

THE MONTH BETWEEN APRIL AND MAY

Written by

Kai Tattersall

Story by

Kai Tattersall
Myles Ortiz-Green

EXT. COAST OF THE PACIFIC - LATE AFTERNOON

Rattling rocks. Whirling dust.

It's a little before sunset by a rugged sea-cliff, where caverns emerge from limestone crags into white sand beaches.

Clouds drift against a powder blue sky. Peaceful. Until -

CLOSE-UP OF SOMETHING MOVING FAST.

A PLUME OF STEAM zips violently past.

Powering steadily along the coast is a TRAIN extending far beyond sight, with its towering, *five-storied carriages* being swung side-to-side by the uneven rail; a city block on wheels.

ON AN ADJACENT SERVICE ROAD:

A black, open-roof car, built for rough terrain, keeps pace alongside a train carriage with "DREAMCATCHER EXPRESS" faded and printed on the side.

The carriage door opens. The car maneuvers masterfully, close enough for a PASSENGER in a tartan shirt, aided by another rider, to emerge from the backseat and grab a rung of a ladder on the train.

FROM WITHIN THE TRAIN:

An OFFICER, in a summer khaki cotton service uniform, pulls the young woman aboard from within, slamming the door behind them.

INT. CARRIAGE 5, HEAD NURSE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

In the ensuing relative calm:

HEAD NURSE

Nice weather, isn't it? Other than the mosquitoes. Are you comfortable?

MAY, a nurse in her mid-thirties, sits opposite the Head Nurse. A loud patchwork of colors decorate her small frame - the tartan shirt and trousers, both high-waisted and stiff. A show of vivacity dulled into a faded costume.

MAY

Yes.

HEAD NURSE

Good. Did you come in on the San Juan or the Okinawa?

May replies with a polite indifference.

MAY

Neither. I transferred from the Mercy.

Despite her tattered and eclectic outfit, May exhibits no arrogance or need for attention, with good posture and a refusal to move... unless necessary.

HEAD NURSE

Oh, a hospital ship.

MAY

I'm a floating pool nurse.

The older woman checks her paperwork. Her office is a modern design of reasonable grandeur, with faux-marble and glass, adorned with pale vertical slats and an inoffensive sculpture hung from above.

Were it not for a constant rattle, as though the vibrations itself would break the room apart at any moment, one could almost forget that they are in a train carriage.

HEAD NURSE

Why'd you transfer?

MAY

I got tired of being seasick. I wanted solid ground.

HEAD NURSE

I'm not sure you'll get that here. No other reason?

MAY

Nothing you'd find in a performance report.

HEAD NURSE

Clearly.

(then)

You left your stay length request blank. How many weeks are you looking to work?

MAY

I'm not sure yet. At least four.

HEAD NURSE

Most stay minimum three months. Some of our most dedicated nurses have stayed for years.

MAY

I'm not sure yet.

HEAD NURSE

I'm pairing you with one of our best nurses. She's been with us for a few years now, and is very well liked by her patients. Has a very intuitive way to deal with people's afflictions.

(more)

I'm assuming you've got experience with dream therapy before?

MAY

Yes.

HEAD NURSE

Good. We're the only institution to focus solely on insular therapy.

MAY

Insular?

HEAD NURSE

That's what we call it. When patients suffer from what we call "unincorporated thoughts" - thoughts detached from reality, *uncultured* thoughts, anything alien - we treat it.

(then)

But we believe a preventative approach is the most efficient.

MAY

Ah.

HEAD NURSE

I'm sure you have plenty of questions. April can help with those. Any concerns, go straight to her.

MAY

April?

HEAD NURSE

Yes. April is the nurse you'll be sharing a cabin with.

May seems slightly amused.

HEAD NURSE

Something funny?

MAY

My name is May.

HEAD NURSE

April and May, look at that. You two will get along nicely. Cabin #1945. That's carriage 19.

(standing up, and shaking May's hand)

Welcome to the Dreamcatcher Express.

MAY

Thank you.

HEAD NURSE

I think you'll find good company here. People like you.

(off May's look)

Travelers, you know - short term visitors. Like mayflies.

MAY

Hm.

INT. CARRIAGE 19, CABIN #1945 (APRIL'S ROOM) - EVENING

The cabin is a small room on the first story of the nineteenth carriage. There are two small beds and a window with the view of the sea, but it's comfortable enough, with a grand patterned rug and two reading chairs.

Half of the cabin is decorated like a college dormitory, posters, maps, letters, with the exception of a crowded wooden bookcase, filled with a variety of books and trinkets.

APRIL is lying on her belly, with a towel beneath her, reading a book. She wears a dress of dry, uncompromising beige, with no sleeves, no lace, and no ornament, save the modest belt cinched at the waist.

APRIL

Hi, you the new roommate?

MAY

May, nice to meet you.

APRIL

May? That's -

She's interrupted by a knocking.

APRIL

One second.

April steps into the hallway where she exchanges a few words with a PATIENT. Around her people are speaking Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, and English. She seems to be able to converse among them with relative ease.

The patient, clearly very friendly, gifts her a bottle, which April accepts with a great show of appreciation.

MEANWHILE, INSIDE:

May places her coat and bag on her new bed and wanders to the window, where an instant of overwhelming beauty had passed as the sun dips into the wine-red sea, and April returns with a smile.

APRIL

Sorry. Hello. I'm April, May. Nice to meet ya.

She hugs May, who after a brief hesitation, pats April's back.

APRIL

Nice shirt. Where'd ya get it?

MAY

My brother. He lives in Capri.

APRIL

Oh, I loved Naples. I had a terrace that overlooked the bay.

(sparkling)

The island of Ischia silhouetted against the sun. It was my favorite place to read. Have you been?

MAY

No, I never visited.

May is surprised by the depth of April's world knowledge, making little effort to hide it.

APRIL

You must be tired. Want a drink?

