

Only Dreams

by Mark Reep

Though she answers his deferential knock
in a bloodstained peignoir, torn stockings
the conductor remains impassive .
Next stop's the border, miss, he says.
You'll be wantin' your papers ready.
He does not ask after you but looks
her up and down now as in deliberate
extraction of unspoken payment.
Her smile like fortune's cannot be coerced
but she opens her peignoir. He stares
at the sullen bullethole between her breasts,
dark blood welling slowly with each heartbeat.
Does he bow slightly, turn away whole?
You suppose not. She closes the door.



Diner on dust, she says, do ye thirst yet?
Scratching lightly with chipped nails at your eyes
she laughs to find you already unblinking.
Were all her cruelties so charming, unstudied?
She smiles down at you from years gone,
the small far end of a telescope:
I had too much coffee, she says. Her piss
is cold, washes parts of you away.
She waves, Bye-bye! Gestures:
A convenient floordrain yawns.
If you could you'd say you're sorry
but you're tumbling through rusty grates
into darkness, a storm of cinders,
thunder of a thousand wheels.



In the next scene police and bloodhounds
converge on echoes of unresolved narrative
but no one finds you nor will ever.
In the dining car the conductor sits drooling
from the corner of his mouth. Is there
a doctor on the train? Other passengers
agree on little save she was lovely and you
seemed a prick. Her hair was so fine,
a girl says wistfully. When she brushed it,
static crackled. One of her companions
giggles. Then they all do.



An old woman waiting her turn to say
she knows nothing either imagines herself
in a red Aston Martin speeding along
a winding mountain road. She rolls down
the window, splays fingers to the wind,
wonders if she remembers, or only dreams.

