

The Twilight Express

by Crystal Koo

LETTERS TO MURRAY LEIGH

Paris,
February 2nd, 1848

My dear Murray,

I write to you at Gare de L'Est an hour prior to my departure. You must have heard that I was leaving. I was exceedingly anxious to see you – I had a number of things to give to you, but you had not yet returned from Southwell the night I quit London and sailed for France to board the train and embark on my journey. Pray bestow my Emily and the boys with the frequent presence of an old friend. It is beyond doubt that she will find any visit from you more than welcome; as you may suppose, Emily has at present not yet reconciled herself with my being away from her for some time.

For my own part, I have been in a state of serenity since I received my ticket. Emily will have told you how I possessed it before this letter reaches you, but I believe it is only fitting that I explain my sudden departure myself. I know you have thought me very capricious and apt at sudden fancies since our days together in Cambridge, but every person in the household, from Emily to Maud in the kitchen (whose Yorkshire pudding I shall sorely miss), can attest to how long I laboured and agonised over this decision. You yourself have been the victim on many occasions of my thoughts on this matter, and I assure you that I decided to leave under the clearest state of mind. Perhaps England has been too small for me – I cannot say with Hamlet that I can be bound in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space. But I shall write to you most often, and shall deluge my family with even more affection.

There is a posthouse nearby; I must take this letter there before the train leaves. I shall write to you during the stops our train should take on the way.

Yours, ever,
John

The Twilight Express,
February 17th, 1848

My dear Murray,

I am quite pleased with the train, and the thought comes to me with great relief. The Twilight Express has two sleeping-carriages, with ten compartments each, two dining carriages, a salon carriage, and a *fourgon* at both ends. The hospitality is rather impressive as well. I am lodged in my compartment with a pleasant young man from Germany by the name of Kappel; he possesses an astonishing breadth of knowledge of the sciences, which he jestingly attributes to his sharing of lineage with a distant relative whom we all know by the distinguished name of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and whom Kappel claims boarded the Twilight Express some decades ago.

I have been given to reminiscing when Kappel is not in the compartment to entertain me with his theories on mechanics or to admire the scenery with me. How I long for the simpler times of Cambridge! Alas, if it were not for Emily and Henry and William, I would rush back into the arms of boat-riding and scholastic forays into the law, of days that had nothing but our brotherhood. You were present when I first laid eyes on Emily upon attending the opera, and it was you who gave me the strength and fortitude to make her acquaintance. No man has ever been so welcome in our family. My friend, shall we not say that we would go down sweetly to our deaths with the memory of a friendship that upheld, in *gnosis* and *praxis*, the virtue of loyalty above all?

I trust that any trouble Emily may have had would have been given to your care; I am certain that you would make no poor substitute for me. Pray tell me how my wife is faring. I have received from her a letter filled with such cheerfulness, and it gives me the greatest pleasure that she does not find my absence wearying, but I am aware that she writes in such a manner only so as not to burden me.

Some passengers have caught the cold and inflammation, but God be thanked, I am still pretty well in health.

Ever very truly yours,
John

The Twilight Express,
March 29th, 1848

My dear Murray,

I wish to apologise for two misdeeds I have done unto you. Firstly, I have treated you very badly in not writing over such a length of time and I hope this letter finds you well. I have no excuse and I await your just wrath humbly. Secondly, I had forgotten to include in my previous letter any mention of our location, but it has come to me that I may make amends for my mistake by proposing a game out of it. It will be a guessing-game of sorts, in which each of us, during the length of my journey, shall attempt to guess about a certain aspect of the other, and we shall find when I return to London who is the better man.

I have already provided you a subject to guess about; now it is my turn to propose one for myself to hazard upon. You may recall, nearly a year ago, you had referred to me a man from Cheltenham as you were too busy with other cases to be his solicitor at that moment, and I had gone to Cheltenham with him to make more enquiries of his situation before selecting the appropriate barrister for him. It had been planned that I would be in Cheltenham for a fortnight, but circumstances made it so that I returned to London a day earlier. It had been a Sunday, and on the way home I had the notion of calling upon you, perhaps for afternoon tea with a friend after a long journey. I rang your bell but your footman appeared not to have heard. When I attempted to rap on your windows, I saw through a slight opening between the hastily-drawn curtains you and Emily together on the chaise lounge in the living room. The sun had been setting and it was difficult to ascertain the state of things then in your living room. Now let the game begin! In my next letter I shall speculate as to why Emily had visited you that Sunday afternoon.

