

On the wall above the toilet was a crudely-drawn reproduction of the tattoo on the dead man's thumb. The single staring eye glared back at him like an interrogatory spotlight, burning into his brain as though probing the secrets of his soul.

As he stared into the unblinking eye, Tate got the disconcerting impression that it could see into his mind, that it somehow knew exactly what he had done and what he was thinking....

Suddenly, he had the overwhelming feeling that there were other eyes on him, and he whirled round to stare back down the carriage. There was nobody in sight, but Tate was unable to shake off the feeling that someone - some *thing* - was watching him.

He looked back at the eye on the wall. Its unflinching scrutiny still unnerved him and he looked away again. Sweating, and unsteady on his feet, he backed away and headed for the buffet car. Surely there had to be somebody else around, someone who could tell him what was going on, someone who could bring an element of normality to this bizarre journey.

He could see nothing of the landscape beyond the windows, just a stygian gloom that pressed against the glass as though seeking to engulf everything in the train.

The automatic door slid open as he approached. Tate stepped into the buffet car.

It appeared to be deserted, but it was difficult to be sure because the darkness seemed to be deepening even as he stood in the doorway looking for signs of life. Shadows filled the carriage, the train's rocking

motion making them dart from side to side, flickering ghosts that fuelled his growing unease.

As his eyes adjusted to the gloom, Tate saw that his initial impression had been mistaken. There was someone else there, albeit virtually hidden by the encroaching shadows. At the far end of the carriage was a tall figure of indeterminate gender, standing as still as the movement of the train would allow.

"Thank God," Tate began, walking towards the person. Unspoken questions froze in his throat as he drew closer, though, an inexplicable coldness stealing into his limbs as he approached the shadowy figure.

It was a man, and although the darkness partially obscured his face, it was clear that the features were twisted into a look of purest hatred. The bloodshot eyes, blazing with hostile intensity, drilled directly into Tate's, an unpleasant reminder of the drawing on the wall of the toilet cubicle. A cruel sneer contorted the mouth, and the nostrils were flared as though in anger. The head was poised at an awkward and unnatural angle, a fact that puzzled Tate but triggered something in his memory. The man's breathing was laboured, air wheezing asthmatically in and out of his body.

For a long few seconds Tate stood facing the man, trying to make sense of what was happening. Then, in a moment of nightmarish clarity, he realised what he was seeing and his eyes widened in terror.

Fighting the urge to scream, he backed out of the buffet car, running back along the adjacent carriage as the door slid shut. Just as he entered the next carriage, he heard the door to the buffet car opening again, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps.

Refusing to look back, Tate ran down the aisle, desperate to escape the thing that was chasing him.

As he entered the next carriage, panic making him gasp for breath, the train rocked precariously and he fell, landing heavily on the dusty floor. He cried out in pain when he tried to stand and realised that he had sprained his ankle. As he hobbled frantically towards the next door, cursing repeatedly, he was conscious of his pursuer's footsteps growing louder. Closer.

The door seemed to open more slowly than the previous ones, and Tate did his best to help it on its way, pushing it until the gap was wide enough for him to squeeze through. As he did so, he heard a sound that almost made him weep with joy.

The mobile phone was still ringing in the next carriage!

If he could just get to that phone, he could try to reach the emergency services....

A crippling bolt of pain shot through his injured ankle and he tumbled to the floor again, tears stinging his eyes as he landed. Unable even to rise to his feet, he crawled towards the final door, trying to block out the sound of those ominous footsteps.

His wrists and knees were hurting now, scraping repeatedly against the hard floor as he neared his goal. His breath coming in short gasps, he lunged into the final carriage just as the door behind him was sliding open.

The mobile phone was just where he had last seen it, its annoying ringtone suddenly the sweetest music in the world. He picked it up and pressed the button that would enable him to answer the call.

Before he could speak, the voice on the line intoned the four words that he had seen in the diary and on the laptop screens. "Terribilis est locus iste." The voice was throaty, malicious, inhuman, and as it spoke, Tate's brain translated the phrase.

This is a terrible place.

The footsteps were growing louder. Tate scrambled to the back of the carriage, realising that this was the end, that there was nowhere else he could go.

The door opened and his pursuer stepped through the gap.

Tate's eyes bulged from their sockets as he looked at the figure framed in the doorway. Garrotte wounds still scarred its neck, explaining the unnatural angle of the head and the stertorous breathing. Its horribly familiar face exuded implacable hatred, and as Tate stared in disbelief, he saw that it held a piece of electrical flex in one hand and a serrated knife in the other.

One of its thumbs was missing.

As the figure lumbered towards him, Tate wanted to scream at it, send it back to the realm of nightmare, but terror rendered him mute. He sat, paralysed, as it moved to stand over him. For a few moments it stood, looking down at him, gloating. It actually *smiled*.

Just before the flex looped around his neck, the horror finally overcame Tate and he screamed. But the sound was abruptly choked off when the cord tightened round his throat.

The train plunged into the terminal darkness, nearing its terrible destination.