

Glory Train

by

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DESCRIPTION

A young woman threatens four travelers with a vial of what she says is anthrax. Maybe. Maybe not.

CHARACTERS

- Man, Latino/Caribbean
- Woman, African-American
- Passenger 1 (man), African-American
- Passenger 2 (woman), African-American
- Other passengers, mixed

SETTING

- The Ashmont/Mattapan trolley

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The Ashmont/Mattapan high speed trolley. A MAN gets on holding a Bible. Several passengers scattered around. The MAN should also be dark-complexioned; his accent can be a mixture, part Caribbean, part Latino. He wears a name tag, but it's blank. One of the passengers, a WOMAN, sits wrapped in herself, literally, her arms crossed tightly across her chest. She wears a belly bag. As the train pulls out, the MAN begins to speak.

MAN

Good morning, people.

No response from anyone.

MAN

Thank you for letting me talk to you. I'm from Victory Outreach, doing the Lord's work today, like the Fisher of Men himself, trying to reel in some of those lost souls on our streets, raise 'em up. We work mostly with kids, trying to get them away from the streets, away from the evil that hits on them every day of their lives, into something that's gonna turn them around. I know—I was there. Heroin. Crack. Alcohol. Homeless. Hooked. All by eighteen. My mind was clouded, closed—

(holds up the Bible)

—until the Lord Jesus Christ spread his light in me. Spread it everywhere. The Lord Jesus can save you with love—if he saved scum like me, he can save you—and that's why I'm out here today talking to you. Riding the rails. With him you can escape the evil around you, the evil in you.

He holds up the Bible again.

MAN

It's all right here, the only roadmap you'll ever need.

(MAN begins handing out business cards)

The Lord is good, the key to survival. Praise his name. If you know anyone who needs help, especially young people, if you know anyone needing the Lord's juice—maybe yourself—give us a call. I made the call a long time ago. You make the call.

The MAN sits next to a passenger and begins talking. The two sit across from the WOMAN.

MAN

Good day, brother.

PASSENGER 1 nods. They shake hands.

MAN

How are you today?

PASSENGER 1

Fine.

MAN

Good to hear that. Read the Bible?

PASSENGER 1

Used to.

MAN

Are you saved?

PASSENGER 1

Depends.

MAN

Have you accepted Jesus into your heart?

PASSENGER 1

I don't know.

MAN

Don't know?

PASSENGER 1

I did as a kid—I was saved one time—does it stick? I like to think so.

MAN

Do you feel Jesus in your heart now?

PASSENGER 1

I don't know. What's that feel like?

MAN

Joy—that someone loves you. Sins and all. If you just make that effort to know him.

PASSENGER 1

I just be trying to make a living. I don't have time for sins.

MAN

Ah, sins aren't something you do, they're in the blood.

WOMAN

(not speaking directly to either one of them)

Bullshit.

The MAN and PASSENGER look at her.

WOMAN
(still not directly speaking to them)
So much fucking bullshit.

MAN
Young lady—

WOMAN
Fuck you. Fuck the Bible. Piss on it.
(to the PASSENGER)
Don't buy this bullshit about Jesus savin' you. Jesus can't save no one. There ain't no escape. From nothin'. We're already dead.

MAN
(enthusiasm)
You just have to let Jesus—

WOMAN
Been there. Had it done to me. Didn't take.

The MAN is really excited now. He leans in to talk with her, the PASSENGER momentarily forgotten.

MAN
I can't believe that you really believe—

WOMAN
Didn't you hear me? You already a dead man. Sins and all.

She reaches into her belly bag and pulls out a small glass vial, holds it up. It holds a cloudy liquid.

MAN
What's that?

WOMAN
What do you think it is?

MAN
I don't know.

WOMAN
You?

PASSENGER shrugs.

WOMAN

It's the comin' death. Yours.

The trolley lurches, and they all jerk forward and back in their seats. The WOMAN almost drops the vial.

WOMAN

Shit. Don't want to drop this! Not yet, at least.

MAN

What is it?

WOMAN

Know any Latin?

The MAN shakes his head no.

WOMAN

You?

PASSENGER 1

No.

WOMAN

I do. Bacillus anthracis.

(shakes the vial)

Anthrax.

PASSENGER 1

What's that?

WOMAN

You don't know? Don't you read the papers? Remember that Saddam Hussein bastard, all them chemical weapons they were tryin' to take away from him?

(shakes the vial again)

I have my own little weapon here. Kill everybody on this train, and then some, if I just threw it down on the floor and broke it.

