

Mark's morning commute was a pain in the arse, but he had no alternative. Sitting on the full train heading toward the bustling metropolis of London this morning, he rued his show off younger self. Sure, he thought, I have the city job but his bank balance was pitiful, and it would be until he really found his feet at Burke and Bailey. Maybe in a year he could move into the city and never have to take this fucking train again. The forty five minutes weren't that bad, but when you're herded into a hunk of moving steel like sheep, pressed up against some other poor schmuck in an expensive looking suit with a briefcase, day after miserable day, it can get pretty annoying. Today he faced a fat balding man who looked just as miserable as he did. Having to run for the train this morning meant he had to stand face to face with this guy all the way into the city. They didn't even bother with the nicety of small talk, Mark pressed play on his iPod and went into his own world. The fat guy opposite was a little more positive with his morning, and clutched a bent and well-worn paperback in his hand, gripping onto the handrail with the other free hand. How Mark longed to be one of the people in first class, who chose to live outside of London because they could afford to, who commuted through choice rather than financial necessity, and who sat back and watched the world go by and didn't have to wrinkle their nose against the faint odour of BO floating around one of the three carriages in the Eastern Trainlines 7.47am service into London Euston.

Twelve months max, Mark thought to himself. He'd trade his flat on the outskirts for a flat in the centre. A year of thrifty savings and he'd never had to get this fucking train again. He closed his eyes and tried to concentrate on the music filling his ears, holding his breath against the stale smell of human sweat drifting into his nostrils.

Sophie had managed to find a seat and sat with her laptop balancing precariously on her knees, nervously looking over her presentation that she due to give that morning. Fenner Pharmaceuticals were on the verge of releasing a new drug into society. This drug would be one of a kind and was designed to help the taker tackle social anxiety. The release of endorphins into the brain as soon as the pill dissolved into the bloodstream created a sense of ease in the brain, a feeling of relaxation would soon overcome the recipient of the drug and all shades of nervousness would be counteracted. They'd tested it on a handful of subjects, and the results had been remarkable, even the shiest of their subjects had been placed in potentially unsettling social situations and excelled.

Sophie was due to pitch to the head of every major chemist in the UK. She was a little nervous but her preparation had been meticulous. She glanced up from her MacBook and noted that the train was crammed full, as it was every morning. She felt for the passengers looking uncomfortable standing but her sympathy only went so far, they should have gotten to the station earlier, and then maybe they would have got a seat, as it was she was backwards facing as the train crept towards Euston.

Malcolm was bloody miserable. He hated these horrible morning shifts when he would ferry the rich into the city, and then steer the empty train back to the outskirts, repeating until 2.30pm when he could go home for the evening. This service wasn't bad, as people were mainly fine, heading into the city with time to kill. It was the one after this train that would be the pain in the arse, as he'd ferry the stragglers into the city. He hated dealing with those who'd slept through their alarms and would be panicking that they'd be late. There was always one rich cocksucker in a suit who would complain to him as they pulled into Euston just before 9am.

"I'm late now, fuck" they'd always complain. Like Malcolm gave a toss. He'd shrug and close the window to Mr Rolex and his briefcase. One nagging question prodded at Malcolm each and every morning that he was down on the rota for the morning stretch between Grafton and Euston, via the pleasant village of Frampley. How had he ended up here?

The radio crackled in front of him, he picked up the receiver and held it to his ear.

"Mal...Malc...Malcolm, are you there?" A female voiced came through the radio

"Loud and clear Sue, what's up?"

Sue was at the control box at Euston, directing trains and controlling the flow of traffic in and out of the station. She was a frumpy woman with knockout tits. She and Malcom had gone out once for a date, which had ended back up at her Isleworth apartment. Relations had cooled somewhat between

them as word got around of her promiscuity with other train drivers. She was what was known in the train driver's circles as a smash and dash.

"I... I don't know... there's something wrong with the city. Malcom, park up half a mile away from the tunnel, will you?"

He sighed to himself "Ah, fuck, Sue. What am I supposed to tell them?"

"Signalling, until we know more...please"

He noticed the panic in her voice "What is it? What's wrong?"

