

A train trip

« The train 2201 to Lyon is going to leave », the station master announced. Anna speeded up. She threaded her way through the crowd which spread over the platform, saw her wagon, ran, put her feet on the stepladder and finally stepped into. An inspector closed the door behind her. She felt the vibrations of the machine: the train was moving.

She crossed the corridor, and opened the compartment's door. It was a typical 50 's cabin – After the ravages of the war, the government tried to rebuild the country -, with two leather seats faced to faced, places where to put luggage, and a large window whom the bottom part could slide to let the air enter. There was nobody. Anna sat down and put her only luggage next to her, a handbag. She took her sponge bag, and among the multiple objects that were inside, scissors, nail file, towels and solvent... she chose the mirror. She observed herself: a blond-haired woman in her thirties, a frantic look - She had run -, and shining magnificent green eyes whose the simple view could let you paralyzed, as hit. Finally satisfied by her appearance, she closed her mirror, put it away, and got out of her handbag Hugh's letters ...

Someone opened the door. A white-haired man entered with difficulty, his belly touching the door's sides. He hit Anna's shoulder, and without apologizing nor saying hello, sat down in front of her. He was dripping with sweat, and was breathing with difficulty. Anna looked at him with disguise and plunged once again into Hugh's letters ...

A noise woke her up. She straightened her back and sorted out her dress. She had dozed off. She looked through the window. The train was still sliding on the rails, and was following its way through the countryside. Black clouds were accumulating together on the horizon. It was going to rain when she would arrive. The man was snoring. He seemed disturbed. He was shaking his hands as to protect himself against something. Anna wondered whether she had to call an inspector. Suddenly, the man started speaking with a thin voice. Anna pricked up her ears. And this is what she heard: "... I am sorry for all of you. But don't you understand? It was the war and I didn't want to die. I know! Think to the Resistance fighters, who sacrificed themselves for a better world. I know! But I am a coward and the Germans threatened to shoot at me if I did not collaborate. So, I gave you to the Police ... But look at me! I think I paid for this. Oh I'm still paying for this! Since the night they arrested you, I cannot breathe correctly anymore. And with my weight, it becomes more and more difficult to have a decent life. Yes, you who are listening, I deserve a decent life! And I have never forgotten you. You are still stuck into my memories. I remember all your names and the place where you were hidden when they caught you: 25 boulevard St Michel. And every day, I have thoughts to you. So, please, stop haunting me!"

Anna remained stunned. She could not move. 25 boulevard St Michel ... It was the place where Hugh was arrested ... Her quasi-immaterial lover, who could disappear during three weeks for an obscure mission for the Resistance, and came back toward her with a large smile, some provisions, knowing she was still waiting for him... Their evenings together in their maid's room, where, the face as pale as a ghost – They did not have coal and it was winter-,

between two kisses, he was describing a world without war where they could have lived together happy ... His fiery eyes, - he was like a demon-, when he was defending his ideas ...

She admired him. She loved him. And then, the arrest at 25 boulevard St Michel. Her round trips to the police station, always begging for some news, something she could hold to not sink ... And finally the answer of a policeman: "It's a shadow that you are asking for... The Gestapo should have deleted his folder, but you can consider now he is no more ... Certainly shot". She had shed tears. She had stayed in their apartment, with her sadness and a nervous breakdown when listening to the American soldiers entering into Paris under the cheers, she had decided to get her life back... She had just kept his letters, love letters, letters in which he had told her his love, his fears, his passions, ... They were always in her handbag... A destroyed life, because of who? This obese old man, this miserable rat, for who there would be absolutely no forgiveness!

But what could she do? She took once again Hugh's letters, these love letters, in which there was a soul, read once again the words of the loved and forever absent man ... And then she knew what to do. She put Hugh's letters on the seat next to the window and took her handbag. She caught the nail file, stood up, silently moved closer to the old man, closer, more and more closer, and with a supernatural strength, pressed the blade into his fat neck. The man jumped up. Anna fell on the floor, her nail file still hammered into his neck. The old man headed for the compartment's exit. But he had not the time to open the door. Anna scrapped him backward and pressed her scissors into the carotid's man several times, her left hand in his mouth to stop him from yelling. Her face was bathed with blood. She could feel the man's body shuddering but she did not let him go. Then no move, not a breathe. She let the body slide on the floor. Exhausted, she slumped on the seat. Hugh was revenged!

"Come on, a last effort! I have to get rid of the corpse", she whispered. She stood up, took the body by the shoulders, dragged him towards the window, opened it, and with all her strength, despite the vibrations of the train, lifted the cadaver and throw it outside. Then she started to clean the floor with some towels and solvent. She ended with the window pane, where some blood was still stuck. She stepped back towards the door. With a quick look, nobody should notice something. Satisfied, she picked up her handbag and left the cabin. She had to clean her face and change. Luckily, she had other clothes...

An inspector knocked at the door. As he heard nothing, he opened the door and entered. The compartment was dark. There was nobody. A slight metallic smell was floating into the air. Puzzled, the inspector headed for the window, bent on the seat and collected some paper sheets. He took a glance: although they were absolutely empty, he could feel a ripple of fear through his body and he did not understand why.