

The mirror directly in front of him did not reflect his face. It had become a window, looking into a dark and grimy room, a place he did not recognise.

It was lit by torches attached to the walls. In the middle of the room, Tate could see a pyramid of bodies, piled high on top of one another. The ones near the bottom were little more than skeletons, dressed in strange clothing, tunics and robes. Towards the top the bodies were fresher, and dressed more modernly, but they all had one thing in common: they were missing a thumb.

As he watched, two masked men came into the room, and threw a body onto the top of the pile. Tate took a step back as recognition hit him, it was the man he had killed earlier.

Except he didn't appear dead, he was pointing at Tate and said:

Terribilis est locus iste

Suddenly, from around the edges of the mirror, decay began spreading. It was as if the room beyond was infecting the train. Wall panels were eaten away, leaving behind the bare metal, that rusted as the infection spread. In front of his very eyes, the train was aging.

Shaking his head in disbelief, Tate turned and walked back the way he came, examining the changes as he went. The seat covers, where they were still intact, were stained and covered in dirt and blood.

He could still hear the phone ringing, but the cheery, annoying ringtone had somehow become distorted into a shrill, eery echo of the original. The noise grated through his brain, and made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end.

Tate's annoyance of the sound faded when he saw the phone. It looked as if it had been created by a fusion of bone, flesh and metal. The speaker had the appearance of a small mouth, and with every ring, it seemed to flex and purse to create the sound.

Tate picked the phone up, and hit the answer button. Instantly a deep voice starting speaking slowly and quietly:

AWhat you have seen, you will become@

AWho is this?@, Tate shouted into the phone, AHow are you doing this?@

The voice at the other end repeated the phrase again.

Tate threw the phone at the wall of the carriage and watched as it shattered from the impact. Blood and ichor pumped from the broken pieces onto the table.

Tate pulled the bag containing the thumb from his pocket, and emptied it onto the table. As he watched, the skin ripped along the eye tattoo, and it peeled back, *like an eyelid*, to reveal an eye.

Watching him.

And then it blinked.

Tate had seen and done horrific things in his lifetime, but nothing could have prepared him for this. He took a step away from the table, and slipped on the ichor that had dripped from the phone onto the floor.

He put his hand out to try and grab something to stop his fall, but the bare metal instead cut through his hand, slicing deep into his own thumb, and severing it.

He hit the floor, and yelled out in pain. Tate looked down with astonishment at his thumbless hand, and the blood that was pumping from the wound.

Tate used his other hand to push himself into an upright position and stood up. It was, he thought, some kind of sick karma.

He found a handkerchief in his pocket, and tried to tie it around his wounded hand. Due to the one handed nature of this action however, he dropped it onto the table. He reached out to pick it up with his wounded hand, but even as he did, he realised, too late, that the handkerchief had fallen onto the tattooed thumb.

Brief movement was followed by an intense pain that shot through his hand.

Somehow, the thumb had attached itself to the wound. As he watched, the thumb began to change colour to a healthy pink, as opposed to the gray it had been. The tattoo started to pulse with each of his heartbeats, as it had tapped into his blood supply. Tate felt a tingling in his hand as skin began to grow from the thumb, covering the wound.

Soon the attachment was complete, and Tate was gifted with a hand as good as new. He bent and flexed his new thumb, and it felt no different from his other hand. He wondered briefly how he was going to explain this to his employers, as the thing he was to be delivering was now part of him. He knew what they would do, they had made it quite clear how much they wanted this particular item of his kill. Now he partly knew why.

As if there was a hidden signal, the aging process suddenly reversed itself, and within seconds, the train was back to how it used to be. Tate went back to the toilet where the decay had spread from, to see only his reflection in the mirror. He carried on walking, to find people occupying their seats once again as if nothing had happened.

As Tate was nearing his seat, the bald man listening to the CD player stretched out his legs, and tripped Tate up. He fell to the floor, annoyed but unhurt. The man laughed quietly to himself as Tate got up and walked back to his seat.

Tate could feel rage building inside of him towards the bald man, when something peculiar happened to his hand. He looked down and saw the

tattoo on the thumb opening slowly. The revealed eye was blood red and evil looking. He heard a noise behind him, and turned his head slightly to see. The bald man was clutching at his throat, his eyes bulging from his head. Again he felt pulses in his hand, and looked down to see that the eye seemed to be glowing, radiating an evilness that Tate could feel. With each pulse the bald man got more frantic in his actions, until he just collapsed in his seat.

Tate was appalled that the other occupants of the carriage could ignore what had just happened. He could feel his anger building, and watched as the eye pulsed rapidly. Looking around, Tate saw that they too, were dead.

A cruel smile crossed his lips. He now knew why his orders were so specific, it wasn't the hit they were interested in at all, it was the thumb. The power to kill with just a thought would do Tate's business some good. He was already at the top of his game, this would just make everything so much easier.

The images he saw in the mirror returned to him, and now he knew what he had seen. The bodies had belonged to the previous owners of the thumb, they had welded this power, and had it taken away from them by someone else.

He knew that his employers would send someone after him when he didn't turn up, but he would be ready. They might want this item, but he had it, and after all, thoughts are quicker than bullets.....