she took him up top. She felt like it was a relatively safe place to hide out. She also felt it would be a fitting place to say goodbye.

“We’ve lived long and hard together in such a short time”, she muttered, “I feel like I know you.” These words were hard for her. It was almost as if she was saying them to herself out loud.

“Thanks for getting me back together again”. The Firefly plainly stated. He didn’t look afraid or upset. If anything he looked happy. Happy and relieved. And then she could see it. For the first time she could really see it. His glow. Now she knew why people called him the Firefly.

The energy was coming back to him right in front of her very eyes. For a brief moment the clouds behind him made a crack and she could see blue. The blue looked like the shape of wings coming from behind him. Wings of blue. And then the Firefly was gone.

Blue. Sky blue up above. Below, a neighborhood. The sun stretched out across the land. Houses stood in great rows in this suburbia. The smell and sound of front lawns being mowed filled the air. So did something else...

The sounds of a novice learning the saxophone. The neighbors had been putting up with it for weeks now. They had been putting up with every shriek and squeal of the instrument.

A young boy sat in the back garage. Pictures of Monk, Coltrane, and Gordon surrounded him. Also in the garage was an old warn case. It had a mysterious hole on its side. The boy, enchanted with this recent gift struggled and made time to learn the instrument.

Years had passed.

A knock came on the front door. It was Mrs. Robinson, the neighborhood snoop. She made it her business to come and register a complaint with the owner of the house. After a moment the front door was opened and Miss Smith greeted her. Miss Smith smiled warmly, “Hi what can I do for you?” she asked.

Taking a good look at the woman in front of her and the monstrous antique hunting rifle hung on the wall behind that woman, Mrs. Robinson decided to tone down the nature of her complaint.