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## The Train

By Antaeus

I awoke early this morning from a dream that I felt compelled to write down. I wanted physical proof of the dream, something tangible to prove that I wasn't going insane. I wasn't worried that I would forget the dream, I'll remember it for the rest of my life.

Like when you hit your finger with a hammer, you don't have to write it down to remember it, you just remember it.

There were tears in my eyes and great sadness in my heart when I woke from that dream. As hard as I tried too, I just couldn't go back to sleep. The tears just wouldn't stop.

They were like a river of water running from my eyes, along with the sadness one feels when they have lost something precious to them. You know, like when there has been a death in the family, or some other great tragedy has occurred.

My wife Clementine is usually very sensitive to these things. Typically she would have sensed something was wrong, woke up, and comforted me. Not this time, though. I had to wake her up so she could ask me what was wrong.

I tried to explain my dream to her but, how could I? It's like when you pick the lint from your belly button and examine it. Why? I didn't know the dream's meaning myself.

It was three o'clock in the morning, and we had gone to bed at around one thirty, so my Clementine eventually went back to sleep. I stayed awake to write this. Like I said, something was compelling me.

The dream was mine, and as with all dreams, the telling is never the same as the experiencing. It's like when you have to pee really badly, and you finally get to go. You can explain to someone how you did it, but not the orgasmic-like feeling you had while you were doing it.

I know that the dream and the sadness will always be with me, even if only on a subconscious level.

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In my dream, I was in a house that was different from the house we actually live in.

As it is in dreams, I knew that my wife Clementine was there with me, although I never actually saw her. I was in the kitchen preparing supper as I usually do when a stranger walked in.

Dreams are funny. Sometimes you can't tell if the other person is a man or a woman. Sometimes they change from one to another in the dream. It all feels so natural that you don't notice. Except if you're dreaming that you are lost. Then you see everything.

This dream was different in that I didn't pay attention to the details, but I noticed everything. I must have known this person because I wasn't alarmed at all. It seemed perfectly natural that he or she should just walk into my kitchen.

We began to speak to each other. Not with words, but telepathically. At the time, I did not, and still, do not feel that this was strange. It felt as normal to me as breathing.

Have you ever been so close with someone that you sometimes finished each other sentences? Well, it wasn't like that at all.

As we communicated, the stranger and I walked together outside of the house and into the yard. It was dusk, and I could look back and see the front porch aglow with lights from the kitchen.

The stranger told me that a train was coming and that I could get on the train if I wanted to. As he said this, I could see the train arriving.

There were no tracks on the ground and no wheels on the train. The cars just flew over the field. This didn't look strange to me, so I guess that on some level I thought this was a perfectly natural occurrence.

Have you ever dreamed that you could fly? You don't have wings, but you just jump up, like Superman does, and soar through the sky. You can feel the wind in your face and the warmth of the sun on your back. Me too, but it wasn't like that at all.

When the train stopped, it was only a few feet away from us. By this time, it was almost entirely dark, with some shadows seeming darker than others. The strange thing was that even though it was dark, I could see as well as if it were midafternoon.

I could clearly see someone walking out of one of the shadows, but not from the direction of the train or the house.

As the person passed, I could see that he was me. Again, I felt no alarm or curiosity, I just accepted this as if that was the natural way of things.

My other self, as it were, walked a little way past us and stopped. He just stood there in the darkness, waiting.

I asked the stranger why there was another "me" standing there.

He explained that the other "me" was going to take my place here and that no one would know the difference. For some reason this did not alarm me, I intuitively understood what he meant. That it was not an evil or malicious thing.

The stranger then said that I had a choice to make. I could get on the train and "move on," or I could stay here.

If I chose to stay here, I would live a mundane life like all of the other

people on this plane. If I got on the train, I would have the adventures of many lifetimes.

When I looked at the train, I could see other people sitting in the lighted cars. Some of them seemed familiar to me, but I couldn't remember who they were.

All of the people had a golden glow about them, and I suddenly realized that the only thing that was in color was the train and the people on it.

I realized, too, that the world I was living in was only shades of gray in comparison. That what we thought of as color was in actuality not real color at all.

With this revelation came a great yearning to get on the train. The adventurer in me wanted to see what great adventures lay at the other end of the invisible tracks.

I took a few steps toward the train then stopped and turned back to the stranger.

"What about my Clementine," I asked?

The stranger placed a hand on my shoulder.

"I'm sorry, but Clementine can't go."

It was at that point that I had the urge to pee, so I just turned around and peed. It's like that in dreams. If you have a bodily function you have to perform, you just do it right there. No one in the dream seems to mind. Except that I've noticed that no one else in my dreams, other than me, does these things. It's like I am the only one allowed to do them because it's my dream.