April offers May the gifted bottle of red wine, which May politely declines. April, her voice bold, with an ambiguous accent obscuring any insight into where she may have come from, seems happy to talk.

APRIL

How long are you staying?

MAY

I'm not sure. At least a month.

APRIL

Just passing through then.

MAY

Yeah. How *big* is this train?

APRIL
Big – very big.

MAY
I mean, how many people?

APRIL
I don't know. I only talk with a handful. But I think a lot.

MAY
Friends or patients?

APRIL
What?

MAY
The people you talk to.

APRIL
Oh. Both, I guess. Same difference.

Her watch beeps.

APRIL
Oops.

April hands May the wine bottle.

APRIL
Here, please, make yourself at home. I have the night shift so I gotta run, but feel free to use anything of mine. Mi casa es su casa and all that.

And in a flurry, she's gone.

May clears the bed. Having hung her coat and stowed her only suitcase away, she's left with nothing to do but to shift through April's collection of books, and, finding nothing.. tucks herself into bed and falls asleep to the sound of rocking, and the deep blue light seeping through the curtained window.

INT. CARRIAGE 19, HALLWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

OVER BLACK:

Muffled conversation, behind a door or a wall. Accompanied by the soft rattle of the carriage.

ANDRE (O.S.)
He jumped off.. the fourth floor.

ANNA (O.S.)
 I don't believe a word they say.
 They could stop if they tried. They
 don't want to waste the fuel.

ANDRE (O.S.)
 What was it he did again?

ANNA (O.S.)
 Business. An absolutely normal man
 of business, who's retired with
 comfortable benefits. I don't
 believe a word they say.

ANDRE (O.S.)
 Who knows what he's capable of.

ANNA (O.S.)
 Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I -

ON MAY:

Asleep in her bed: her tensed brow perspiring ever-so-
 slightly as her face burrows firmly into the pillow.

She's in a light slumber, on the threshold between dreaming
 and listening, and the rattle of the carriage threatens to
 wake her with every side-to-side. From the hallway comes:

ANDRE (O.S.)
 Oh. Hello there.

As if called to respond, May stirs, almost waking, or waking
 maybe for a moment, but quietly mumbles herself back to
 sleep. The train moves along the coast.

ANNA (O.S.)
 Hi, Thomas.

THOMAS (O.S.)
 Hi Anna, Andre.

ANDRE (O.S.)
 Have you heard what's going on?

THOMAS (O.S.)
 No.

ANNA (O.S.)
 Wilson - he's a patient on the
 fourth floor - he's jumped
 overboard.

THOMAS (O.S.)
 Oh.

ANNA (O.S.)

It's quite tragic actually. He had a nice cottage on the beach. Enjoyed his baths. Would laugh a great deal - well, with restraint - and -

ANDRE (O.S.)

Didn't you know him, Thomas?

THOMAS (O.S.)

Yeah, I did know him.

ANNA

I'm sorry.

THOMAS

Please - we knew each other, but I wouldn't call us friends. What was his nurse's name again?

ANDRE

Assunta.

THOMAS

Do you know her carriage?

ANDRE

Twenty-four, I think.

ANNA

Poor Assunta. I hope she's alright.

ANDRE

Yeah.

THOMAS

Yeah.

OUT THE WINDOW:

The morning sun glimmers against the sea. Having awoken sometime during the conversation, May listens in the still silence.

A heartsick look settles on her face. She rolls over, opens a drawer in her nightstand, grabs a pen and, finding no paper, scribbles a little note into her arm.

The ocean passes by and a clear sky lingers behind. She slips back into a light sleep. On her arm, "24" is written in ink.

INT. CARRIAGE 24 - LATER THE SAME MORNING

As identified with a bronze plaque, the first floor of Carriage 24, a brasserie in art-deco style, is a perfect social lounge for any company-seeker, with a feeling that the voluble crowd might at any moment break into a rattling chorus.

The mirrored panels and polished brass lend a sort of plastic elegance to the old wooden walls awash in green and gold, but the charm is nonetheless real. Everyone is with company except for one woman:

ELLA is caught between her meal and a book, and spends no time acknowledging the masses.

She wears a garment, if you could call it that without understating its effect, of bold but elegant patterns. She wears no jewelry, or flourish, but her hair is dyed an impossible shade of *bright red*.

MAY (O.S.)

Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt. My name's May, I'm new here.

Ella looks up, with the nervous disposition that relaxes upon seeing that the approacher is not a man vying for her attention. May extends her hand and Ella shakes it.

ELLA

I'm Ella. Have you met a nurse named April?

MAY

Yes. She's my roommate.

ELLA

Oh. Haha. That's funny.

MAY

Yeah. It is a little.

ELLA

Haha. Yeah.

A little pause. Not enough to linger, but sufficient to hear the chatter and clatter of the guests around, and as always, the rattle of the carriage.

MAY

I'm looking for Assunta. Do you know where I can find her? I was told she'd be in this carriage.

ELLA

Are you looking into why Wilson jumped?

MAY

Yes.

ELLA

Why?

May struggles to answer.

MAY

I'm new here. I wondered why someone would jump off a moving train.

ELLA

Assunta is a good person. You shouldn't bother her. She's already distraught.

MAY

I'm a nurse. Thought I could help.

ELLA

Oh.

May gestures to an empty chair, "*may I sit here,*" to which Ella allows.

MAY

I treated a patient once who jumped off a boat. He had this paralyzing dream of being stuck in bed. I was just wondering if Wilson may have suffered something similar.

ELLA

Why?

MAY

Plenty of people have dreams like that.

ELLA

Do you?

May nods.

ELLA

I still don't think you should be bothering Assunta. But I can tell you she's not in this carriage. You can check the fifth floor for the call sheet. But I don't think she's here.

MAY

Thank you. I won't be a bother.

She stands, carefully tucks the chair back in, to avoid making noise, and with a polite smile, leaves, but after a second, returns.

MAY

I like your hair, by the way.

