One-Way Ticket

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Gerard must have dozed off. He opened his eyes, and his vision blackened and shimmered, before focusing on the green upholstery of the room he was in. There was a double-thunk, and he felt the whole room shake. He closed his eyes again, for a second feeling only the constant vibration of his seat. Then he opened them again.

There was a light fixed above his head, a lantern swaying to and fro. He was seated on a bench of similar looks to that symmetrically across from him in the tiny room. There was another double-clunk.

Another person was sitting across from him, in a corner of the room, leaned against the wall. She was slumped, and dressed in a yellow dress, with her wide brimmed hat covering her face. There was no sound from her, so Gerard assumed she must be sleeping, like he was just a bit ago.

There was a sliding door to one side of the room, and a blind to the other. He slid across the seats, getting closer to the blind, and opening it, found a window leading into blackness. There was another double-clank. The upper part of the window was made to slide down, so he did so, and found a force of wind entering the room with a large amount of noise. He grabbed his hat, and quickly fumbled to close it back again. He looked over at the woman, but was relieved to find that the clatter has not disturbed her rest. He set his hat right, and sighed.

He was, as he suspected, on a train. It seemed to be night, but he was not sure where he was, for nor could he see the stars, nor was there any light in the distance. He fished his pocket watch out of his vest, was showing a tad less than five minutes after four. It also wasn't running. Peculiar, for he was nearly certain he wound it up last night.

He composed himself, looked in the reflection of himself in the window, to righten his mustache, and finally asked himself the question. 'How did I come to be here?'

There was a double-clunk.

He looked up, to see if his valise was somewhere to be seen, but it did not seem to. There was a trunk above the head of his sleeping companion, but nothing resembling anything of his. He stood up, bowed slightly to the sleeping lady, and opened the sliding door. There was a row of windows before him, each as black as the one he looked through first. There was a double-clank. On the other side of the small corridor from them seemed to be other compartments housing space for people. The row of doors was shut. Gerard rummaged around

his pockets, and found what he was looking for. He took out a cigarette out of the tin, and lit it with a match. For a second, he stood there, inhaling the fumes, and looking at the wondrous twirls and shaped the smoke made in the air.

There was a double-thunk. He went back into his compartment, and looked along the wooden floor, whether he missed anything under the seats. Finding nothing, he left the warm light of the room again and took to wandering about the corridor.

There was another double-clunk.

He heard slow, heavy steps approaching. He looked around, and finding nothing, ignored them. Must have been another of the various train sounds. He took out another cigarette, and lit it. He was pondering how he got here for quite a while, but his memory was hazy. He remembered the party at Robert's, and having tea with Amelia a week after, as well as his feud with Jeremy. But all of those felt like things long past, and anything closer, clearer, he had no recollection of. The cigarette shortened, and a bit of ash fell to the ground, again.

The step like sounds wasn't diminishing. He started looking around, and it seemed that the sound was stronger at one end of the car. He looked through the window at the door to the outside, and into the next car. It too seemed to be lacking light in the corridor, only the compartments shining a dull warmth into the rest.

There was a double-clank.

The steps stopped. He heard a creaky sliding, as the far door to the car was opening. The lights flickered, and as they stabilised, they were one less. The last compartment's lights were off. The steps resumed, and Gerard heard the dark compartment's door open. They stopped again, and he heard a few loud ticks. Then they resumed, slowly getting closer. As they moved forward, the lights started flickering again, giving Gerard a flicker of a blue-clad human shape. Then the next compartment went dark.

Gerard took a breath of smoke, and started looking about his pockets once more. There was the matchbox, his cigarette tin, his watch, a pocket knife, his reading spectacles, a buttor that has loosened from his shirt about a week after his teatime with Amelia, a metal orb, and some hard candy. No ticket of any sort. This gave Gerard a bit of a scare, but he composed himself. He was sure, that once he explained his situation, the authorities would help him out in this case. There was nothing to be afraid of, from a conductor.

He went back to the door, and put his hand on the handle He went to pull it down, but didn't

He stood there for a while, with his hand on the handle

There were no steps.

He looked through the window, and saw, in the darkness between compartment lights, two pricks of reflected light, shining right at him.

Then, all compartment lights in that car turned off. He heard the steps resume, but this time, there was more force behind the steps. They were as slow as before, but this time, it seemed to Gerard as if each step against the floor was two tectonic plates grinding against each other. There were no stops. He felt warm blood going away from his face, all the while his heart was neither sure if to pump blood as fast as it could, or stop entirely, and not make a sound. He let go of the handle, and with a tremendous exhaustion of willpower, took a few steps back. The steps continued.

