

On the wall ahead of him was a mirror, the type you see with that brushed aluminium look where you can't quite see yourself properly. But he wasn't looking at himself, it was what was staring back at him that made his heart pound. Etched clearly with a sharp instrument were words he was never going to forget.....THIS IS NOT YOUR TRAIN.

His face paled ash white staring at the words. Below it on the hand basin lay a red knife. No ordinary knife but a specialist Swiss Army knife with two blades exposed. He picked it up and examined it, exactly like the one he owned and had used on the odd occasion to stab into the carotid artery of a victim for a sure-fire quick kill.

Panic set in big time, his heart was drumming faster and thoughts rebounded in his head. It's coincidence surely, perhaps written for a sickening laugh. But why would someone write that? It begged more questions and his usual clarity of thought seemed to desert him.

Dropping the knife into the sink Tate exited the toilet and continued forward to the buffet car to see if by some miracle anyone was there. He leant upon one of the tables and peered outside, still black as the ace of spades. Christ he thought this tunnel goes on forever, how long had he been travelling on here? He pressed the pin on his watch - 7.14pm. Hang on a minute 7.14pm? The train was set to depart at 7.06pm and he was late. That can't be right he'd been on here for...well at least half an hour by now. Pressing again he lit up the seconds this time so see if the watch was actually

working. The digital display was frozen at 56. He glanced round the cabin hoping to see if there was a clock mounted on the train carriage anywhere, but there were none to be seen. Couldn't even remember if trains had them he thought.

The carriage he walked through was like the others, empty all bar half filled cups and partially eaten snacks as if an emergency evacuation had taken place. He passed yet another laptop and this time noticed something different about it on the screen that caught his eye. He swung the machine round and what he saw hit him like a dagger through the heart. Written in the same style as the latin phrase before it said:

You must be taken

Mouth open, his glaze fixed on the screen Tate didn't move. His heart beat so fast it felt as though it was to burst from his ribcage. He sat heavily onto the seat, his unblinking eyes not moving. The words on the screen then appeared to disintegrate behind the white background to be replaced by new ones.

Too many have gone

Tate didn't move, the words seemed to pierce his conscience and he couldn't avert his gaze. Again the words melted away and reformed this time in a now more familiar form.

Terribilis est locus iste

Which reformed to...

This is a terrible place

And then re-emerged as...

For terrible people

For terrible people

For terrible people

And so it continued unending down the page.

Tate didn't move, he knew what it meant but didn't want to know. As if to confirm all those fears he glanced to the corner of the screen. The built in clock said 7.14pm. It was if fate was sign posting his immediate future in as clear terms as it could.

His breathing short and laboured, he could feel every gasp of oxygen flowing into his lungs like dry ice in a nightclub. Mumbling under his breath words were exiting his lips uncontrollably.

“This isn’t happening, can’t be happening! Gotta get off the train”

Tate didn’t need to know if it was still moving, he could pretty much tell by the rumble and feel of the sleepers thundering underneath but other than that there were no other constants to judge things by. No streetlights, nor cars passing by, no barometer for reality. Leaping from the chair he made his way to the nearest exit. Set above the door in a recessed panel lay the cable to stop the train. At that moment the lights flickered and dimmed momentarily, as the train seemed to lurch into another gear throwing him off balance. He could hear the rumbles from the undercarriage change key. It’s getting bloody faster he thought. Without hesitation he reached for the cable above the door and yanked as hard as he could.

There was an almighty screech as the brakes kicked in and Tate was thrown to the nearest wall with full aplomb as the carriages bumped and concertinaed against each other trying to stop. Cracking his head against the nearest wall, he lost his balance and collapsed in a heap on the floor clutching his wrist.

The lighting in the corridor flickered and returned to life again but all Tate could think of was a searing pain running through his fingers. Blood droplets were falling from his hand like raindrops onto his outstretched leg. The pain was immense, he cursed and swore again and again – eyes bulging in front of him.

He could see his fingers had been sliced clean open by the cord. Strips of flesh flapped loosely in his palm like soggy breakfast soldiers and he was unable to move them as most of the tendons were torn. The combination of watery fluids and congealing blood partially disguised how deep the cuts were. Looking furiously up and down from hand to cable he couldn't grasp what had happened.

He lifted himself to his feet and looked at the pull cord over the door. It was blood stained yes, but something else was amiss. Instead of the usual insulated cable, this looked different – much thinner and it glistened. Carefully tugging it out he knew exactly what it was. Fishing line. Andy Carver a year ago on the River Trent, one quiet Sunday morning. His own tackle being the instrument for death that time, but, but.

His train of thought was cut short as the train made one final lurch and juddered to an uneasy stop. Tate turned to the carriage door and with his unsevered hand tried to open it but to no avail. Kicking and pushing it wasn't having any of it, the door was stuck fast. In submission he instead pulled down the window screen and leaned out feeling the nights cool but rank musty air pass over his face. Peering out into the abyss he could still see nothing, no discoloration of the night from distance towns, no stars or car lights to taint the view. He glanced left down the length of the train, lights on but hey nobody at home he thought sarcastically. It was at that moment he felt a strong blast of cool air from behind his neck blowing his

unkempt hair all over the place. He turned to face it and was blinded by the glow of white light.

The time was 7.14pm and 56 seconds exactly and Tate still remained on the train.