ELLA

Oh. Thank you.

Ella smiles, though with restraint, and her eyes are gentle. May exits through the swinging door into:

A STAIRWELL:

White walls with red trim, although time has allowed a pale yellow hue to stain most of the walls.

May heads up the stairs, the polished wood creaking beneath her, pausing where she meets a BLACK CAT, yellow eyes as big as marbles, who watches like an owl from the railing above.

Breaking the stare-down, the cat releases a high-pitched meow and dashes further up the stairs.

By the time May had reached the fifth floor she had met what felt like most of the residents in Carriage 24, who moved en masse through the stairwell. To May's relief, the roaring gossip dissipates, as residents flock to the lower levels, leaving much of the fifth floor quiet.

May finds the call sheet posted on a wall, sees that Assunta was not on this carriage, as Ella had said, and after a beaten sigh looks through the carriage window.

The rocky mountain is lit roundly by the late-morning sun. The mountain towers above the thick, green vegetation.

Absorbed in the sight, May hadn't noticed trio, an older couple and VICTORIA, a middle-aged woman, passing through the hall.

VICTORIA

¿Me puedes hacer un favor? Necesito ayunda moviendo el piano. Puedes venir enseguida?

MAY

Lo siento. No hablar español.

VICTORIA

El piano. Muévelo. Nada vas a cojear un minuto. Un minuto.

MAY

Piano?

VICTORIA
Piano. Pesado.

Victoria mimes heaving up a heavy piano.

MAY
Me, carry?

VICTORIA
Si, you.

MAY
A piano?

VICTORIA
Si, piano.

Victoria opens the door to room #2470.

LOOKING DOWN THE CORRIDOR OF THE HALLWAY AS:

May follows Victoria in, and the two elderly couple follow.

HOLD ON THE SHOT AS THEY LEAVE FROM VIEW.

The door closes leaving the hallway, quiet again, rattling back and forth from the ragged rail, until a turn in the rail makes the entire carriage lean sideways. Without the sway of the train, or the passing views, the hallway would look like an ordinary hallway part of an ordinary building, with nothing extraordinary happening at all.

REMAIN ON THIS EXTERIOR HALLWAY SHOT AS CONVERSATION CONTINUES FROM WITHIN ROOM #2470.

APRIL (O.S.)
May?

MAY (O.S.)
April? What are you doing here?

APRIL (O.S.)
I'm helping carry a piano.

VICTORIA (O.S.)
¿Ustedes son panas?

APRIL (O.S.)
Ella es mi roommate nueva. What are you doing here?

MAY (O.S.)
I'm helping carry a piano.

APRIL (O.S.)
Ha. Small world. I heard you're looking for Assunta. Did you find her?

MAY (O.S.)

No, I haven't.

APRIL (O.S.)

I assume you've heard about Wilson then. We're trying to get them to stop the train but the people above won't let that happen. They say it's a fuel problem. Restarting a train is costly once it's stopped. It's all money at the end, isn't it. Assunta's real broken up about it. Estamos hablando de Assunta.

VICTORIA

Poor Assunta.

APRIL (O.S.)

Do you still need to find her?

MAY (O.S.)

No. I think I'm good.

APRIL (O.S.)

Why'd you wanna meet her?

MAY (O.S.)

I wanted to ask her a few questions. Nevermind though. Best if some things are left alone.

APRIL (O.S.)

Hm.

MAY (O.S.)

Do you play, Victoria?

APRIL (O.S.)

¿Tú tocas piano?

VICTORIA (O.S.)

No puedo tocar el piano muy bien, pero me encanta la música. Me gusta practicar y jugar, tocaba mucho en Ponce.

APRIL (O.S.)

She says she's no good. But she's always been fond of music and gets a lot of fun out of strumming. She used to play a lot in Ponce.

Victoria plays one of the movements from a Beethoven sonata. She does not play well.

PAN TO WINDOW.

TIMELAPSE:

The rising sun climbs from the mountain and sets behind the train into the sea, as a navy blue hue darkness washes over the sky, only for the sun to climb again, behind the same mountain, and repeat, until the cycle is broken by the rain's bombardment against the carriage window as water slowly infiltrates the train through a careless gap left open, pooling on the floor. The arrival of the morning light reveals the water had disappeared with the night, but had left a puddle of sand, which the wind, through the window gap, slowly carries away until only a dusty floor remains.

INT. CARRIAGE 1, ENGINE ROOM - MORNING, A FEW WEEKS LATER

The screaming metal pistons, furious and puffing steam, push and pull the wheels, dragging forward along the track the Dreamcatcher Express and all its impossible, monumental weight.

Withstanding the full force of the wind, her head poking out of a hatch above the engine room, is May, with hair freshly dyed a shade of bright red identical to Ella.

Despite this being Carriage 1, in front and behind her, the train stretches past May in both directions and the start or the end of the train is nowhere to be seen.

May ducks her head back into the carriage, stepping off a wooden chair, which AUGUSTUS, a gentle elder man, removes and stores in front of a miniature TV.

The cabin is narrow, with a tiny kitchen, in which is a firewood stove. The tiled wooden walls break up the well-grimed metal floor and ceiling, from which an old gas lamp hangs, swaying with the rhythm of the train, illuminating a large armchair and a small roll-out desk. On the walls are framed engravings.

MAY

Thanks Augustus. Wow. Wow, wow, wow. I mean what a view.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, any time.

MAY

I always thought the engines were at the front of the train.

AUGUSTUS

They are. But a big train like this has engines front, back, and all throughout.

MAY

Wow. How big is it?

AUGUSTUS

You know, it's embarrassing to say,
but I don't know.

MAY

How can you not know?

AUGUSTUS

Nobody ever told me.

MAY

If you don't know who does?

AUGUSTUS

I don't know. Whoever made it I
suppose. Got any plans for lunch?
I'm going to watch a bit of
cricket.

MAY

Who's playing?