Gerard ran. He ran towards the other end of the car, and as he touched the door handle, he felt the temperature in the cart rise. The lights flickered, and went black, as something started weighing heavily on his whole body. He nearly dropped to his knees, but managed to hold on, and thrust the door to the side. He stumbled out of the car into the space between, into the sound of winds rushing past at tremendous speeds. He closed the door behind him, and went to the next. It opened, and he rushed inside, into the warm, faint light. Without looking back much, he dashed forward still.

There was a double-clunk

He stopped for a breather in the middle of the car, only at that point noticing the pain of his burned lip. His cigarette had burnt out, so he took out his tin box. It clattered around in his shaking hands, as he finally fished out a singular cigarette. It took a few tries, but he managed to light a match without breaking it, and he let the smoke fill his lungs. He let his shoulder's circle, calmed down a bit, and closed his eyes.

With his eyes closed, all he saw was darkness. He focused on the smoke filling his lungs, and the way it flowed through him.

Then, the darkness was broken. There were two pinpricks of light, shining right at him. He started coughing, and opened his eyes, but found that the steps were still far, the darkness has not yet reached the car. He sucked in the smoke again,

and started in strides.

There was a double-clank.

He opened the door, and went through the wind tunnel, into the next car. Looking back, he saw the lights still on in the car back, so he stopped again, and took a moment to focus There was something off about the car he was in, he had the feeling since he came in, but it took a while for his winded self to pinpoint it.

The light was off, in one of the compartments.

He heard the door to the darkened compartment open, and without a second thought, he dove into the one next to him

The room had green upholstery, and a swaying lantern, just like his first one. There were also the blinds. And the trunk above. And the lady in yellow.

He looked at the scene, bewildered, but then started hearing the steps again. He went up to the woman, and shook her, but she didn't seem to react. He raised her hat to slap her awake, but instead of anything he could have imagined her face to be, he found brittle greenish skin sticking closely to bone, and a mouth gaped in a breathless scream. And the eyes. They were wide open, but only after a second did he see the eyelids having been punched off, the edges showing markings as of a hole puncher. He jumped back, making the corpse topple over.

Still, he had little time. He propped up the corpse, finding that similarly to her eyelids her tongue has been treated, and covered the face with the hat. He pulled the knife out of his pocket, and stood on the bench beside the door, then waited.

It took a while, but the steps finally neared the compartment. The light flickered, and extinguished itself. In the darkness, Gerard gripped his knife's handle harder. Steps approached the room, and even with the lack of light, he could clearly see two reflections of some eternally distant flame hanging in the air.

Before the conductor could enter the room, Gerard lunged toward the door, aiming his knife towards the right shine. He felt the metal connect, and enter something soft, as the creature staggered back, leaving him some space, to run through. He ran away from the creature, towards the next car, as behind him, he heard glubbering, that slowly increased in intensity, and turned into a mixture of screeching and creaking. Gerard held his hands to his ears, as he felt the sound reverberate

through the whole train

He ran, and was nearly at the door to the next car, when the lights turned off. Not just in this car. He had the window in front of him, as he was escaping, and it seems that one by one, all cars had their lights extinguished.

He knew the approximate location of the door, so he fumbled forward, shaking with adrenaline that had little way to be acted out. He found the door frame, and a tad later, the door handle

The steps started to near again.

He went through the wind tunnel, and into the next car, and felt his way to the matchbox, in his pocket. Trembling, but determined, he took a match out, and carefully lit it. He saw only the first three compartment doors in the light of the match, and they all were open. Inside, blue-clad humanoid shapes were slowly moving out, in movements he was sure had to be grinding off few of their bones with each step

The match went out.

Multiple couples of eldritch flames were pointing at him, in the darkness

Gerard rummaged through his pockets. He felt the candy, the bullet, the watch, but he realised he had left his knife in the conductor in the car behind him

He opened the door behind him, and stepped into the wind

Everything was dark.

He was surrounded

Gerard jumped.

He remembered.

There was the feud. A duel. Blood. The metal bullet.

As he fell, in complete darkness, he felt wet. Slickery. There was something squishy enveloping him, consuming him whole. He couldn't breathe. His head started hurting. His consciousness fled.

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vision blackened and shimmered, before focusing on the green upholstery of the room he was in. There was a double-thunk, and he felt the whole room shake. He closed his eyes again, for a second feeling only the constant vibration of his seat Then he opened them again.