

Level Crossing

By

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INT. ALAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

An alarm clock is on a bedside table; it reads 06:44. It turns to 06:45 and an alarm sounds. On the main double bed, ALAN CLARKE, middle age, reaches over and hits the snooze button, and rolls over. He's in a t-shirt and boxer shorts. His wife, LUCY CLARKE, also middle aged, stirs; she wears a nightgown.

LUCY
Aren't you getting up?

ALAN
No.

LUCY
(opening her eyes)
And Alice?

Alan opens his eyes and sees the stern expression on Lucy's face.

ALAN
(unhappy)
Do I have to?

LUCY
You promised Jack you'd take him.

Alan sighs and rolls out of bed. He gets a dressing gown from a hook near the door and leaves the room.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - CONT

Jack's bedroom is a typical room for a five-year-old boy. In the bed is JACK CLARKE, five. He's fast asleep.

Alan enters the door, and goes over to the bed. He kneels beside his son.

ALAN
Jack?

He shakes him gently.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Come on, Auntie Alice is on her way.

JACK
(reluctantly)
I'm tired, I want to sleep.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN
You won't see the trains, Jack.

JACK
Later.

He rolls over. Alan sighs and gets up.

ALAN
Fine, I'll go by myself. You won't
be able to see the station at all.

Alan leaves the room. After a moment, Jack stirs again and gets out of bed in his pyjamas.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Alan and Jack are sitting at the breakfast table, eating cereal. Alan is dressed casually, as is his son, and they are ready to go. Alan holds up a newspaper to read, and Jack reads a comic on the other side.

Alan turns the page of the paper.

JACK
I'm not finished.

ALAN
Hm?

JACK
I was reading.

ALAN
Oh, sorry.

Alan opens up the paper so they both can read.

EXT. ALAN'S CAR ON ROAD - MORNING

Alan's car, a modest sedan, drives along.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - CONT

Alan drives as Jack sits up front in a booster seat.

ALAN
Why are you so eager to see the
station, hm?

(CONTINUED)

JACK
I want to see the trains.

ALAN
Why?

JACK
They're cool, Dad, everyone in play likes them. Like Thomas the Tank.

ALAN
Not all trains are like Thomas the Tank, Jack. Most of them don't even have faces.

JACK
(disheartened)
But ALL of them have faces on TV!

ALAN
(trying to cheer him)
Well, I'm sure some of them have faces, Jack; maybe we'll see one today? He can tell you a story.

JACK
Wicked!

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - MORNING

Alan sits on a bench, reading his paper. Jack sits beside him looking around. He spots a TRAINSPOTTER, with a camera and notepad, who constantly checks his watch, his pad and the timetables in the station. Occasionally he scribbles something down.

JACK
What's that man doing?

ALAN
(putting down his paper)
Hm?

JACK
Him.

He points to the spotter, and Alan sees him.

ALAN
You shouldn't point Jack; that's just a trainspotter.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
What's a trainspotter?

ALAN
He spots trains, son.
(sarcastically)
He probably lives with his mother,
collects Hornby models, and doesn't
shower. Probably has dubious sexual
interests and mild personality
disorders, too.

JACK
What's "seshal" interests?

ALAN
Nothing you need to worry about.
And I'd appreciate it if you don't
ask your mother, either.

JACK
Is that his job?

ALAN
No, something has compelled him to
do this of his own accord.

JACK
You use hard words, Dad.

ALAN
You can blame The Guardian for
that.

He chuckles to himself.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Let's just hope your train
fascination doesn't get out of
hand, hm?

LATER

The train arrives, and ALICE STOCKWELL, early 30s, appears with a small suitcase. She waves to Alan and Jack, who see her. Jack runs up to her and gives her a hug, Alan, sauntering up casually.

ALAN
Hello, Alice.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
Morning, Alan, fancy seeing you here.

ALAN
Jack's idea. Much of a pleasure it is to have you, a Sunday morning lie-in is a basic human right.

The adults chuckle.

ALAN
You're looking well.

ALICE
There's some very good coffee on this train.
(to Jack)
I've got something for you, little man. Someone told me there's a birthday soon, eh?

JACK
What is it? Can I see?

ALICE
All in good time, don't worry. First lets get home.
(to Alan)
You may have lost your lie-in, but knowing Lucy there's probably a good breakfast in it for you.

ALAN
Sounds like a plan.

They head out of the station, Alan carrying Alice's suitcase, and Alice carrying Jack.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - MORNING

Alan drives, Alice in the passenger seat, Jack in the backseat.