Kappel has taken great delight in scrutinising the engine of the train; I, however, have been indulging myself in a more critical exploration of the entirety of the train. Today someone I had never seen in the train before sat with me during one of my leisures in the salon carriage; a handsome man of forty peculiarly absorbed in his

newspaper. I should think that the graveness with which he regarded the events of the world would have given him the impartiality fitting for a judge, were it not that he suddenly jumped and exclaimed ‘*Che donne belle!*’ with legendary Italian flair when Signorina Marcuccilli and Signorina Guiccioli entered the carriage. I had the pleasure of making Signorina Marcuccilli’s acquaintance a month ago; she is from Rome, the daughter of a wealthy aristocrat – Signorina Guiccioli is her female friend, whom I suspect suffers from consumption, so pale is her countenance. That they should not come with an entourage of ladies-in-waiting I found surprising. The man with the forgotten newspaper introduced himself as Signor Samptorini. In moments when the two signorinas were engaged in a conversation regarding perhaps mutual friends, Signor Samptorini was pleasant enough to speak with me in English. It was of great surprise that there was very little of the Lombard in his tongue. But of greater interest I found was a certain grandness that he possessed in his pronouncements of life, of the train, even of the mixing of tea! This grandness I felt did not go unjustified, given the truth that he speaks.

I have discovered something rather peculiar about the Twilight Express – it seems curiously antique. I had accidentally grazed my elbow on one of the wooden panels of the wall in my compartment, and to my astonishment, a quarter of the panel cracked from so slight a strain! I hastily rang for a boy but he assured me that the age of the train accounted for it and that passengers were not to be faulted for anything not exceeding a shattering. The train should not be more than ten years old, but at times I am accosted here by *l’air de la mélancolie* that I would only otherwise be aware of upon taking part in the forlornness of ancient church ruins.

The paper is out, and so is the letter. Worry not, I shall write to you again much sooner than you think!

Ever yours, etc.

The Twilight Express
April 15th, 1848

My dear Murray,

You guess very poorly, my friend! I am assuredly not in China, rushing past the splendour of Xanadu – I would say I am beyond it! There is a heavenly freshness in the air so far removed from the smokestacks of London; at times I am wont to believe that the earth is not round and we have ridden past the edge! One country is merely a page; to read the book that is life one must learn to transcend his patriotism. Perhaps one day you too shall have the opportunity to risk all you have and leap into the rails. However, I shall leave you an intimation of my present location. At this very moment as I look out my window, I see fields and fields of white and we are all quite wrapped in scarves. I look forward to your next hazard!

Prior to that, however, allow me to wager my chances with the powers of deduction at my side. I shall now show you how I had drawn several contingencies with regard to my wife’s rationale in calling upon you the day I returned to London from Cheltenham, and how I examined and eliminated each impossibility until I arrived with the conclusion that whatever remained, however improbable, must be the truth.

At first hazard, I was led to the opinion that a desperate client had come during my absence and sweet Emily rushed off to ask you to accommodate him. I immediately dismissed this, as I judged that if this truly had been her intention, firstly, the client

would have been there with you, and secondly, Emily could have very well sent the maid with him instead, since Emily does her reading on Sunday afternoons.

Whereupon I assumed, with great trepidation, that there had been an accident in the house during my absence. Images of Henry drowning and William falling off the roof quickly filled me until I reflected that if Emily had gone to seek your aid, I would have chanced upon both of you not in the living room but out on your doorstep, rushing for a hansom to take you to my house.

With this consideration, my mind turned over other possibilities of the same nature which I rejected with equal ease. I found myself reasoning that there would have been no situation grave enough that would demand the actual presence of my wife in your house unless you had requested it, which I initially felt was highly unlikely. However, I had no other answers. After much deliberation, I concluded that if you had indeed demanded the presence of my wife, and knowing the great care you take in maintaining propriety as a gentleman, I could only assume that you had done so merely to enjoy her presence and that any intercourse would have been purely amicable.

Let me know if I have prematurely won our little game.

Pray forgive all this nonsense which keeps me from wandering to more serious topics, with which I do not wish to bore you.

Give my love to my Emily.

Yours ever and ever,
John

THE NOTEBOOKS OF J. M. FORRESTER

May 9, 1935

Woke up in the hotel this morning staring at the ceiling wondering what I'm doing but I'm feeling much better now about leaving Jersey.

