

A Peak at Charon's Parallel Ride (Revised)

“CHARON Railways” she reads, questioning whether the name is a mere cruel coincidence or irony of fate. Elise looks up from her ticket, peering out the train window, perhaps to allow herself a sort of escape through whatever landscape she is allowed at four in the morning amidst the lightless wilderness.

“Not much to be glanced at, this time of night I’m afraid.” – she hears, a tall handsome man, in a suit that barely yields to his movements, stands at the doorway of her booth.

“Uh-, better than attempting sleep right now if I’m being honest.” – Elise remarks, the man gives her an understanding nod, then extending his hand so he can validate her ticket. As she hands it over however, a screeching sound blasts through the train, it rocks, and the lights suddenly blink out.

Elise, paralysed in fear, hopes for some kind of reassurance from the ticket collector, she calls out. “Hello?” - But she is left with only silence in return, in fact silence is more than a response at this point, for it has consumed the whole of the carriage, Elise starts to question her own perception as the darkness and silence has become a daunting place to sit in. “It must be a dream, I must be dreaming, fell asleep as I was looking out the window I’m sure” – this parallax seems more comforting than whatever alternative would admit that this deprivation of senses is happening here, now. In the pitch black however, in the midst of the deafening quietude, doubt creeps in, “But why would I dream of- “

The stillness is broken by a distant sound, a train, another. Marching forth audibly coming approaching. The woman looks towards the direction she recalls the window to be, she sees it. The parallel train has caught up, from the darkness Elise sees the other passengers in this divergent line, some sleeping, some having gentle late night chats, others even enjoying a drink over a game of cards. Nonetheless her interest is caught by an old woman in the booth now parallel to her.

The young peeper squints, for a second, she almost believes to recognise her, but her attention is ripped from her when a man in black storms that opposite booth, his face mostly covered by a flamboyant hat, his movement erratic. The old lady is terrified, raising her hands to plea and protect herself, but the man is impatient and remorseless, he pulls a knife and directs it at her while looking through her purse.

“No! Stop! You’ll hurt her!” – Elise panics, she shouts and knocks on the window, but it warrants no reaction. There is nothing she can do but watch this tragic string of events unfold in the blasting stillness of the train’s locomotion. The old woman bravely tries for the door when the burglar seems distracted, yet his jumpy disposition got the better of him, he moves to block the lady but ends up stabbing her with one swift movement. The parallel woman falls, her life now slowly leaving her, the man flees the booth in a frenzy.

Elise is in tears; she sobs as the twin train slowly diverges and it goes further and further into the darkness until it is no longer visible. Now, the lights return suddenly, along with the natural sounds of the carriage, she sits alone, distraught, with the knowledge of how powerless she was to stop any of it. Her phone rings.

A man’s voice comes through. - “Hey El, sorry, I guessed you’d still be up. Is the train on track? I’ll be picking you up in about 2 hours and then we’ll head to mine so you can take a breather before... you know.”

“Yeah” – Elise responds reluctantly.

“Hope you’re alright. You know, we don’t have to stay long, she wasn’t much of a fun of funerals anyways. At least not anyone else’s I guess.”

“No Mark, this time, I need to stay.”