

Golgotha Station

Watch David as he walks to the station. Brisk and driven, back straight, crisply cut hair, bright white shirt beneath the stylish suit. Black briefcase swinging with his right arm, measured but quick steps. He anticipates a productive day at work, money to be made, power to be brokered.

He has his Oyster card ready as he nears Golgotha underground station, it is a bright day, not necessarily fresh, London never is, but bright and full of hope. A nearby park gives the illusion of new life, grass, some daffodils, children playing with their single mothers.

David's mind skips over the details it does not like, the graffiti, the occasional waft of urine from the quieter corners between the buildings, behind bins next door to steel shuttered nightclubs and bars.

A few meters from the entrance, and the stairs, and escalators into the depths, something jars, and his concentration flickers for a moment, and he looks down the alley next to the station. There are large wheeled commercial refuse bins, and further down, a wall, over which one would look into the cutting, at one of the shallower TfL lines.

A small blonde child, no more than 4 years old or so, with a green woollen jumper, clean blue corduroy trousers, and smart shiny black leather sandals. It sucks it's thumb, but is expressionless.

With sympathy that David doesn't recognise, he walks over to the child. Looks right, down the end of the alley, and left, back to the road. Looking down benevolently at the child, who slowly raises his gaze to meet his, he asks, "where's your mummy?"

The child simply gazes back at him, unemotionally.

David is a "take charge" kind of guy, so he reaches out to take the child in hand, and present it to the nearest member of governmental authority. There is a spark as his hand touches the boy's arm, and a blinding pain runs across his frontal lobes, and he is granted a vision of flame for a few seconds, and the noise of thousands of insects marching to oblivion, and then he is back, staring at the child.

"Wait", he says, reaching out towards the child, before realising his hand did not reach, his arm did not raise. The boy turns towards the darker end of the alley, and David turns to follow it. Nausea sweeps his body, as his brain flails in anguish, trying to regain control of his own flesh, which is now obeying some other force. The fingers of his left hand relax, and his briefcase falls to the ground, bouncing, then laying on its side in the gutter. Some part of David's brain registers annoyance at the dirt now attaching itself to the leather trim, while the rest of his brain screams.

David scarcely registers the next few minutes, as inside his own mind he screams for help, struggles against an iron control of his body, and goes very quietly insane. His body meanwhile, pulls open a section of corrugated metal roofing, to pass out of the alley, and follow the boy down a passage between the wall of the underground cutting and the side of a building. The sound of rats can be heard in the darkness behind rubbish bins.

Through a hole in some mesh fence, David's body drops to all fours, and what part of David is still registering the outside world, feels composted cardboard making its way underneath the carefully manicured nails, and a dampness suffuse the knees of his suit. Standing, he sees the boy disappear through a gap in the cutting wall, and following, David turns around, and backs its way down a rusting ladder, black outdoor paint flaking on his fingers, until he stands in an unused part of the London underground, the worldly sounds of the city sounding distant and suppressed by the drop into somewhere which to the rest of humanity, simply does not exist. David turns towards the darkness of the tunnels, and with a final spasm of defeat, his brain wills itself into a semblance of calm, realising it cannot regain what will not be freely released, and had better pay more attention to where it is going.

A short walk, the light growing dim, but not absent, and David realises that this section of the network must have been abandoned for some time, the grass growing above the tracks, and a lack of any breeze in or out of the tunnel.

David watches the boy, stumbling along as all small children do, but not quite faltering, or falling, and with a purposefulness, confidently putting his hands on rails, stepping over obstacles, and with a dextrousness which feels quite wrong.

As the from the outside world almost disappears, David turns to his left, and a rough hole in the brickwork, which looks as if it was made simply by gouging away the mortar and slipping out the bricks, presents itself. David stoops to go through the hole, which doesn't reach much more than few feet, but just enough so he does not have to kneel again, and into the antechamber beyond. David's brain upends itself, looking as it does now, at a parody of a suburban hallway. A crazed mirror on the wall to his right, an umbrella stand, with the skeletal remains of an umbrella, and a mould coated stick. A small table is perched unevenly on a broken floor of sand, dirt and broken bricks, and an ashtray threatens to slide off it onto the ground.

In the enclosed space, a stench permeates through the air to David's senses, something dying, something already dead perhaps, and with a large component of excrement. The boy seems to relax, and spins around, almost with joy, and scampers through a doorway out of sight. Jerkily, as if someone remembered to pull his strings, David follows again, turning to his right, and stares at another scene from almost personal memory, twisted out of all reality.

A woman, perhaps David's own age, but hard to tell, sits on a rotting sofa in a small living space. Her hands are clasped around a cracked mug. She sits in torn and dishevelled clothes of an indeterminate colour, and looks towards a smashed television set in the corner of the space. She has only a single remaining shoe, and looking at her legs, David realises the excremental stench in the air is coming from her. A naked, but dim bulb hangs from the ceiling, lighting the metal beams forming the roof. As if coming to her senses from a long way away, the woman's eyes suddenly move, and turn towards David. Her mouth forms a smile. The smile of clenched teeth and twisted muscles, and her eyes meet David's and scream in silence. David wonders how long this woman has been sitting here, before he walks towards the sofa, and sits down next to her. His right hand moves of its own accord, and places itself gently, almost reverently, on her knee, and his face turns towards the television.

The boy stands in front of them, and smiles at them, then sits down between them and the television, it's cracked and in some places, absent screen. He looks at the box, and David's mind begins to snap, as the television begins to flicker, grotesqueries passing across its face, and unconsciousness blooms.

At some point, David regains his senses. Consciousness now operating on automatic, he finds himself sat at a square wooden table, in a room not unlike that of before, a similarly naked bulb illuminating himself, facing the woman, her eyes staring into his. Dirty and cracked plates are before them, and the places set with rusty cutlery of various periods. David's left hand rests on top of her right. Her left hand is engaged in feeding herself with biscuits from a packet resting on the table.

Water, of feetid aroma rests in wine glasses, one of which is broken, a wicked crystal shard glittering underneath the light. David drinks from it, and he vomits over himself as his stomach rejects the offering out of hand, expressionless, as his company also remains.

The child is stood next to them, and speaks. His sentences broken, as if coming from a far off place, chosen carefully from a dictionary, assembled to grammatical rules before being enunciated.

“Now we can have. Tea.”

The cherubic face smiles at them again, without malice, almost with love, as David's hand now reaches for the biscuits.

“Then. Bedtime.”

David feels a tremor in the woman's fingers underneath his. While he returns her fixed gaze, her eyes appear to glass over. A cracking sound accompanies a similar tremor in her jawline, and he realises with a sickness, that one of her teeth has just snapped. Her left hand, which is resting on the table, moves towards David's glass, and begins to lift it, struggling, as if under a heavy weight. The stagnant water spills from the glass over the table, and David feels drops land on

his legs as it pools, and then washes over the edge. The shard traverses an arc from the table, toward her own neck, and her body begins to spasm, ever so gently, conflicting and contradicting commands firing across synapses as she slowly, but inevitably starts to push the sharp point into her flesh.

The body locks, and her left eye bulges obscenely, the pupil jerking out of sync with the other, as blood begins to weep from the socket, then grows vacant, as the woman's breath simply ceases. The hand with the glass, lowers itself carefully back to the table.

The boy looks from one of his family to the other, then back to David's gaze, which he returns, as his head turns involuntarily.

The words come from a long way away.

“Do not worry.”

“I will”

“Find a”

“Replacement.”

“I want you”

“To be happy”

“Daddy.”