(looks right in the MAN's eyes)

Kill you outright if I opened it up and threw it on you. Would the Lord save you then? Sins and all? Huh?

(looks at the vial)
Anthrax. Now there's a Bible for you.

MAN
That isn't—what you say it is.

WOMAN
How you know?

MAN
It just isn't.

WOMAN
Here, read this.

She pulls a tattered news clipping from her bag and hands it to him.

MAN
(reading out loud)
“Biological terror. Prepare for it, US cities are urged.”

WOMAN
Read the circled part.

MAN shakily hands the clipping to the PASSENGER.

PASSENGER 1
“The terrorists released an odorless aerosol in the airport terminal. Several days later, passengers from all over the world began dying from anthrax, a deadly bacterial infection.”

WOMAN
Give it back.
(holds up vial)
Weapon of choice among us truth-seekers.

MAN
Where would you get it?

WOMAN
I don't have to tell you that. Lord Jesus gonna save you now? He's gonna have to be quicker than me.

Fakes a motion to throw the contents on the MAN. He raises his Bible to block it.

PASSENGER 1

You a sick woman.

WOMAN

No I'm not. I'm just dead. I don't care. Dead people don't hafta care.

PASSENGER 1

Jesus raised the dead.

WOMAN

Dead bodies. Betcha Lazarus had maggots all through him. What'dya think that did to his self-esteem?

WOMAN makes to drink the vial, with an eye on the two of them.

WOMAN

Or maybe I'll just save myself. Sins and all.

Train lurches again, stops. A large black woman, PASSENGER 2, walks out and gets on the train, sits. She is carrying a magazine, like The Watchtower.

MAN

That's not real. That can't be real.

PASSENGER 1

I'm gettin' off.

MAN

No, you gotta stay, see this through.

PASSENGER 1

Not me.

Train lurches as it starts up.

PASSENGER 1

Ain't another stop between here and the end.

PASSENGER 2
(fanning herself)

Warm today, ain't it?

MAN

Ma'am, you might not want to sit here.

PASSENGER 2

Why should I move?

WOMAN

I am the coming death, that's why.

WOMAN shakes the vial.

PASSENGER 2

What are you talking about? What's that?

PASSENGER 1

She says its anthrax. You might want to move.

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax.

WOMAN

How do you know?

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax. Dishwashing liquid, or something like that. I seen sheep and cattle die of anthrax when I was a kid in Tennessee. Burn the bodies, burn the fields to get rid of it. No fool would carry it around.

WOMAN

I'm not just any fool.

PASSENGER 2

No, you some special kind of fool, most likely. Holy fool.

WOMAN

I could open it right here! Right now!

PASSENGER 1

You shouldn't push her.

PASSENGER 2

I'm too hot to worry about dying.

(to PASSENGER 1)

Don't talk about what you don't know.

(to WOMAN)

Honey, you can put it away.

Train lurches to a stop, then starts again.

WOMAN

I could do it.

PASSENGER 2

I know you could. These two fine gentlemen know you could, too.
Right? You've made your point.

WOMAN puts the vial away, speaks to no one in particular.

WOMAN

If you gotta die to be saved, I'm halfway there.

PASSENGER 2

You made your point. You have. Whatever it was, you made it.

WOMAN wraps her arms around herself again, almost like a cocoon.

MAN

If you came to the Lord—

PASSENGER 2

That dog ain't gonna hunt here.

MAN

But Jesus—

PASSENGER 2

Jesus is fine for some. Use it on them. Here, it's water on a hot
stove.

(fans herself)

Whew!

PASSENGER 1

Jesus isn't good for everybody?

PASSENGER 2

You have to be reachable.

PASSENGER 1

Some aren't.

PASSENGER 2

They're deep away.

MAN

Jesus can reach anybody!

PASSENGER 2

Young man, you got a lot to learn about the limits of your employer. There's gold in the center of the earth no one is ever going to reach.

Train lurches, comes to a stop.

PASSENGER 1

Last stop.

The four of them look at each other for a moment. The WOMAN gets up, pats her belly bag.

WOMAN

You just never know.

The WOMAN gets off the train and exits offstage. The other three rise and get off the train.

PASSENGER 1

You know her.

PASSENGER 2

I do.

(to the MAN)

She's had pain you can't even imagine. She just wants attention. Human attention. Not ghosts. She has enough of those.

(fans herself)

It's only gonna get hotter today.

MAN

So it wasn't anthrax?

PASSENGER 2

(walking away)

I didn't say it wasn't anthrax.

(walks partly off-stage)

You just never know.

PASSENGER 2 exits.

Blackout.