"Nobody knows yet; just pull up will you... I'll keep in touch"

The connection was ended with a short crackle of static. Malcolm sighed deeply and picked up the radio that let him communicate with the train. He paused a moment and he started to slow the train on the approach to Euston, the yellowish tint to the city that had first looked mesmerising now looked sinister to him.

"Ladies and Gentleman, this is your driver speaking, I am afraid..."

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The vast crowds milling around London's plush streets were all frozen to the spot and looking up at the sky. They stared stunned at the ever expanding spectre of darkness overcoming the translucent morning sky. Some were confused, some expressed fear in hushed tones as if talking to themselves and some conferred with others when normally they would walk straight on by.

For those already in the expansive offices that made up Canary Wharf, they all stood transfixed at the open windows, looking at the clouds as they rolled in. It was a mist drifting in off of the Thames that caught their attention. Only it seemed like it was engulfing everything in its path. Not only was in slow rolling in off of the water, it was approaching airborne from all directions, slowly but surely. The glass façade of Canary Wharf was slowly filled with blinking faces looking out over the metropolis.

Traffic was at a standstill. Only a handful of disconcerted people carried on with their daily routine and pushed through the crowds. Some even took advantage of the standstill traffic and navigated through the stationary cars. The lone cyclist going about his business was cycling frantically, as if he were outrunning something.

If you were unlucky enough to be on the tube that morning, you wouldn't have known what was going on above ground. You would have been totally in the dark as to why the city above had come to a standstill. All the services were halted across the city, wherever they were, the darkness that engulfed morning commuters created an eerie sense of confusion in the steel tube trains. The electricity still hummed all around them, but nothing moved and nobody spoke. The tannoy announcement had spoken of signalling problems, and promised constant updates on the situation. It had been a smokescreen of course; there were no updates to give, because nobody knew what was happening to the city.

London stood still, watching, waiting, and wondering.

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The clouds that were rolling towards the city centre had enveloped Brentford and the outer districts of London when the Boeing 747 made its final approach towards Heathrow. The pilot saw the clouds from a far and radioed into air traffic control, but got no response. He radioed into the control centre again, and the same static crackling that had greeted him minutes ago met him again. It was time to put his training into action, and bring this bird down safely on the ground. The coordinates were locked. His co-pilot looked worried, he was new to the job and together so far they'd only flown in perfect conditions.

"Hey" Captain Rogers put his hand on Blake's shoulder "It's only a bit of cloud, buddy, don't worry"

Those were the last words they ever spoke between them.

Mary Baggerly lived a stone's throw from the major landing path for the new T5 terminal. She, along with other residents, protested vehemently against it, but eventually she got squashed like the

insignificant little bug she felt up against the government. She heard the plane approaching from the north east, and craned her neck for a look out of her front window.

That morning she couldn't see the plane as it descended into the strange low hanging clouds. As soon as it hit the clouds, the noise dwindled down, and as the back end of the plane entered the cloud, the noise stopped all together. The plane disappeared into the cloud, but never came out, it... it... simply disappeared into the smog and never came back out. She cranked up her hearing aids in her ears, and instantly turned them back down, as she craned a well-tuned ear to the clouds, expecting engine roar, she heard screams, screams which pierced her to her very soul. She ran out of the house and out into the clouds.

She dropped dead on her front step.

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"It's been forty-five fucking minutes, what is going on?" An angry voiced called out over the hush of the carriage Sophie found herself sat in that Monday morning. A wall of silence met the voice, who, clearly annoyed that nobody had joined the chorus, continued. "I was meant to be in a fucking meeting ten minutes ago, fuuuuck. Let me through, I'm going to talk to the driver." He started to push through the stationary crowd crammed inside the carriage that stood still on the tracks. People were content to let him through rather than point out that they were all late, that they were all stuck, and that they were all annoyed, they just weren't being an obnoxious moron about it.

Sophie looked out of her window, staring into the concrete jungle that stood on the approach into London. Backwards facing, she couldn't see the city, she could only make out its reflection in the guy's glasses who sat in front of her, eyes fixed on the city. She was just as annoyed as the guy who was no doubt banging on the driver's door and f'ing and blinding for no reason. She'd called her boss, who, in a confused state had told her that some kind of rolling fog was slowly engulfing the city, and that it had brought the usual bustling streets to a complete standstill. As it happened, the heads of the companies she would be presenting to were also stuck in traffic. So really, there was nothing to worry about. They were all up the same shit filled creek with the same paddle.