Some of the furnishings in the Express are rather old but the train is far from drab – it has five sleeping-cars, three dining cars, three lounge cars, & a baggage van each at the front & the back. You could have knocked me over with a feather when I saw it – it's gigantic. The compartments are paneled with wood – mahogany, I think – some of them with cracks.

So here am I in the Twilight. We'll be leaving New York in a few minutes. Am sharing a sleeper with Frank Murphy, journalist from Chicago, about the same age as Sherwood.

Here is a potential title – “Life in an Aquarium.” Will have to look for a plot to go with that. In the meantime I'm going back to the Sound & the Fury. I anticipate Faulkner indigestion.

May 12, 1935

The problem with having Sherwood as an older brother as well as an engineer is that he's both. Exactly what they want from a son -- he fulfills the concept of an heir to the legacy. Frank Murphy reminds me terribly of him, from the self-assuredness to the Old Spice. I'm in grave danger of disliking him enormously.

Sherwood Lloyd Forrester, President of Forrester Mechanics in two decades or less. Now all eyes are on the younger Forrester, working his way to hell on the wagon trying to get published.

Given up on Faulkner. Don't know what the world's coming to.

May 14, 1935

Been walking around the Express to stretch my legs. After a few days the lounge carriages simply can't be enough. Murphy is popular among the ladies & is out of the compartment for the most part. Frankly, the reek he brings back is more than enough to compensate for his absence.

I've talked to some new people during meals. There are people. Then there is Samuel Samuels – seems to know a great deal about the Twilight Express & a hearty sort of fellow – I pity him for his name. Samuels is a businessman from Washington with stocks on the Transatlantic Railway, hence the familiarity with tracks & crossties. According to him, the Twilight had existed since trains were invented & it has branches all over the world – that much I had expected, I would have worried if that were not the case. I do like Samuels. He carries an air that makes him larger, bigger than the pigeonholed life we usually spend. The way he talks with such authority about the train, it's as if he's been on and off for quite a while. You meet very few people like that in this life.

May 15, 1935

Must write this now. I found a bunch of letters when I was in the older lounge carriage reading the papers. They were collected in a large manuscript envelope that had been wedged deeply between two of the sofas – I found them when I dropped a coin into the darkness. Across the envelope is written "Letters to Murray Leigh." The letters themselves are dated 1848 & the first one was written in France – the rest were written in the European branch of the Twilight Express, I would suppose – they must have recycled the lounge car. It's remarkable & the discovery has put me in such a state. Murphy is looking at me as I write this in the same way I look at him when he loses his head to a beautiful girl.

The letters are all written with a stylus – script is beautiful, hand of a well-educated gentleman. The paper has oxidized awfully, some of them tore when I pulled them out. The letters are all addressed to a Murray from a man who signs himself as John. Haven't read any of them & at the moment am deliberating whether I should hand them to the conductor.

May 18, 1935

Didn't give the letters to the conductor – I have been reading them for days & I've paused only to write this down in case I lose the letters in some manner. There must be a hundred letters here. I have been much too amazed & utterly fascinated by the depth of the whole thing to count.

An actual life in London during the 19th century. The man John had been (or was being, it's difficult to figure) cuckolded, as they used to say, by his staunchest friend Murray & he writes letters to him from the Twilight Express. He begins by writing in generic postcard style. Then he brings his wife Emily in before proposing a "guessing-game" with Murray, which is simply John's way of telling Murray that he knew of the

affair. After the revelation, the succeeding letters build into a polite frenzy of John's nostalgia of their days in Cambridge coupled with praises of Murray's worth as a friend, while on the other hand he raves about "imaginary" scenarios if he were to find that Emily was cheating on him. Throughout the letters he incessantly tells Murray to take care of his wife.

The restraint is simply excruciating, the vitriol is bubbling beneath the words, but in the end John makes it clear that Murray was the reason why he took the ride in the Express. I think that John has lost his sanity by the last letter.

The language is beautiful. I mourn the passing of the English language.

May 22, 1935

John's letters to Murray have unfortunately made me reflect why we're in the Twilight. I've never been too curious about it before – it is not the sort of talk wanted around the dinnertables. John purchased his own ticket, that much is apparent. Murphy tells me he's one of the many people who were given one.

