

It was the scuffed and vandalised mirror, mounted on the wall above a soap smeary sink. He'd glanced into the other empty cubicles, and hadn't taken in the details. He'd been so sure there'd been someone in this one that he scoured the compartment with his eyes.

The mirror: the reflection that peered back at him from behind the glass was all too familiar, but it wasn't his own.

*What?* He thought, his mind spinning in shock.

It was the face of the man he'd just killed.

He blinked slowly but it didn't change. The reflection was grinning at him.

It was getting too much. The disappearing passengers, that spooky Latin. Now he's wearing some else's reflection. *I'm having a minor breakdown*, he thought, his anger sliding away, *it's okay. Best just to ignore it*. He needed sleep. A short rest and the hallucinations would stop. He made a plan: Ignore the weirdness; deliver the thumb; see a doctor; take a holiday.

First though, get off this fucking train.

It stood to reason, when you've been killing people for as long as he had you had to expect some kind of comeback. Secretaries get RSI, hit men get hallucinations; hazards of the trade.

Best just to return to his seat. Tate walked back down through the carriages. He ignored the half eaten snacks, the abandoned drinks; he ignored the Walkman that sat on one seat, still playing, as if the person wearing it had just disappeared. Vanished in the blink of an eye. He ignored

the unrelenting darkness outside the train, the rolling blackness of that vast tunnel; he ignored his altered reflection in the windows.

He ignored all of it though his skin crawled, his heart thundered and his stomach rolled in an ocean of disquiet. He did a good job of ignoring it but he couldn't ignore the phone that still trilled and rang through the clattering desolation of the empty carriages. *Damned* persistent whoever the caller was.

Can mobile phones get a signal in a tunnel? He doubted it. He really did.

The phone was where he'd seen it last, perched on the table amongst the magazines. He half expected it to ring off by the time he reached it but it didn't.

Tate picked the phone up, maybe there was an answer there, it made as much sense as the rest of it. His catchphrase of the month was lit up on caller ID:

Terribilis est locus iste.

*Oh great, he thought sarcastically; I must remember to look that up when I get a chance.*

The voice that answered was familiar though he didn't understand the meaning. Last time he'd heard this voice the man had been pleading for his life. He'd regained his composure in death it seemed. Regained his bottle. The words were gibberish to Tate.

"Modo ego factus tu."

"If you're trying to scare me, do it in another language. I don't speak bloody Latin!"

Tate lost his temper, this wasn't a hallucination he was sure, it was too complex, too staged. Someone was playing him. Revenge for someone he'd choked the life out of down the years. They'd made a serious mistake messing with Frank Tate he knew that. He opened the window and lobbed the phone into the inky blackness.

The lights flickered, the words on the woman's laptop winked at him in the gloom.

*Terribilis est locus iste.*

He slapped the laptop off the table. It broke on the floor.

Tate started moving down the train towards the driver's compartment. The driver was still there, had to be, the train was still moving after all. Still speeding down this magical, mystery tunnel. He didn't know if the driver's door would be locked or what but he'd smash it down easily enough and get some answers. Find out who's doing this. Someone rich to rig it the way they had. That didn't explain his reflection though. But maybe they'd spiked the coffee with LSD. He'd find out soon enough after he dangled the driver out the window. Maybe he wouldn't even drag him back in either, maybe he'd just drop him into the crashing murk to get torn to pieces by his own train. Tate was certainly in a foul enough mood to do that.

But. . . The driver must have read his mind because the train started to slow. He could feel it, the vibration that thrummed through his feet slowing as the engine began to die.

Tate glared at the driver's door. The train was pulling into a station but they were still in the tunnel.

The way he saw it, he had two choices: The driver = answers. The station = off this fucking creepy train.

A carriage door opened, he felt a rush of cool wind on his face. It was beautiful. That decided it. He stepped off the train into the station.

Except it wasn't a station. He stood there paralysed for the longest time before he could do anything, let alone move. The door slammed behind him, the train moved off in a cloud of dust, hissing and squealing on with its dark journey.

He contemplated the puzzle that lay before him.

It wasn't a station; it was the murder room, the room where he killed the tattooed man. Though, his thumbless body has been removed. He thinks there's an answer to all this somewhere, but he has a sense of time running out, slip slipping away through his fingers like a length of oiled rope.

Fingers?

Thumb? He checks his pocket for the thumb but its not there anymore; it's nowhere.

He looks at his own thumb with crawling terror and like that, he knows. . .

He thinks of all those disappeared passengers. *No that's not right. I'm the one who disappeared. Did I die on the train? Or was it before?*

Did that last minute sprint for the train trigger a heart attack? Or was it an embolism that ripped through his brain like a ragged firework? That chalky taste in his mouth, was that what they all tasted when they filled their trousers and sometimes (only twice) bit their own tongues off? Is that what death tastes like?

This terrible place. . . Is this hell? Is this his punishment for a lifetime of murder? Is hell all your crimes repaid?

There was a small tattoo on the lower knuckle of his own thumb where there had never been before. It looked like a staring eye.

He's spitting and licking his thumb, trying to scrub it off.

*This puzzle, I could work it out if you'd just give me time!*

He hears slow stealthy footsteps outside the door. Horror starbursts inside him as he realises rational time is not what he has left.

*But I think I have an eternity though, one for each life I took.*

A man has come.

A man with spotless, bloodless, fine leather gloves.

A man with a small plastic bag in his pocket and a length of electrical flex.

Tate thought: *He's going to choke the life right out of me.*

*He's going to cut off my thumb!*