

The cold tap on the sink had been left running. Sat upon the tap was a severed hand.

The hand had been curtailed at the wrist; whoever or whatever had placed it there had taken great care in arranging the fingers around the cross headed tap. Tate got the impression that it was meant for him.

He was looking at the hand side on, with the little finger closest to him. As he peered forward he was able to see that something wasn't right about it. Then he realised what it was.

There was no thumb.

Tate reached for his knife. This was definitely a message directed at him, someone was stalking him and they knew exactly how to grab his attention. He backed up to face the cubicle doorway – he had suddenly felt very vulnerable with his back to the gangway.

The thumb in Tate's pocket had come from that hand. Someone obviously knew what he did. Why hadn't he seen anyone following him? How did they get onto the train after him when he only just managed to get on himself? Whoever was pursuing him was cunning, fearless and obviously very skilled. Had they disposed of everyone on the train? Surely he would have heard a scuffle if that was the case – no-one was that good, not even Tate himself. His heart began to beat fast.

Charged with adrenalin, Tate lurched through the doorway, moving his head from side to side in exaggerated movements. He scanned every possible space for signs of movement. There was none. He didn't know if he should be relieved or worried.

Moving onward, with knife in hand, he entered the buffet car. It was empty - apart from the now familiar debris of travellers once present.

As he got halfway across the car, an almighty "HISSSSSS" suddenly filled the room, bringing him to his knees. He dropped the knife and covered his ears, his eyes closed and his face scrunched up as he tried to fend off the almighty burst of white noise. It lasted for a full minute, and then abruptly stopped. The noise tore through Tate like a razor.

His heart began to pound faster and faster with the onset of panic. His chest tightened. Calm down Tate, calm down, he told himself repeatedly. Slow, deep, breaths... He took a last long intake of air, grabbed the knife, and decided to head for the cab. Maybe the driver had some answers, and he would need to go quickly before he was beset with the deafening sound again.

Three carriages later and Tate found himself standing just outside the engine car. A pale grey door with a red metallic handle on its right was all that stood between him and an answer to this madness.

He grabbed the handle with his right hand, and with all his strength tried to shift the handle down. No movement. Now both hands. Still nothing. He looked across the carriage, and stomped over to a fire extinguisher. He grabbed it, ran back, and began to crack down on the handle with the butt of the extinguisher. This needed some precision due to the handle being recessed into a metal housing, and on the fourth blow his efforts were rewarded. The handle moved down with a satisfying clunk.

The door flew open with almighty force. Tate was sent sprawling across the floor as he was struck by it. After the initial shock of being knock over, he looked up at the doorway but could barely see because wind was gushing through with such velocity and making his eyes water.

Tate hauled himself up and edged towards the doorway. He wedged his left foot against one corner of the opening and with his right hand grabbed at a baggage holder fixed to the wall to steady himself. His body swayed back and forth slightly as he attempted to find some point of natural balance – which he did after about half a minute. As he peered through the doorway he couldn't believe his eyes.

There was nothing there! Where he expected to see the engine car was nothing, just blackness. The carriage he was in and the others attached to it were hurtling through some dark tunnel at breakneck speed with no sign of it slowing down, let alone stopping. He lost his concentration for a

millisecond and lost his grip, and was subsequently sent sprawling across the floor once more.

Tate began to panic again. There was no rational explanation for any of this, something sinister was afoot and he didn't have a way out. He was trapped. He began running back down the train.

He got through two carriages before the white noise blasted into his eardrums for the second time. As before, he dropped to his knees as the sound ripped through his brain, driving him to despair.

As suddenly as it had started, the noise stopped. Then the train started to slow down. Tate felt nauseas, he sensed that something terrible was about to happen.

He looked out the nearest window – still just blackness. After a couple of minutes the train had slowed to a stop.

Silence.

Tate walked back to the front of the train. Checking the windows as he walked he saw nothing but dark. He reached the front. The pale grey door had slammed shut, so he tried the handle. "Clunk". He pulled it towards him. The door opened with ease.

In front of him lay a vast cavern that fanned out from the point at which the train had stopped. It looked like it had been naturally formed due to the rough rock walls and floor. A yellow glow emanated from series of smallish round holes in the cavern floor.

A straight path lay in front of him. . The path was bounded by huge jagged metal spikes which were pinning human corpses to the ground. The sight was so horrific he was oddly transfixed by them, human heads with mouths agape and hollow eyes stared back at him.

He stepped down from the carriage, he looked at the grisly pathway, and he looked at what lay in wait for him at the end.

Stood at the end was the man who hired him for this last job.

"This is a terrible place" he said as Tate drew close.

"What do you want from me?"

"The thumb brought you here" he rasped, "Those with the darkest of souls are summoned to this place. In your lifetime you have been a brutal and merciless killer, therefore you have been chosen to remain here for all eternity..."

Before Tate could even spin around, he was skewered to the spot by a giant metal spike from above.

Before he bled to death, the last thing he saw was the thumb, inching across the cavern floor to its master.