AUGUSTUS

England versus India.

MAY

God. I wish I could. I really do.
But I've got a working lunch today.

AUGUSTUS

Ah, bummer. Well off you pop. Don't
go keeping an old man company. Go,
go.

MAY

Okay, okay. But rain check on the
lunch.

She grabs a small laundry bag and opens the inter-carriage
doors. Suddenly the carriage is flooded with the deafening
sound of the train's engines.

May exits, turning towards the hall but finding herself face
to face with:

ANDRE

May! Oh new hair.

MAY

Hi, Andre. Yeah, just did it.

ANDRE

I like it. Fiery. What are you
doing this afternoon?

MAY

I've got a patient.

May, withholding any enthusiasm for fear of being hit on, keeps her responses brief.

ANDRE
I'm not surprised. You're always working. All the patients always talk about you.

MAY
(gritted teeth)
Hm.

ANDRE
I was wondering what you were up to this afternoon.

MAY
I've got a patient.

ANDRE
Oh right. You just said that.

MAY
I'll see you later, Andre. I really should be going.

She begins to leave but he's is persistent.

ANDRE
My patient was asking about you today!

MAY
Who?

ANDRE
Thomas. Ring any bells?

MAY
I don't think so.

ANDRE
Are you from Los Angeles?

MAY
Is he?

ANDRE
I think so.

MAY
What carriage is he in?

ANDRE
Twenty. Let me introduce you sometime?

MAY

Maybe.

She walks past him, who smiles and waves goodbye, happy with the conversation.

She continues down the hall, through a carriage, then another, uninterrupted, until she makes a sudden stop AT A DOOR and knocks, which someone opens and lets her in.

CUT TO:

THE EXTERIOR OF THE TRAIN

- THE CAMERA TRAVELING BETWEEN DIFFERENT WINDOWS OF CABINS.

Some are decorated; some are not. Those which are decorated, are done so in wildly different manners, some meticulously, as if taken straight out of a magazine advertisement and assembled with delicate attention, and others haphazardly, struggling to maintain order as life, in the form of objects and trinkets, floods into the room, overwhelming the owner.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO TRAVEL BETWEEN DIFFERENT WINDOWS OF THE TRAIN'S EXTERIOR -

THEN SUDDENLY STOPS, NO LONGER KEEPING PACE WITH THE TRAIN, ALLOWING THE CARRIAGES TO ZIP PAST.

BACK TO:

INTERIOR OF THE TRAIN:

The shadows are darker and longer, cutting shapes out of the sun's orange glow painted on the rattling walls.

May exits from a different door, one further down the corridor on the opposite side. She's made the rounds, and having seen multiple patients back to back, is quite exhausted.

She checks her watch and walks off.

INT. CARRIAGE 20, CABIN #2025 (THOMAS' ROOM) - EVENING

The inside of this cabin is furnished like a monk's cell, but the room, smelling strongly of tobacco, is comfortable enough, with two armchairs facing the window, a large desk, a piano and crowded bookshelves.

Cabin #2025 is on the lowest floor and has a spectacular view of the mountain.

The coat rack carries a strange coat of foreign design accompanied by a bag of equal oddity.

Thomas, with a pipe in one hand, a book in another, and a glass of wine on the coffee table is watching television. He hums a tune: Marc Anthony's "*Preciosa*."

He wears a blue shirt, open at the neck, and gray canvas trousers, not as though they belonged to him but as though he was shipwrecked in his pajamas, and had been fitted out with odd garments by compassionate strangers.

Knock, knock, knock. Someone's at the door.

THOMAS

Come in!

May opens the door and removes her hat, holding it against her stomach. Thomas, surprised by the new guest, puts his pipe inside his book to mark his place and rests it on the chair beside him.

MAY

I'm sorry to bother you. Are you Thomas?

THOMAS

That's me. May, right?

MAY

I heard you were looking for me.

THOMAS

Yes! Yes I was. Does RFK mean anything to you?

MAY

That's where I went to school.

THOMAS

I thought so! My memory's all rot. But I think I remember you. Please, please, come in.

MAY

Thanks. I like your coat and bag.

THOMAS

It's the favorite thing I own.

Thomas smiles and clears the second armchair, removing a plate of half-eaten pasta and a stack of books. He pats off some dust and gestures for May to sit.

MAY

Thanks.

She perches beside him.

THOMAS

We were a year above you, I think. Have you been back since? I've been meaning to visit Mr. Uebel again.

MAY

Uebel. I remember him. Hard man to forget. Although his class was a bit of a bore. Who's 'we?'

THOMAS

Oh, Wilson. We were in the same grade.

MAY

Wilson? The one who jumped? He went to school with us?

THOMAS

The one who *left*, yes. As far as I'm concerned, he's out there right now, enjoying his life on an island somewhere.

MAY

Were you close?

THOMAS

Not really. I went to see him the day before he left. I tried to talk but he kept looking at me as though he couldn't quite make out where he'd seen me before. He looked rather awful, as though he had not left his bed in a week.

(then)

But except for that funny look in his eyes he seemed quite normal.

MAY

Funny how?

THOMAS

I don't know exactly how to describe it. Puzzled? Suppose you threw a stone up into the air and it didn't come down but just stayed there...

MAY

Hm.

THOMAS

Well, that's the sort of look he had. He wasn't much fun to talk to, but he read quite a bit.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

We used to share books, but most of his were about the Roman Empire. I found them to be quite boring. But naturally, I have a lot of time for reading since I've settled here.

MAY

How long have you been here?

THOMAS

Fifteen years.

He gives the placid, blue sky a glance, and a strangely tender smile hovers on his thin lips.

THOMAS

I didn't come straight here. I came on the Naples boat for a look at the Blue Grotto. Was supposed to be a three week trip but turned into a few years, somehow.