I was given one too but wasn't so surprised upon receiving it – it makes me feel as though I had been wanting it all along, so I can't be certain at which end of the scale I belong to. Admittedly the issue with Forrester Mechanics had much to do with it.

Thoughts like these make me impatient about getting there.

May 25, 1935

Some progress with "Life in an Aquarium" – I have an image, a character, and a slight attempt at a synopsis.

He was wearing a pair of old white shorts, defiant of their skirts and ties. Aunt Myrtle could not have been more scandalized. "Shucks," Sherwood grunted. "Would do you good to be part of this family from time to time." The boy did not answer and took a seat next to his mother, who fanned herself even harder. "You look a little pale – are you coming down with something?" was all he wanted to hear, but there was no time. The speech was about to begin. After his father had received his trophy for Mechanic of the Year, the relatives crowded. The boy desperately wanted to go home. He had an unfinished poem to work on and the torpor of the hot Sunday afternoon was beginning to cloud his brain. Sherwood was up there, shaking all the hands. "I couldn't have done it without my family," the father was saying. "The Return of the Prodigal Son" was the name of the boy's poem; it was about Rembrandt's painting, but you can't summarize a poem. It'll always be something much more. What happens afterwards when all the characters in

the painting leave and only the older brother and
the prodigal son are left? “Imagine this,”
said the brother, standing on the corner.
“What would our neighbors say of him
when they see his youngest son
crawling back with half a shoe, a stomach bloated with
the sop of pig feed, and he turned him away?
They would say that he did the right thing.
A son who asks for his inheritance
asks for his father’s death.
But our father is a martyr and
the public loves a good martyr.
And here he kills the fattened calf,
brings you the best robes, a ring on your finger,
and sandals for your feet.”
“Shucks,” said Sherwood,
“you can dress better than that.”
The boy shoved his hands into his pockets.
He disentangled himself from the crowd
and went to cross the street where
his car was parked. Along the pedestrian lines,
he bent down to pick up a ticket –

J.M.F.

May 26, 1935

The sun is setting – there’s still a long way to go. I’m rereading some of John’s letters to Murray Leigh. I have discovered why I am so strongly attracted to them – I am drawn to the question as to why John wrote those letters at all. Certainly he must have known that passengers are not allowed to alight from the train during stops. (He lies about this in the first letter.) The train only picks up passengers and nobody leaves until we reach the terminal – mailing letters during the train ride is an impossibility.

Now I’m tempted to wonder whether John, if he even existed, was simply venting for the sake of catharsis or if someone had just been making up a story to pass the time. Was there really a man from Germany named Kappel (related to Goethe!!) in the Twilight Express with him? Why would he even write in the form of a letter & go to so many lengths for subtlety & restraint? We can’t bring anything with us – everything will be left here when we leave.

THE E MINOR BLUES

Lisa brought a guitar with her and played it everyday in one of the twenty salon cars in the Express because Fiona slept most of the time or listened to her own music in their compartment. Things had not changed for three years.

Lisa stopped strumming halfway and bent to scribble the chord on a sheet of paper. Then she stretched her fingers and began extrapolating the chord into a plucking pattern. Her foot began to tap.

A shadow came over her table. The man was built broadly, had a barrel of a chest, and held a cup of coffee with a right arm made of metal. He placed the coffee down and took a carton of cigarettes from his breast pocket, tapped the last Lucky Strike out, and lobbed the carton into the compactor nearby. "Do you mind?"

"Yes, I do." Lisa stared at the arm. It had the decal SAMSON emblazoned from the back of his hand to his shoulder.

"Pretty new technology," he said, returning the unlit cigarette to his pocket and sitting across from her.

"Is it fully functional?"

"It'll do what your arm can do and more."

"How does it work?"

"Bionic device controlled by my brain; I had my nerves re-routed." He used his other organic arm to trace the smooth curves of the metal. "I think, the electrodes pick the signals up and relay them to the arm's computer."

"What's Samson?"

"Me." He took his wallet out and pulled a card. "The first company to go commercial with thought-controlled bionics."

"Oh."

"Is that a song you're working on?"

In a different situation, Lisa would have risen and taken her sheets and her guitar with her. But he had answered too many of her questions to be turned away. She wouldn't have so many questions for strangers the next time. "Yes."

"What kind?"

"Blues," she said, feeling trapped.

"With lyrics?"

"Yes, I'm doing them at the same time."