ALAN
How'd the interview go?

ALICE
Who knows? But Lucy always says that if you don't know if it went well, then it probably did.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

My wife has her moments of wisdom,
it's true.

ALICE

Make the most of those moments,
Alan; they're infinitely handy. But
anyway, I'm not going to think
about it now.

(to Jack)

There's a party going on, right
Jack?

JACK

Yeah!

EXT. ALAN'S CAR ON ROAD - CONT

The car drives along home.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

It's Jack's birthday.

Jack is sitting in the centre of the room, on the floor,
surrounded by wrapping paper, cards and unwrapped toys.
Lucy, Alan and Alice are around him. Lucy has a camera. Jack
is, naturally, ecstatic. A large box, still wrapped, lies
nearby.

Jack is just finishing unwrapping an action figure.

LUCY

Go on, hold it up.

Jack holds up the toy and smiles, as Lucy takes a snap.

ALAN

(to Jack)

There's one for the wedding, eh?

JACK

(giggling)

No!

ALICE

You like it?

Jack nods enthusiastically, looking the action figure over
and playing with it for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN
Just the big one left. Ready?

JACK
Yeah.

Jack sets himself upon the box, tearing at the wrapping paper. It's a model train set. Jack is over the moon.

JACK (CONT'D)
Cool, it's just the one I wanted!

ALAN
That's one for big boys, Jack. It's a bit complicated, but we'll figure it out.

Jack reads the box intently.

LUCY
Let's get another one, Jack. Come on, last one, then you can play with your things.

Lucy gets the photo.

ALICE
Lots of tidying up to do, my friend.

ALAN
ALL hands on deck, Miss Stockwell.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alan and Jack are assembling the train set. All the pieces are scattered about, and they have made a start on putting things together.

Jack holds up a model train carriage. Alan has instructions in his hand.

JACK
Dad, what's this?

ALAN
That...is...

He looks in the manual.

ALAN (CONT'D)
A "twelve ton Vent Van".

JACK
What's that?

ALAN
Who knows? We can look it up later,
let's just figure out where it
goes. Let's get all the track
pieces together.

They scabble around collecting the track pieces. Jack points to his Dad's rear.

JACK
You're sitting on one! You'll
squash it.

Alan jumps off it and picks it up. Jack snatches it and looks it over.

ALAN
Is it OK?

JACK
Yes, but be careful, Dad.

ALAN
(mock-affront)
I'm not that fat, Jack.

Jack laughs at this.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - MORNING

Alan drives, Lucy is in the passenger seat; Alice and Jack are in the back.

JACK
(to Alice)
What kind of train is it?

ALICE
I don't know, Jack, but I'm sure
you can find out when we get there.

JACK
I think it's an intercity.

(CONTINUED)

ALICE
You're probably right.
(to Alan)
Those trains were a good gift,
Alan. He's really taken to it.

ALAN
They're good fun, and pretty
complex. It seems like Jack's a
natural.

LUCY
Well, I can think of another boy
who likes that train set.

She smiles knowingly.

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - MORNING

The train is here. Alice and Jack are walking along it,
towards the rear, talking. Lucy and Alan sit on a bench,
watching them.

LUCY
It was a good idea after all.

ALAN
Hm?

LUCY
Getting that set. You thought it
was daft.

ALAN
I didn't realise he liked them so
much.

LUCY
But it's good, it's given you a
chance to get to bond over
something.

ALAN
Well, every family should have a
father-son thing. Maybe this is it.

LUCY
(agreeing)
Mm.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

LUCY (CONT'D)
I bet you know exactly what kind of
train this is.

ALAN
(chuckle)
I'm not a freak, Lucy.

A beat. Lucy stares skeptically at Alan, who feigns a nonchalant air. They both break down into laughter.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - DAY

MONTAGE

Jack and Alan expand the train set.

END MONTAGE

EXT. ALAN'S CAR ON ROAD - MORNING

Alan's car drives along a road; nearby there's a train line heading in the same direction. A train is also heading towards the station.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - CONT

Jack points out the window.

JACK
Dad, look!

Alan glances and sees the train.

ALAN
That's a big one. Must be your
auntie's.

JACK
It's well fast. It's gonna beat us.

ALAN
Don't be too sure.

Alan revs the engine, and Jack giggles in glee as they accelerate.

EXT. ALAN'S CAR ON ROAD - CONT

The car speeds up.