(a beat)

Circled the globe, a few times, really. Went to England, France, Holland, then to China, and South Korea, got a bit of money from a family death, so I went to Okinawa, Guam, Saipan, Hawaii, then finished in Puerto Rico. Almost got trapped in a storm but caught the last ship out, and then ran out of money.

MAY

Do you ever miss it? Floating around like that?

THOMAS

Always.

MAY

You're sort of traveling now.

May gestures to the window – the train zipping through rocky terrain.

THOMAS

No, I'm not.

The sharpness in his dismissal boils over as quickly as it comes, his soft thin-lipped smile returning again.

THOMAS

And you? How'd you end up here?

MAY

I don't know. Just, tired of the sea. And looking for something else.

THOMAS

Where's home?

May shrugs, sincerely uncertain.

THOMAS

I understand that. I thought I'd find myself home by now too. But I said to myself, well, after all, why should I go back? It wasn't as if I had anyone dependent on me. You have a sister, don't you?

MAY

Brother.

THOMAS

Ah, see. You'll find your way home.

MAY

And you?

THOMAS

None. I was an only child. Had good folks and a good home. All very decent.

MAY

What brought you here?

Thomas takes a long drink, and after a sigh of pleasure goes on.

THOMAS

Before all the traveling, I worked at a branch of the City Bank.

He regains his pipe from his book, puffs and relights it.

THOMAS

Work was fine, the pay was good. Enough that one day I could retire and live off my pension. Then I was sent on a business trip, which was not unusual. Only this one took me to the most beautiful island I'd ever seen. It reminded me of this book my Mom used to read me before bed. The corners were smudged and torn from all the times she would lick her fingers to turn the page.. And I adored it.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It was about this island – my God, it seemed like such a paradise, with the bluest ocean you've ever seen. All my responsibilities, the pension, the work, vanished – just like that. I decided to quit, right there and then. I could take the money I had – and I had a decent savings – and put it into travel. Later that evening, I treated myself to a dinner at a local place, Norgano's. I met a man there, Marion. He was exactly like me – quit his job and was traveling the world at a leisurely pace. And he could tell there was something bothering me, likely he had been bothered by the same thing at some point. You see, I had this guilt. Guilt that maybe I wasn't justified in not having a job like everyone else. So Marion told me this story, one about Sybaris and Crotona.

A drop splats against the glass pane of the window, streaking across, the wind pushing it aside, then another, and another. A downpour drowns the sky in a dark blue, interrupted by flashes of red from the Dreamcatcher's guide-lights.

CUT TO:

AN EXTERIOR SHOT OF THE TRAIN:

The Dreamcatcher Express pummel through heavy rain, carriages disappearing into the distance.

THE CAMERA ROTATES, AS A LIGHTHOUSE BEAM WOULD, PANNING AROUND THE SCENE:

The Dreamcatcher, the ocean, and the mountain, all obscured in fog, with bursts of light emitted from the train. The strange, peculiar storm, is a blend of snow and hail, with flashes of unnatural colors. Over this:

THOMAS (O.S.)

There were two cities: in Sybaris they just enjoyed life and had a good time, and in Crotona they were hardy and industrious and all that. And one day the men of Crotona came over and wiped Sybaris out, and then after a while a lot of other fellows came over from somewhere else and wiped Crotona out.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Nothing remains of Sybaris, not a stone, and all that's left of Crotona is just one column. That settled the matter for me. It came to the same in the end, didn't it?

BACK TO SCENE:

THOMAS

So, what's the point of living if not to go searching for it before it's too late? Marion met a tragic end, but I wish I had listened to his advice.

MAY

Tragic end?

THOMAS

He died a week later. Carbon monoxide poisoning in his room - probably on purpose. I got scared and went back to work after that. It took me another year to work up the courage to quit again.

MAY

You went *back to work*?

THOMAS

You bet I did. But in spite of what happened, the thought that my own Sybaris was out there - an island paradise - it just became too much. So I left again. But after I had blown through my savings, the only way afford to travel was the Dreamcatcher. It seemed perfect. A train-ride on the shore, inexpensive. Practically made for island hunting. Too bad I didn't get the seaside cabin. But I often spend time in the baths, and they have a great view of the sea.

MAY

So you haven't found it yet, your island?

THOMAS

Sybaris? No. But it's out there. I know it.

MAY

Look at the time. I'm late for drinks with friends. But would you like to join us?

THOMAS

I was going to go for a bath.

MAY

Can't it wait?

THOMAS

I suppose it can.

Thomas smiles.

INT. CARRIAGE 24, BRASSIERE - NIGHT

WAITER

The kitchen's closed cos of the storm! Everyone go home!

The waiter yells from upon a chair, to replies of groans and boos. The crowded brasserie shuffles out of the carriage, leaving May, Thomas, April, and Victoria.

THOMAS

Well, that's that, I suppose.

APRIL

I am so hungry.

VICTORIA

¿Y ahora qué?

MAY

There's the vending machines.

THOMAS

I think I'll retire for the night.

VICTORIA

Me too.

MAY

Okay. Later.

THOMAS

How long's your stay length?

MAY

I don't know. I'm thinking 4 more weeks.

THOMAS

Just a month, huh?

MAY

For now.

THOMAS

Good on you. Nice to meet you all.
Enjoy yourselves. May, it's so good
to see a familiar face.

He exchanges hugs with April and Victoria, and then with May, whom he grasps firmly, holding her a little longer than the rest – not enough to draw the attention of anyone except for her, then retires alongside Victoria, leaving only April and May in the carriage.

APRIL

Great. Let's go to the vending machines.

MAY

Carriage 5 has the best one.

APRIL

That's miles away.

MAY

It has better food.

APRIL

Fine.

A LINGERING SHOT. A FLOATING CAMERA THROUGH THE DARK INTERIORS OF CARRIAGES, MOVING FROM CARRIAGE 24 UP THE TRAIN, SEEING:

The resident cabins of the Dreamcatcher Express:

Neighbors sharing light. Sharing food. Laughing.