Anyway, I zipped up my pants, checked the front for pee stains, and told the stranger that I couldn't go without my Clementine.

The stranger replied that I would only get one chance and I had to choose now. He said that Clementine would not know I was gone because the other "me" had all the knowledge I had and would be with her.

I looked toward the train, and once again I felt compelled to the very core of my being to get on it. There are no words to describe what I felt.

How do you describe feelings that we have no words for? Feelings which are beyond our comprehension?

I don't think I ever wanted anything more in my life than to get on that train. Well, to be honest, wanting to hit the lottery when the prize money was half a billion dollars would have been my first choice. However, since that was not going to happen, with the very fiber of my spirit, I wanted to get on that train.

I KNEW in every cell in my body that a great adventure lay ahead of me if only I boarded the train, that everything I wanted to know, I would learn on that train. I would see and do things I could not yet imagine.

More, I was sure that I would finally be rid of all of the things and people that bothered me, that each day aboard that train I would begin another

journey filled with wonder and enlightenment.

Yet, even knowing all of this, I reluctantly turned to the stranger knowing I would refuse.

"I'm sorry, but I can't go without my Clementine. I just can't." I said.

"Why?" He asked.

"Because I promised her we would always be together. And because for over 30 years, we've done everything together."

The stranger removed a funny looking hat. Did he/she have a hat on before?

"She'll never know you've left." He said.

"Yes, but I would know. Besides, how could I enjoy my adventure without my Clementine? She is my other half, I wouldn't be whole without her by my side."

It was then that the sadness came, and the tears began. I knew for sure then that I had lost something precious. Just as I knew that what the stranger had said was true, that my Clementine would not be able to get on the train with me.

As the dream began to fade and I started to awaken I was given another chance to board the train.

"No," I said. "Don't you understand, I made a commitment, it would be dishonest, I can't go without my Clementine."

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Having just written these words, I now realize that I have had this dream before. So, my sadness is lessened by that knowledge, just a little.

It's like when you have the urge to eat a piece of chocolate, and there is none in the house. You have this craving, and you can't go out and buy a candy bar, because all the stores have closed.

Then you remember that Hershey bar you hid in the glove compartment of your car. Sure, it's been there for three months, and the bar has probably melted and solidified any number of times. But, its CHOCOLATE, so you eat it anyway.

Perhaps that is why I feel compelled to put the dream down on paper so that someday someone might find it. Then that person will read it and know I did the right thing. That I gave up the most excellent adventure of all for love.

I hope that when Clementine's time comes to have this dream that she will choose to wait for me. I don't know how I know she will have the same dream, I just do.

As I write this, part of me knows that everyone has this dream. That sooner or later we all have that choice to make.

My Clementine has a strong sense of adventure. Like me, she always takes the road less traveled. How many times have we said to each other, where does that road go, and taken it?

I fear that the call to adventure may be too intense for Clementine to resist. It may be that she can't stop herself from getting on the train.

When the time comes for Clementine to board the train, I know she will call me. She, like me, will want us to get on the train together.

Wait! I just had a thought. Perhaps Clementine has already boarded the train. Maybe that's why she couldn't get on the train with me. Because she is not the real Clementine.

If my Clementine has boarded the train, that means the person in my bed is not the real Clementine.

How do I tell if she's real? If I cut this Clementine, will it bleed real blood or some green goop that smells like rotten eggs? What to do, what to do? Think, man, think.

Now I'm contemplating that maybe the stranger who asked me to get on the train was my Clementine. The real Clementine.

She should have told me it was her. Why didn't she tell me? If she did, I would have gotten on the train. Why wouldn't I?

Maybe she didn't want me to get on the train. Maybe Clementine wanted the adventure all to herself. I know Clementine can be selfish at times, but this is outrageous.

To deny me the chance to take the adventure of a lifetime, of many lifetimes. Why that's, that's, immoral!

My God! I've missed the train, and it's all Clementine's fault!

Now I think that perhaps my compulsion to write this is not for me but for this other Clementine. So that in reading this she will, on some level, remember that she is not the real Clementine.

But what then?

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I've given this some thought for a few hours now. It's now seven thirty in the morning, and I've retrieved my gun from the safe. I'm sitting by the bed waiting patiently. I'm like a cat waiting to pounce on its prey. My butt is even wiggling in anticipation of the pounce.

Look at her, just sleeping away so peacefully. I wonder if she has dreams. I had a dream once. It was a very revealing one. I even wrote it down.

When this Clementine wakes up, I'll make her read this.

I'll watch her eyes. If they widen, then I'll know for sure. The eyes always betray them, the substitute people.