

The Train

by Carl Santoro

Miriam felt a chill and began the slow process of waking up from the train-induced slumber. Her eyes felt oddly stuck closed, failing to focus. A blurred vision of her lap started to make her feel uncomfortable. Something heavy, and wet was resting in it. It was a bloody hand. Just a hand. She jolted back up into her seat and caught sight of the smashed open window to her left. Snow-covered cows staring back at her as the train began a troubling wobble. The man across from her had one hand missing. He had a large shard of glass impaled in his neck. Blood frozen down his tie and pooled dark red on top of his large vested stomach. Suddenly, on her right side, a woman appeared in the compartment doorway, reached in and shook Miriam's shoulder.

"Are you alright, honey?"

Miriam, looked at her with glazed eyes and a cold, numbed face. She tried to utter a sound, but fainted instead.

"Shit, not now, sweetheart! We gotta get outta here!"

The woman slapped Miriam hard across her face.

"Wake up sister, this train's under attack!"

Miriam snapped out of her grogginess and held onto this person like a child clinging desperately to their mother.

The train was speeding with a tilt to the outside and glass could be heard shattering as other windows were punctured with explosives.

"Uhh, what's happened? Where are we going?" Miriam strained to ask, almost being literally dragged off her feet.

A strong blast knocked them both down. The woman covered Miriam with her arm as shrapnel of all sorts flew over them.

On her back now, Miriam twisted around to look at her savior. The woman flashed open her coat to reveal her U.S. Justice Department shield.

"I'm with you "Miriam K." It's my job to see you get there in one piece!"

Miriam and the woman, both about thirty-something, quickly struggled to get up. They became horrified to see the rear of the train begin to tear away. Sparks, flames and metal popping upwards as the car next to theirs peeled off.

Their car too, now, was ripping loose. The agent saw a body of water below coming up ahead of them. They were approaching a bridge. She grabbed Miriam, managed to lift her up and as their car leaned towards the water, yelled, "You'll be alright! Just pinch your nose!" She threw Miriam out of the train towards the embankment just before the bridge. The entire train immediately took a direct dive down, the agent with it.

"I said, are you alright?"

Miriam opened her eyes which she had squeezed tight in preparation for her fall.

"Here is another Bloody Mary to make up for the spill."

Still groggy from the train-induced slumber, Miriam reached for it, staring into the woman's face.

"Your cabin mate is still cleaning himself off."

It was now obvious Miriam had been dreaming. Suddenly, the man entered. He had a plastic neck brace on and one hand.

Miriam quickly looked away and took a long sip from her drink.

"You always so active when you dream?" the man asked.

"It's cold in here," Miriam said. She went to close the window. It was at that moment she realized her left wrist was handcuffed to a pipe.

She looked out the window. Snow-covered cows stared back.

"Could you help me with this celery stalk," she asked.