Then -

A dance hall. Hundreds of bodies, crammed against one-another glistening in sweat, dancing within the swirling colors of the hall lights. The thudding bass of electronic music pounding against the walls. Then -

Empty carriages.

A blitz of rain and snow through an open window

UNTIL THE CAMERA REACHES CARRIAGE 5.

May and April face a rattling vending machine stocked with premium fast foods: pork bun, burger, ramen, coffee, tea, and an assortment of desserts.

APRIL

Haven't been this far forward in ages.

MAY

Told you the food's better.

April sits on the floor in her socks, resting against the vending machine, shoes stacked beside her. May sits next to her, and the two dine, if you could call it that, together in quietude, agaze at the violent tempest roaring outside the window.

APRIL

Wow. Look at the rain.

Lightning strikes and May recoils. April, surprised by her friend's fright, puckishly jabs.

APRIL

Are you scared of lightning?

MAY

A little bit.

APRIL

Didn't think you were scared of anything.

MAY

I just... dislike it.

APRIL

It's part of your dream, isn't it?

April's sharp insight catches May off-guard. She's impressed.

MAY

I wish I was one of your patients.

APRIL

Alright. Miss May, what have you been dreaming about recently?

MAY

Well, I haven't had it in a while. But it starts with a storm just like this. I'm on a train, and all the passengers are staring out the window, like there's nothing else to do. I don't see their faces, they're just people. Then, lightning strikes. Everything goes quiet. And the sun comes out as we enter the eye of the storm. We're all so relieved. But I look back and everyone is jumping off the train. They're hurling their bodies out of windows, the doors, it all happens in an instant. And then there's just me.

APRIL

Do you jump?

MAY

I wake up.

INT. CARRIAGE 22, CABIN #2222 (ELLA'S ROOM) - NEXT MORNING

May rubs her lifeless face, which struggles to mask the hangover.

MAY

Sorry, slept badly last night.

ELLA

Did the rain keep you up?

MAY

No, I had a late night with some friends.

Her room tells us that Ella is a painter, poet, photographer, and an enthusiast in other disciplines many would struggle to identify. She suffers from the fate of most curious artists in that her room is littered with countless unfinished pieces of work.

MAY

How did you sleep?

ELLA

Alright. I had my morning coffee today.

MAY

Any dreams?

ELLA

No, I don't think so.

MAY

What are you working on now?

ELLA

It's been crazy - so many things. I think a lot of things are coming together right now.

MAY

For example?

ELLA

Here, let me show you.

Ella walks to the sink and grabs a deep blue-dyed print.

ELLA

This is a cyanotype. It's a photo exposed by the sun.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

You can place anything on top of it
and it'll leave an impression on
the paper.

MAY

Wow. It's pretty.

It is. Star-shaped dots are burned into the paper creating
the impression of a starry night.

MAY

What are these stars?

ELLA

They're sand from of a distant
beach. My friend brought it back
for me. She said the locals sell it
to folks passing through.

MAY

Why?

ELLA

See the conjoined grains? They're
called twins, and it's good luck to
find it. But if you break them
apart it's a bad omen or something.
I guess they give it to someone
else so they don't end up breaking
it themselves. I don't know, it's
just a superstition.

MAY

Can I see the sand?

Ella struts back to the sink, but her energy quickly dies as
she struggles to sort through an assortment of objects,
having clearly misplaced the sand.

ELLA

It's still wet so I can't show you.

MAY

That's fine.

ELLA

But do you want to see how I make
it?

MAY

Sure.

ELLA

Come take a look.

Chemical bottles and glass plates with printed negatives disastrously clutter the sink, which is stained a sort of cobalt blue, with objects of all sorts filling the gaps.

ELLA

So these are agar plates. I'm trying to do try-toned now. So first I print a blue negative layer, then a yellow, then a green. And then when I combine them, I get a picture like that.

Ella points to the wall, where a print hangs of a yellow sunset above blue waters, and a half circle painted over in black ink. It, with a stretch of imagination, looks like an island silhouetted against the sun.

MAY

I just met someone else who dreams of an island.

Ella, incurious but polite.

ELLA

Oh, really?

MAY

Have you had any more dreams about the island?

ELLA

Not recently.

MAY

Nothing at all?

ELLA

It's the same as I told you last time. How's your hair by the way? I'm sorry it's a bit high maintenance.

MAY

It's perfect, Ella. You started dreaming of the island when your grandfathers died, didn't you?

A flash of unhappiness shows on Ella's face, easily mistaken for annoyance, who after a moment composes herself again, politely smiles and shakes her head.

ELLA

I don't want to talk about it.

MAY

I'm sure you don't. But this is my job. That's why we're on this train.

ELLA

I thought we were just hanging out.

MAY

We are.

May changes her tactic. She gestures at a desk, on it a stack of paper sorted into a few piles. May wanders closer.

MAY

What's this?

ELLA

Junk mail.

MAY

Junk mail?

ELLA

Unclaimed letters from the mail room. I don't know. All kinds. There's love letters, newsletters, tax letters. I sort through it.

MAY

Why?

ELLA

I think it's interesting. They come from all over. Here's one from Paris, one from the Philippines, and look - this one comes from a research center in the Arctic Circle!

An unopened envelope addressed to Ella from KATHRINE - returned to sender. The writing is messily scribbled.

MAY

Where are you from again?

ELLA

Oh, nowhere as nice.

MAY

Would I know it?

ELLA

Probably not. It's a little suburb.

MAY

Do you wish you came from somewhere else?

ELLA

No. I mean, I wouldn't mind if I came from somewhere else. It might make my life more interesting.

MAY

Is that why you dream of your island?

ELLA

No. I don't know.

MAY

Why then?

A SHOT LOOKING OUT OF THE CABIN WINDOW INTO:

The sun breaking through the thick clouds, and the sea extending beyond the horizon, just a singular mass of blue, the sunlight glimmering, and the train's shadow cast on the water zipping past.

