



## SAVING A LIFE OR TWO

by Ben Amato

He always wanted to do something with his life. He wanted to make a difference, save a life, so he tried being an EMT. When he was accused of killing the CPR dummy, he figured a nurse's aide career might be the answer, until he learned of bed pans, mops and laundry. The gig in the drug store turned out not to be his dream, especially after having the register for a few of the Friday night free-for-alls over beer, Visine and condoms.

So here he was, playing bass in a four piece band, out on a dock right next to the end of the freaking earth. On his right he saw a fleet of fishing boats, all with Forrest Gump at the wheel. On his left was the deep blue ocean. It would be cool if he were in it or on it, but looking at it while he drummed out the oldies to a happy hour of even older oldies, well, that was not his idea of making a difference. But it paid the bills. And he got tips, sometimes.



This Friday night was like the other 12 that filled up his summer. Different deck, dock or stage, same crowd of fifty somethings, most of whom have already gone from boomers to bust. There were the crazies. They danced every number and shook every body part that wasn't secured with cable wired brassieres or industrial spanks. Hand one of these ladies a tambourine and stand back. They would turn into ninjas. Then there were the aerobic queens. They would do the same footwork over and over, as if 3 songs on the dance floor would be enough caloric penance for the flock of chicken wings devoured.

On some nights though, he saw love. He saw the magic when the old guys would take their lady out on the dance floor for a slow song. They would grasp hands, embrace and the years would melt away with each sway of their bodies. Those nights his chords would sound a bit sweeter.

This night was a bit different. The kitchen punked out with the food and after the first mad rush for the plates, half the crowd grew restless and a bit pissed. Pasta gone. Chicken wings flew. Not enough salad left to toss. Many scamped to the happy hour down the dock when news of free pizza swept the crowd. The other half sipped their drinks, groped their dates or just looked around nervously. He was bored.

So he looked at the ocean, hit his notes on time and zoned out for the duration. Then he noticed them. Right in his view of the waves coming in, this guy and this woman were rocking away to the tunes. They were sitting next to each other, talking, leaning in to whisper, or laugh or smile. He loved this type of couple. Just met. Nervous. Feeling young for the first time in years.

Well, actually they did look a bit better than the rest. The years were there but the miles were highway miles. Well the guy looked like he had hit a few potholes. But they both looked happy. His fingers strummed the notes a bit quicker. He rarely saw that on these gigs.

The next song was a slow one and he smiled when the man asked the woman to dance. The guy extended his hand and hers fit right in. When he turned towards the stage his smile could have been a spotlight. When they embraced and started to sway, their bodies melded. It was obviously their first dance together, but the way she moved into him, the way his chest and arms caressed her torso said they would fit together well.

"Stu..." Sal the drummer said. "What you looking at?"

He nodded towards the couple on the nearly empty dance floor. He smiled as they turned slowly to the beat. About midway through the song, the guy leaned a bit back and looked at the girl's face. He saw a smile as wide and open as his. They paused, missed a beat and then embraced, this time a bit tighter.

The song ended. Their arms parted first, then they both took a step back and hand in hand they slowly walked back to their seats. Different.

Stu smiled again. That song, that dance, this night he and his bass might have made a difference.



