

On the shelf by the sink a small stream of blood smeared the glass surface. Droplets fell to the floor splattering across the green felt beneath. Tate stepped backwards in horror, nearly losing his balance in the process. He stopped breathing for a moment as he clasped the rail of the outer wall of the train. His hand began to shake uncontrollably as he supported himself on the cold brass rod. It transcended through his whole body and he began to sway with the motion of the carriage as he stared like a zombie at the source of the blood. He took in a large breath and tried to swallow but the dryness in his throat impeded him.

In that moment, there was no sound. He was enclosed in a sphere of time with no dimension. Slowly, he lifted his left hand from the inside of the toilet door. He tried to make sense of the information feeding his brain. At the centre of the scene that brought time to an unprecedented halt, was the 'eye'.

The blood continued to ooze from the severed thumb lying coldly on the shelf.

There was a sudden stab of reality! Tate instinctively clasped at the side of his jacket pocket but there was no evidence of the grim contents. He panicked, grasping at the lining, inside and out - Empty!

The darkness of the tunnel had now closed in to within a few feet. He was trapped in the blackened abyss of one dimension. It directed him towards the thumb. There was a sudden sensation of pain in his larynx. It began to tighten and he was struggling to breathe. He loosened his tie in an attempt to alleviate the discomfort. At his feet the blood had reached his shoes. He could not retreat as the tunnel of darkness had all but covered him.

For the first time in his life he was experiencing terrifying fear. He wanted to scream but that was not permitted in this time warp without sound.

He slowly lifted his head and his attention was drawn away from the lifeless thumb, towards the mirror on the toilet wall.

Through the haze of the outer edges of the tunnel he could see the faint reflection of his face. Inside, his body was breaking up but he was forced to endure the suffering. The mist in the mirror began to clear slightly. The image of his face gained a little clarity. The portrait that remained, reminded him of the 19th century photographs with the clouded edges. He hardly recognised the pale skin tone before him. The eyes were sunken and solemn like those of a dead man. They began to grimace as though in great pain. Behind the face there appeared a shadow and then the discomfort in his throat returned. He could now feel the spectre behind him. The cord drew tight on his neck and he struggled to be free. His eyes bulged as he gasped for breath once more. In the reflection, the face did not stir but the pale skin upon it started to flake and crumble. Through it appeared the white of the bare bones. The eyes collapsed into the skull leaving two large gaping cavities.

Tate let out a scream from hell as the door to the toilet slammed shut. He fell to the floor sobbing uncontrollably. He crawled along the corridor in a blind panic, like an animal on all fours. He came to a halt at the end of the carriage curling up in the foetal position as though to protect himself. He remained there for 40 minutes or so.

He swallowed gently and took short intakes of air. His torso shuddered gently as he slowly began to regain some composure. For the moment there was a little calmness and he slowly edged himself around and wiping his eyes peered down the train. The lights in the corridor blinded him temporarily as he focused on the toilet door down to his right.

He pulled himself up and he leaned tentatively against the corner of the carriage fighting against the aggressive movement of the cast steel wheels upon the rail-line.

He took cautious steps towards the toilet door. The latch indicated vacant. He hesitated for a moment and then he swung the door open. The light inside came on automatically. He retreated slightly as a precaution. Gazing inside all seemed normal.

He went inside and turned on the tap. The cold water was soothing on his forehead. He drank for England as though he had never tasted water before. He looked in the mirror, all seemed normal. He brushed his hair back with his fingers and then glanced sideways at the shelf. It was empty apart from a slab of soap that had never been used. The floor was clean. He picked up the soap and unravelled it from the flower patterned paper. He smelt the sweet perfume emanating from it. Running the hot tap he washed the sweat from his hands. At the side of the sink was a soft white towel lying on top of a wicker basket. Its softness felt good against his face. He held it there for a moment and enjoyed the comfort it gave him. He then used it to wipe the shelf and then he examined it carefully afterwards. There were no blood stains thankfully.

Maybe it was down to relief or maybe just the confusion, but he did not notice that the darkness of the tunnel still remained outside.

He turned to leave the toilet area and stopped for a moment. From within he heard a screeching noise like a finger running across glass. Turning round slowly he was horrified to see the damning words etched on the steam filled mirror.

Terribilis est locus iste

The carriage rocked from side to side as he stumbled through the endless corridors towards the front of the train in a frantic search for signs of life.

The darkness of the tunnel ensued. No light, no people, no end to this nightmare! He glared from side to side as he passed compartment after compartment. There were personal possessions and articles left everywhere as though the occupants had been whisked away while going about their every day business.

At last he reached the front of the train. He could see the driver up ahead. His pace quickened as he neared the final destination. He drew breath and then called to the driver.

He turned towards Tate revealing a spine chilling grotesque face. He raised his hand with the missing thumb.

Tate's head rolled from side to side. He knew there were others in the carriage, the girl with the laptop, the balding man with the earpiece and the young man with the magazine.

They were all Tate's victims of course, strangled from behind whilst using their devices or reading. Tate would not recognise them now except for the missing limbs...

For this is the train of death. For Tate, the eternal tunnel will never end.

Terribilis est locus iste.

This is a terrible place.