

Arranged neatly in concentric circles inside the sink were several severed thumbs.

Tate grasped the thin door lintels to steady himself he almost broke them as he caught sight of a severed head the whites of its eyes looking up at him from the toilet bowl.

A strong, pungent, dead smell invaded his fragile nostrils. He lifted his head slowly consciously willing himself not to be sick. His eyes opened to deep red letters on the mirror. He squinted to focus on the words;

*Terribilis est locus iste*

Despite having now memorised the ghastly phrase, the impact of the dark red blood chilled him to his very core.

The young man who had earlier glanced up at Tate suddenly came into his mind his face seemed more familiar somehow, Tate's head was still spinning.

He quickly looked up and down the aisles willing someone to jump out and shout "You've been punk'd", there was nothing except the soft, fluid movements of the train carrying him along to his destination. He sank into a nearby seat trying to mentally digest the last few minutes.

Tate thought about the exhilaration that usually enraptured him after a job, why not tonight? If there wasn't a young woman waiting for him, there was the 'Tonight Show' or a coffee at a late night café. Tonight was different, no shows just complete and abject loneliness. Tate shivered at the thought of being completely alone.

An image of an empty train driver's cabin roller-coasted into his mind, he rushed towards the front of the train. On his arrival he dispensed with the pleasantries and banged hard on the door, locked.

He grabbed a nearby fire extinguisher and rammed it home Tate fell headlong into the cabin.

He picked himself up, smiled and shook his head at the people-less, carrier. The smile was soon wiped cleanly from his face as he stared out of the window.

The job which he had just concluded was different from any other. His contact was completely unknown, not normally a good sign but his representatives were well known, Tate having concluded several jobs for them recently, but this small stocky guy, who reminded him of the actor Danny De Vito, he couldn't place him at all.

"Don't be surprised at how this turns out", were his parting words. There was a glint in his winking eye which made Tate wonder whether or not he was from 'Oirish' stock. He watched him toddle off and thought nothing more of him.

The job turned out to be the easiest job he had ever done. In fact it seemed unnaturally easy, not that Tate was complaining, until he was just about to leave the house.

A black and white photograph on an old mahogany chest of drawers caught his attention. It showed a young priest surrounded by young boys. Tate squinted at the picture he'd have to get his eyes checked. The young priest looked very familiar. He glanced at the corpse there was no mistake. It had the same scar on the chin as the young priest.

They were standing outside what looked like a large stone building. Above them carved into the stonework were some letters, 'Terr b l s esl loc s ste', he could only make out some of the letters.

*He took one last look around the room then walked unhurriedly down the stairs and out into the street where he hailed a cab.*

Tate sat motionless in his seat wishing he was back in the cab. His anger, having completely subsided, was being slowly replaced by doubt, sadness and fear. Why a priest?

The image of the completely dark exterior of the train was being rerun in his mind inter-cut with the even more powerful image of the speedometer on the speeding train showing a speed of zero.

The train maintained its consistent high speed towards what Tate believed would be his final destination. His thoughts of despair were suddenly interrupted by a child's voice.

A voice?

He leapt up at the thought of another human being in the same compartment as him.

He looked down the aisle and all around him but couldn't see anyone. There it was again, a sweet, young, innocent voice.

Tate walked quickly towards the back of the train carefully checking each seat as he passed for where he hoped would be his mystery passenger.

He could feel the frustration rise inside him like a thermometer in a greenhouse. It was getting warmer, he loosened his tie.

Another mobile phone sounded it's pathetic, tuneless mono-tones, but to Tate it was a symphony of hope. He grabbed at it like it was his last chance

at freedom. He could hear a muffled voice Tate shouted the familiar earth greeting.

"Hello, hello?" He strained his ears to hear the reply.

"Terr, locus, something" he said out loud to no-one in particular. The same words were being repeated over and over. Without warning a sharp, rasping voice boomed out loudly.

"THIS IS A TERRIBLE PLACE".

The force of the voice caused Tate to drop the phone. He continued to hear the voice booming the words for several seconds as they crashed further and further into his head with all the force of a speeding train.

Tate, once again, slumped into a nearby seat only to be shocked by a young boy sitting across from him. Tate swore in fright, then quickly apologised.

"Thank you" said the young boy. He was dressed in a dirty white shirt, cloth shorts and black boots.

"Sorry?" asked Tate straightening himself.

"Thank you sir" repeated the young boy.

Tate sat bemused and watched as the young boy carefully lifted himself out of the seat and slowly walk away. Tate looked in horror at the recently

vacated seat which was drenched in blood. He turned to the young boy whose bare back showed scars from many, many beatings. The back-side of his shorts, were covered in blood.

Tate, attempting to get up, was halted by a firmly placed hand on his shoulder. He took the Lord's name in vain and was reprimanded by the stranger.

"Now you know better than to say that in front of me Frank" said a soft Irish voice. It had an immediate soothing influence on him and he relaxed into his seat.

"That was your last job my son" said the white haired priest, sitting across from him.

Frank sat motionless. Images of his previous kills slipped effortlessly into his mind. The young man with the magazine, the woman at the laptop, the balding man with the CD player...

"It's time for you to stop, you want to stop now, don't you?" smiled the priest. He lent over and held Frank's hands.

He nodded his reply tears welling up in his eyes. The Priest had been with him when his mother died nearly twenty years ago and he would be with him in his final hour.

Frank glanced down at his left hand, his thumb was missing. He kneeled down in front of his priest.

“Bless me Father for I have sinned” he cried.

The train slowed down and stopped.

Frank had arrived at his destination.