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - MORNING

The train pulls in. Jack races into the station, his Dad close behind.

JACK
We won, we won!

ALAN
(slightly breathless)
Don't get too excited, Jack.

JACK
We're faster than a train, Dad.

ALAN
Absolutely. We could probably race
a plane.

JACK
Really?

Alan chuckles and lifts up his son.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alan, Alice and Lucy are at the breakfast table. They're drinking tea.

ALICE
So, good news; I got the job.

LUCY
Well, that is good news. I told
you, everything will be fine.

ALAN
When do you start?

ALICE
Soon as I'm back from this
godforsaken place.

LUCY
(mock-affront)
Well, that's hardly good form,
little sister.

(CONTINUED)

Alice chuckles.

ALICE

It's a great position, though, with gym membership and a company car, and everything.

LUCY

A car as well?

(to Alan)

Looks like you won't be needing to give up your lie-ins any more, Alan.

Alan's reaction is indistinct; he's appreciative, but slightly saddened.

ALAN

Don't tell Jack, hm?

The women understand, and Lucy changes the subject.

LUCY

More tea?

ALICE

No, I'm fine; maybe a few seconds in the microwave?

LUCY

OK. Alan?

ALAN

No, thanks, Luce.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - DAY

Alan drives, Alice in the passenger seat, Jack in the back.

JACK

Maybe we can see a Mark III, Dad.

ALAN

Probably, although they're not really the most interesting things to see.

JACK

Not like the Pacer.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

Yes, that was pretty cool, wasn't it?

ALICE

What are you boys talking about?

ALAN

Oh, train stuff.

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - DAY

Alan and Jack are seeing Alice onto the train.

ALICE

You two take care; say bye again to Lucy for me.

ALAN

Shall do. Travel safe.

They hug.

JACK

Bye Auntie Alice.

ALICE

Bye, Jack.

They hug. She then gets on the train, waving once more before disappearing within.

Alan and Jack hang about on the platform a little longer. Jack sees an ENGINEER along the platform, who catches his eye. Jack waves, and the Engineer waves back.

JACK

Dad, who's that?

Alan looks, sees the engineer, and waves in kind.

ALAN

Probably an engineer for the train.

The engineer comes over. Jack stares at him in awe. The engineer has a Geordie accent.

ENGINEER

Morning, folks. Better get on, else you'll get left behind.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

No, we're just dropping someone off.

JACK

Do you work on the train?

The engineer kneels down to Jack's level.

ENGINEER

Aye, lovely train, en't she? 140 miles an hour, easy-peasy.

JACK

Not as fast as a TGV.

The engineer chuckles.

ENGINEER

No, that's true. You're a clever clogs, eh? Here...

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a pair of railway crossing pins. He gives them to Jack.

ENGINEER (CONT'D)

From a level crossing we took apart last week. Something to hang on to, in case you feel like fixing a train.

The engineer chuckles again, ruffling Jack's hair and standing upright. Jack is in awe.

ALAN

That's very kind of you.
(to Jack)
What do you say?

JACK

(looking up)
Thank you.

ENGINEER

Not at all, son.
(glancing at his watch)
Think I'd better be off, late already as it is.

ALAN

Don't mean to keep you. Was nice meeting you.

(CONTINUED)

ENGINEER

You too, sir.

The engineer tips his hat and leaves.

ALAN

(to Jack)

Well, fancy that.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - DAY

Alan and Jack are heading home. Jack stares at the pins in his hand, examining them closely. Alan glances over, and smiles to himself.

FADE TO:

INT. ALAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The alarm clock reads 06:44. It flicks to 06:45 and the alarm goes off, but is quickly turned off by Alan.

He gets out of bed quietly and gets dressed. He then goes to...

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - CONT

Jack is sleeping. Alan kneels and gently shakes him.

ALAN

Want to go see some trains?

Jack wakes quickly, gets out of bed and starts getting dressed.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT

The two of them eat cereal briskly, in silence.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - CONT

Alan drives, Jack sits beside, holding a camera.

ALAN

What are we seeing today, Jack?

(CONTINUED)

JACK
We're going to have a race, Dad!

ALAN
Sounds good. How are we for time?

Jack looks at the car's digital clock.

JACK
It says "nought, seven, two, four".

ALAN
Perfect. Get your camera ready.

EXT. ALAN'S CAR ON ROAD - CONT

The car drives on. As the camera pulls back, we see a train in the distance, heading the same way.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END