HOLD ON THIS SHOT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CONVERSATION.

Ella, after some thought, reluctantly tells a story.

ELLA

My mother's parents lived next to a lighthouse in Kent. When my grandfather died, I took the train to the funeral. I rode through the most beautiful countryside, where acres of green pastures separated farm-houses and cottages. They all had their little plot of land, enclosed by hedges, and I remember thinking, from up above on the train, they all looked like little islands passing by. The funeral was just family members – all six of us. And very quick. Everyone went home the same evening. I had intended to stay behind to take care of my grandmother, but the next morning I got a phone call from my father, telling me that my other grandfather had just passed away as well.

(a beat)

Before I knew it, I was back on the train again but going further away from home. I passed by the houses again, like islands, and that evening I arrived at my other granddad's house. I slept there the night after his funeral. That night, I had this dream of an island with a lighthouse – and I was in the ocean.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)

I try getting closer to the lighthouse, but the harder I try, the further away the light becomes – like the island's floating away from me. And there's a buzz that gets louder and louder. Until I wake up.

(a tense sigh)

That morning I called my grandmother to tell her about the dream. But when I called, she didn't recognize who I was. The only living custodian with the memories of the people who practically raised me – had forgotten me.

(more)

So I left. I had everything I needed already packed into my little backpack. I found my way onto this train, and since then, the dream of the lighthouse and the island keeps coming back.

END OF SHOT. BACK TO THE ROOM INTERIOR:

MAY

And have the dreams stopped?

ELLA

Recently.

MAY

Do you want them to?

ELLA

I'm not sure.

MAY

Then you might want to slow down on sorting those letters. Obsessing over a feed of other people's thoughts. You're leaving no room for your own.

ELLA

I don't mind, to be honest.

MAY

Oh.

ELLA

It's easy. And gives me something to do.

MAY

Sure.

They both stop, the conversation dying with a whimper, a mutual sullenness – or so we think, until –

BANG, BANG, BANG! An urgent pounding.

APRIL

May! You in there?

May opens the door.

MAY

Yeah, I'm here. What's wrong?

APRIL

Thomas jumped.

INT. CARRIAGE 20, CABIN #2025 (THOMAS' ROOM) - MORNING

The Dreamcatcher Express chugs along the shore.

Conversation is brewing outside the cabin as onlookers from peer into the open door, gawking and gossiping, seeking any excitement to break the monotony of a Monday morning.

May, her head buried in her arms, sits in Thomas' window-side chair. The mountain gleams a renewed shade of green beyond the open window.

April enters the room, a flash of disdain on her face as she ushers the onlookers out of the room and closes the door.

MAY

What did she say?

April shakes her head, no.

MAY

But he took his suitcase and coat.
They have to stop the train.

Thomas' suitcase and coat are gone, despite the rest of the room, except for some papers ruffled by the wind, being perfectly untouched.

APRIL

They said it was a fuel problem.
They don't have enough fuel to
stop.

MAY

That's a lie. We've been moving for
the last month without refueling.

APRIL

I know. I'm sorry.

MAY

He took his suitcase. He jumped from the first floor. He's out there somewhere.

APRIL

I'm not sure there's anything we can do.

MAY

Can you talk to her again?

April can see the thoughts racing behind May's eyes.

APRIL

Sure.

April knows that the head nurse's mind won't be changed, as does May, but her agreement brings May some relief. April quickly squeezes May's shoulder and exits the room.

May sees a small pile of ash on the table next to the chair. She dips her finger into it.

April walks through the gawking horde into Carriage 24, past the bristling brasserie, into a dingy stairwell, where a black cat with yellow eyes whines and meows, then runs up the stairs.

A tear streaks down April's solemn face.

INT. CARRIAGE 19, CABIN #1945 (APRIL'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Rain falls again. May sits on her bed, morose and silent. She takes a cotton shirt from the fresh laundry piled beside her, folds it ploddingly, and lays it neatly down. She stares at the slanting rain falling in torrents. It's a dark night.

Knock knock.

April peeks into the room.

APRIL

I found one.

She hands May a plastic raincoat, made of cheap yellowed plastic and falling apart.

APRIL

Maybe the only raincoat on this train.

MAY

Thank you.

May folds the raincoat in quarters and places it in a rucksack, then places her folded laundry inside.

APRIL

I wish the rain would stop for a moment. Like it did in your dream.

The rain shows no sign of stopping.

MAY

Well, I don't suppose it's any good waiting for it to clear up.

APRIL

So you're really going to jump?

MAY

I guess so.

APRIL

Why?

MAY

I don't want to be stuck on this train. If everyone else is doing it, I might as well. Besides, I'm just finding Thomas and bringing him back. That's all.

APRIL

Okay. I'll walk with you.

MAY

Okay.

They step out into the hallway.

INT. CARRIAGE 20, CABIN #2025 (THOMAS' ROOM)

Outside the door of the room.

APRIL

Did you layer up?

MAY

Yeah.

APRIL

Good luck. And be careful.

MAY

Thanks. I may ruin your coat.

APRIL

Don't worry. I don't live to avoid wear and tear.

April hugs May, holding her tight. They part, glancing a look of farewell through damp eyes, but stiff as soldiers, with chins up and shoulders back.

May touches the door to Thomas' room and hesitates.

MAY

Why do you think he jumped?

April thinks for a second, a tiny moment, and speaks as if the answer had been written out long before the question.

APRIL

I think he just realized he was stuck. Maybe talking to you reminded him of that.

MAY

Why?

APRIL

Because you're the type of person not to notice.

MAY

Not to notice what?

APRIL

When someone's stuck in place. Because you've never been stuck. And it reminded him that he is.

MAY

Yeah.

A final mourning moment.

MAY

I think you're probably very good at your job.

April smiles.

MAY

See you soon.

APRIL

Bye.

May smiles.

She enters the room, closing the door behind her and leaving April behind in the hallway.

