

The Last Stop
By
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An Original Screenplay

INT.TRAIN-NIGHT

It is dark outside the window; a soft glow inside the private cabin. The train forges on into the night, its vibrations, like the gentle rocking of a boat at sea, brings sleep. A Victorian man -STEVEN PELSON- opens his eyes. He glances out the window and sees only his reflection. Removing a watch from his vest pocket, he checks the time.

The small lump under the blanket on the bench seat across from his doesn't stir. He stands and slowly stretches. He reaches over and lifts the blanket. The seat is empty. He quickly puts on his jacket and slides open the door to the hallway. He glances right and left. It's also empty and silent but for the steady rumble of the wheels on the iron tracks.

He hurries down the dim hallway, and exits the sleeping car.

EXT.TRAIN/CABIN-NIGHT

The din of the train quadruples in volume. The wind tugs at his jacket as he peers down at the ground below as it races by in a dark blur. He continues into the next car.

INT.DINING CAR-NIGHT

Rows of tables line both sides of the dimly lit, elongated car. The figured wood appointments of the car gleam as if polished only minutes before. Each table is immaculately set. Not a napkin or dish out of place. The car is empty except for a balding, portly MAN (50's) in a flawless, black tuxedo, a white cloth draped over his forearm, hands folded neatly in front of him, standing silently near the end of the car.

STEVEN

Excuse me.

MAN

Yes, Sir.

STEVEN

I'm looking for little boy. My son actually. Seven years old, blond hair.

MAN

A boy, Sir?

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

Yes. I seemed to have dozed off.
He's not in the cabin. I thought he
may have wandered this way.

The man doesn't respond.

STEVEN

Well, have you seen him?

The man shakes his head.

MAN

No, Sir.

STEVEN

It's nearly seven. Doesn't anyone
eat around here? Where are the
other guests?

MAN

Guests, Sir?

Steven gestures with his hands at the empty car.

STEVEN

(Irritated)

Are you daft, man. Yes, the other
passengers. Where are they?

MAN

I wouldn't know, Sir.

STEVEN

What in heaven's name is going on
here? When we boarded this train
there were over a hundred
passengers. Surely you must have
seen them.

MAN

Your table is ready, Sir. The chef
has prepared a wonderful game hen
for tonight. He's truly outdone
himself this time, I must say.

STEVEN

Listen, I don't know what kind of
foolishness is going on here, but I
assure you I will get the bottom of
it. And if anything has happened to
my child, I will personally make
sure this railway is held fully
responsible.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

If you would kindly be seated, Sir,
I'll bring the first course.

Steven points a finger at the man.

STEVEN

I'll be back. If I were you I'd
start gathering my belongings
together, because I'm going to make
sure you are terminated
immediately. Do I make myself
clear?

MAN

If you would just be seated, Sir.

Steven glares at the man, turns and leaves the car.

INT. TRAIN-NIGHT

Steven hurries down the hallway and stops at the door to his
cabin. He slides it open. The silence inside is deafening.
The cabin is empty.

He walks to the next cabin and knocks. No one answers. He
slides open the door. It's empty. He moves to the next cabin
and knocks. No answer. He slides open the door. It's empty.
Angrily he moves from cabin to cabin, all pretense at
courtesy now gone, he quickly slides open door after door.
They're all empty. He moves forward to the next car.

INT. TRAIN-NIGHT

He stands at the back of the passenger car. Silence, along
with highly polished wood, ornate glass light fixtures and
the backs of twin rows of pale green velvet, square-backed
seats await him. He anxiously rushes down the center isle
glancing right and left as he goes. When he reaches the
halfway point he glances to the right lets out a gasp.

An OLD WOMAN, (80's) wrinkled and stooped over with age,
quietly knitting, looks up at him.

OLD WOMAN

It's not polite to stare, young
man.

STEVEN

I'm so sorry. You gave me a bit of
a fright. I assumed I
wouldn't find anybody in here.

(CONTINUED)

OLD WOMAN

That's what you get for assuming.

Steven kneels down between the seats.

STEVEN

Have you been sitting here long?

OLD WOMAN

Long enough.

STEVEN

I'm looking for my son. Blond hair, seven years old. I thought maybe he might have come this way.

OLD WOMAN

Never had any use for children. Dirty little creatures, always snooping about, making a mess of things. Always wanting to be waiting on like they was kings or something.

STEVEN

Yes, they can be a handful. Have you seen him?

OLD WOMAN

Charlie, that's my husband, God rest his soul...

The old woman makes a hasty sign of the cross with a long knitting needle.