"What can you see?" She asked specs in the seat opposite

"I... I... don't know" The sweat seeping through his shirt meant that he was either worried, or didn't talk to women very often. He shuffled backwards into his seat, lifting his legs up into his chest "Have a look yourself"

Sophie did. She didn't like what she saw.

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The mist had fully enveloped London now. As it rolled in the people who were on the streets dove for open shop windows, they crowded down into subway stations, and generally took every single bit of evasive action that they possibly could to get out of the way. One pre-adolescent on his way to college decided to jump into the Thames to get away from the fog, but he never made it to the water. The mist spat out an arm and caught him. Anyone else who had the misfortune to be taken by the fog did so with their hands firmly clamped over their ears, trying to stifle the screaming sounds coming from the vapour.

Then it started to rain.

It instantly began to dissolve everything that it fell on, tops of buildings, cars, and the pavement below, and human flesh. The unwitting cyclist who had weaved through the traffic made it as far as Tower Bridge before the rain got him, ripping through his flesh. Until it reached his legs, he cycled on, his top half slowly dissolving, becoming a grinning spectacle of half man, half skeleton. As he splashed through a puddle the front tire gave out and he crashed down into the quickly forming puddles of rain, and he slowly dissolved away, bringing the nose wrinkling smell of rotting corpse to the air.

The rain ate through pavements, cars falling into the sewers below. The underground network was exposed like roots of a tooth after years of slow decay; cars fell onto the stationary trains, bringing with them splashes of acid that instantly tore through the roofs of the trains, rendering the people

inside dead instantly, if not from the crush then from the rain soaking them. Buses ran over cars in a panic, pulverising those inside. Buildings were dissolving, crumbling and starting to decay. The rain fell like an incessant monsoon for the next few minutes, eating through everything in its path. Then it stopped. Sophie had swapped seats with the guy in glasses and now sat looking into the dark nebula of the fog, imagining the rain reducing London to a slippery mess. She'd not brought her umbrella today.

Then the clouds exploded.

###

"What the...?" Sophie muttered to herself, she put her hand out of the window to catch some of the colourful rain that had just started to fall onto the train; she quickly withdrew her hand back into the carriage, her eyes widened at the sight of the flesh disappearing rapidly, showing bone in seconds.

"CLOSE THE FUCKING WINDOWS" someone shouted, and clambered over her, knocking her unconscious as their knee connected with the side of her bowed head.

The rain fell on the train, and then quickly blew in through the open windows, dissolving flesh, creating widespread panic as people tried to flee. Some naively tried to shelter themselves with briefcases, newspapers. Some desperate people even grabbed fellow commuters and tried to use them as shields.

The screams reverberated around the train, as the engine started up and the train was quickly thrown into reverse.

The screams were now joined by the dull roar of the engine, the rain hadn't reached the undercarriage just yet, but the screams had reached the driver, who stared transfixed at the spectre of doom befalling the city he called home.

And those screams, he could hear them in his soul.

###

London imploded.

Buildings collapsed on their foundations, shop windows blew out, taking the people inside with them, throwing out a shower of glass and bodies into the fog.

The Thames burst its barriers, creating a tsunami effect in all directions, the rapidly gushing water engulfing rubble, cars, bodies and absolutely everything else in its path.

The resulting mushroom cloud that stood over London was pulsing, like a beating heart working overtime to pump blood around the body.

It exploded again, shooting arms of vapours out in all directions; it was fast, and it spread rapidly outside of the city itself, shooting off into the countryside, out over the sea towards France and up the motorways towards the rest of the country.

The train was hurtling now, going in reverse as fast as it could.

Malcolm still clutched his one ear that hadn't been dissolved off, trying to drown out the screams.

The fog was chasing the train

It was chasing him,

And it was screaming.

Malcolm crouched down underneath the control panel, the train growling uncontrollably into the countryside.

Malcolm prayed, but it was no use.
He knew the fog was faster.

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