WE SEE THE FOLLOWING ACTION THROUGH INSERTS. THE CAMERA CUTTING BETWEEN CLOSEUPS OF THOMAS' BELONGINGS. MAY'S SHADOW CAST OVER THESE OBJECTS, PORTRAYING THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

CUT BETWEEN:

May wears her raincoat -

Carries her bag -
 Opens the window -
 Climbs over and -
 Jumps off the moving train.
 Wind and rain gush in.

EXT. OUTSIDE - NIGHT

May recovers herself and stands up, clearly in some pain from the fall, covered in white mud close to the tracks.

A grain of sand is painfully embedded in her skin, and upon removing it May sees that it's star shaped. The sand, two grains conjoined together - a twin, breaks apart.

She looks at the mountain with uneasy eyes. There's a thin strip of silver beach rising quickly to hills covered to the top with luxuriant vegetation. The coconut trees, thick and green, come nearly to the train tracks.

The Dreamcatcher Express rattles by, faster now than it seemed aboard. May steps away and picks up her bag. The gusting rain subsides away from the speeding carriages.

May pushes through the hedgerow and shrubbery, leaving the train tracks behind, into an expanse of green, littered with an uncountable variety of trees. Among them May sees the summit of the mountain; and then, gleaming white, a flash of light climbing up.

CAMERA LINGERS BEHIND AS MAY ASCENDS, WATCHING HER DISAPPEAR INTO THE FOREST. PAN AROUND, SEEING:

Birds. Insects. No schedule. Leisure. Utopia. Sybaris.

CUT BETWEEN:

CARRIAGE 1, ENGINE ROOM; Augustus in his twin bed, asleep in the engine room, a game of cricket on the television.

CARRIAGE 24, BRASSERIE; a voluminous crowd dining and a table playing Rummy.

CARRIAGE 22, CABIN #2222; Ella opens an envelope addressed to her, and inside is a letter with shaky handwriting.

CARRIAGE 19, CABIN #1945; April beside her window, a book in her hand, but her mind too scattered to read, her eyes shifting sporadically to the sea passing by.

CARRIAGE 20, CABIN #2025; The wind unsettling Thomas' vacant room.

EXT. SUMMIT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The rain falls in torrents.

Thomas is on the mountainside, sheltering under a tree, lying quite peacefully in the darkness lit only by the half-moon.

A SHOT OF THOMAS FROM THE FRONT, MAY BEHIND HIM. LONG SHOT.

May ascends the mountain, her eyes on Thomas but scanning the area, unable to make out much. She watches the flowing rain, like a deluge from heaven, with a steady persistence and a fury of its own.

She plunks down beside Thomas, wordless. He's startled by her at first, but settles back into his own quietude again, silent but grateful for her company. Under his breath he begins to sing Guy Lombardo's "*Enjoy Yourself*."

THOMAS

(singing)

Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think. Enjoy yourself, while you're still in the pink. The years go by, as quickly as you wink. En-

A deep cough erupts from his chest.

MAY

We'll find someone to give us a lift. We could catch the train if we hurry.

THOMAS

We'll be fine.

MAY

Thomas, we're going to run out of time.

THOMAS

I know. Just until the sun rises. I'll be able to see Sybaris in the morning, and then I'll take a boat across.

MAY

What boat?

THOMAS

(continuing)

And I hope you'll accompany me. Although I imagine once you see the Sybaris, it won't take much to convince you. The island's most beautiful in the morning light, I heard.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

There are these two great rocks that stand out of the sea. They're so breathtaking that I've heard of people dying at the beauty from the sight. Although those are just stories.

MAY

Thomas.

THOMAS

So you see, there's nothing that could compel me to move before the sun rises.

May looks at him, then at the dark void where the sea should be, her curiosity undeniable. She thinks for a moment and gives her tacit consent.

THOMAS

Good.

Thomas reclines back, settling in and rubbing his chest for warmth. May unfurls another coat from her rucksack.

THOMAS

Did you bring that for me?

MAY

Yes.

THOMAS

Thanks.

He blankets himself with the coat and begins to sing again.

THOMAS

(singing)

You work and work for years and years, you're always on the go. You never take a minute off, too busy makin' dough. Someday you say, you'll have your fun, when you're a millionaire. Imagine all the fun you'll have in your old rocking chair.

Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think. Enjoy yourself, while you're still in the pink. The years go by, as quickly as a wink. Enjoy yourself, enjoy yourself, it's later than you think.

You're gonna take that ocean trip, no matter come what may.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

*You've got your reservations made
but you just can't get away. Next
year for sure, you'll see the
world, you'll really get around.
But how far can you travel when
you're six feet underground?*

EXT. SUMMIT - THE NEXT MORNING

It's nearly sunrise, and the morning light is illuminating a clear day. Thomas and May are asleep, turned on their sides, when a distant horn wakes them. Thomas, the first to upright himself, nudges May up.

Awe creeps over her as she sees the morning scene, as the darkness lifts. She gasps. She understands.

MAY

Oh my god.

The Dreamcatcher Express hisses down the base of the mountain, running along the beach. But the sun, rising behind the vast ocean, reveals the ground where May and Thomas stand: not a just a mountaintop, but an island. May and Thomas are standing on an island, maybe six miles wide, surrounded by the Pacific.

The train turns sharply around a bend and steams around the shore. It creates A LOOP completely encasing the island; and all around it runs, without start or end, creating a great circle - the eternal train races around the island like a snake chasing its tail.

MAY

(a whisper)

It's just a circle. It's just a circle.

Nothing lies beyond the horizon. There are no far-off islands. The vast blue ocean is empty.

THOMAS

I'm sure it's there! Sybaris is just beyond the horizon. We can take a boat.

May silently walks back to the train tracks.

THOMAS

(shouting)

May! I'm sure it's there. Don't leave. They're not going to stop for you! May!

Thomas shouts after her, but she's already gone. Only rattling rocks and whirling dust.