OLD WOMAN

He wanted children. Came from a big family, he did. But I told him from the beginning there'd be none of that. Not in my house. But that didn't stop him from sneaking into my room at night and slipping in my bed after he'd come home from the pub, stinking of day old sweat and tobacco. But I wouldn't have it, no sir. I wasn't about to let him crawl on top of me and poke about with that stubby little thing of his. I finally had to stick him right in the eye.

Steven pulls away at the last second and falls back against the other row of seat as the long, sharp knitting needle comes within an inch of his eye.

(CONTINUED)

OLD WOMAN

Never had much use for children No,
Sir, I never did.

Steven slowly rises to his feet, never taking his eyes off the old woman. She goes back to her knitting.

He moves on to the next car.

EXT.TRAIN-NIGHT

Steven grips the guard rail, his forehead covered with beads of perspiration. He closes his eyes and stands motionless, welcoming the chilly blast of wind that blows his hair and clothing wildly in all directions.

He tries the next door. It's locked. He cups his eyes and tries to peer inside. He slams the door angrily with his palm. He turns to go back. This door is also locked. He pounds on the door. Suddenly the train begins to slow down.

The train has barely stopped moving when Steven jumps to the ground. A light in the near distance catches his eye. It's a small building.

He begins to jog towards it. Nearly at the entrance, he hears an unmistakable sound. The train is moving again. He turns and runs full out back towards the train. As he struggles to reach the hand rail he looks up and sees a face in the window. A ghostly pale, blond little boy.

STEVEN
(Screams)

No.

He stumbles and falls to the ground. He gets to his knees and begins weeping as the train disappears into the darkness.

OLD WOMAN (OS)
I never did have much use for
children.

STEVEN
Just shut up. Please

He hears her footsteps walking away. He turns and sees her silhouette moving towards the building.

INT. BUILDING-NIGHT

It's a large, brightly lit room with wooden benches lining the walls. A MAN -(60's) full head of white hair and round spectacles, sits behind a counter writing.

Steven rushes up to the counter.

STEVEN

I need to see the constable right away. My son is on that train. He's alone. We need to wire ahead to the next stop...

The man doesn't look up from his writing.

MAN

Name, please?

STEVEN

Listen, my son is alone on that train that just left. We were separated. I need your help.

The man stops writing, lifts his spectacles and looks at Steven.

MAN

Name, please?

Steven looks confused.

STEVEN

Pelson. Steven Pelson. My sons name is Edward.

The man studies his paperwork.

STEVEN

Where's the old woman? I saw her come in here.

MAN

Go through that door.

The man points at the only door.

MAN

Down the stairs. Third door on the left.

(CONTINUED)

STEVEN

(Angry)

This is a joke, right? I need to see a constable right now, and I'm not going anywhere until I do. My son is alone on that train.

MAN

Listen, you can go sit on the bench until hell freezes over. No difference to me.

STEVEN

No, you listen, damn it. I've had about enough of this nonsense.

Steven reaches out and grabs the mans arm, but grabs nothing but air. The man is gone. Steven puts his face in his hands. A moment later he shuffles over to the door and enters.

The stairway is very dimly lit. Steven trudges down the stairs. At the bottom he sees three identical doors. He tries the first. It's locked. The second is also locked. He shuffles over to the third. As he looks down he sees something engraved in the threshold. He gets down on all fours and tries to read it. He takes a box of matches from his vest pocket and lights one. He makes out the words "Abandon All", when the door suddenly swings open. The match goes out.

Two large men in uniforms are standing in the doorway.

MAN 1

Mr. Pelson, I presume?

Man 1 reaches down and helps Steven to his feet.

STEVEN

Oh, thank God. I thought...I don't know what I thought. My son is on the train that just left. We need someone to meet him at the next stop.

Man 1 removes a ledger from his pocket and opens it.

MAN 1

Steven Phillip Pelson?

STEVEN

Yes, that's right.

(CONTINUED)

MAN 1

Level 9.

MAN 2

Don't see too many of those, now do we?

STEVEN

I don't understand. Level 9?

MAN 1

Mind if I ask you a personal question?

STEVEN

Of course not. Anything you need.

MAN 1

What angers a man enough to kill his own child.

Steven is shocked.

STEVEN

What? No. What are you talking about?

MAN 1

Snapped the poor lad's neck, he did. Only seven. It's enough to make you sick.

STEVEN

No, you're mistaken. My God. It was an accident. The stairs...he fell..

Man 1 takes Steven by the arm and guides him to a roped off area. Man 2 lifts the rope.

STEVEN

What have I done?

MAN 1

You'll have a million lifetimes to figure that out.

Man 1 gives Steven a little push.

Suddenly Steven is falling. The intense heat quickly burns off his clothing. He screams.

FADE OUT