"Fascinating." He looked over at her draft. "'Remembering the Nights'. That looks like the beginning of a nice poem. May I borrow your guitar for a moment?"

He played a blues melody in E minor, his organic hand pressing the strings on the fretboard, his bionic fingers curled and crisp over the soundhole. There was a deliberateness in his movements that made the glare of metal seem gentle.

When Lisa returned to her compartment, she found Fiona lying on the bed on her belly, reading a worn spiral notebook. There were three more beside her.

"What's that you're reading?"

"A few diaries of an American writer. About eighty years ago. I found them under my bed." Fiona sat up and stretched like a cat, her eyes gleaming. "Did you find your E minor blues?"

"Someone else did," said Lisa and told Fiona about Samson and his metal arm.

"I didn't know they were making those already. Did he say how he lost it in the first place?"

"It was his company. He had his original arm chopped off and preserved in a cryogenic ice box to show how much the world could trust him. There was nothing wrong with his arm."

Fiona shuddered and decided to return to an older, happier world.

Lisa sat on her own bed and began playing a few random patterns on her guitar. "How's the American writer?" she asked. Samson's hands had gone too fast for her to catch at least a few patterns she could link to a chord.

"I don't think he was ever published," said Fiona absently. "But he's got a lot of good bits and pieces."

"What does he write about?"

“Uh...I think he has some issues with his family. I’m only on the first notebook.”

A moment passed and Fiona asked, “Could you maybe please stop playing?”

Lisa released her fingers from the guitar, and in the silence she rose and left the compartment.

She met Samson again on the way to the dining car. He was buttering a scone by the counter as she bought a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. “I hope I didn’t disturb you earlier?” he asked.

“No, you didn’t.”

“Did your roommate kick you out?” he asked, his voice muffled as he bit off a piece of his scone.

“She’s reading something someone wrote eighty years ago.”

“She found it here, didn’t she? I’ve picked up some of those. Quite common here.” He swallowed. “I’m sorry, which station did you board from?”

“Melbourne.” The peanut butter didn’t have much taste.

“Two days ago, wasn’t it? Your friend’s quite quick.”

Lisa didn’t know why she was talking with him. But he began leading her around the train on a tour, showing her the furniture, what they were made of, where they came from. “It’s more than just a tin can,” he said. “This train has carried dignitaries from all over the world. You’re in great company, Lisa.”

The pneumatic doors wheezed open and they stepped through. “Have you ever seen the baggage vans?” Samson seemed to have access to everything. He punched the lock code and pushed against the heavy metal door with a finger from his right arm. The baggage van was filled to the ceiling with paper. “The janitorial staff try to clear out all the paper and bring them here, but some people leave their things in the oddest places. A minor litter problem,” he said and closed the door.

In the end they climbed up a steel ladder that led to the roof of one of the dining cars. At what speed the train was rushing Lisa didn’t know. She sat on the roof hugging her knees, looking at the fields of white and feeling a little cold.

“Tell me a little about your friend,” said Samson.

Fiona was the reason they were on the train. They had met in a pub near university and whatever friendship that had ensued, no matter how great it had gone, had been broken when Fiona began buying methamphetamines. By that time they had begun sharing a flat and Fiona was awake all the time, going to Lisa’s room at two in the morning and opening the windows, complaining that the entire flat was too hot. When Lisa began locking her bedroom door, Fiona came every night to knock, and the sound became the perverse thudding of a migraine. Fiona was fine in the morning, when they met to brush their teeth, and never seemed to remember what demon possessed her the night before.

Fiona heard voices in her head. She told Lisa stories about whatever lunatics she had in the family and the demands their ghosts made of her, of vengeance, sacrifice, of retribution. All things bloody and mad. Fiona was only twenty years old and she was already too old. Her boyfriend had left her, her parents never answered the phone, and she was failing. On the days when Lisa had to clean Fiona after a vomiting fit, she would stand before the sink scrounging the soiled towel with a scrub, wondering what kept her there. After putting Fiona to bed, Lisa would sit on her own bed and lean against the wall, playing her guitar softly until Fiona shrieked about the noise.

Seeing Fiona shake always drove Lisa out of the flat. Loud fits were bad enough but it was unbearable when Fiona tried to control it, to show Lisa that she wasn’t completely lost. Lisa had returned from class and opened the door to see Fiona trying to

light a cigarette. The stick was shaking in her mouth and the flame looked like an agitated firefly. Fiona was sweating and she was rigid as she shook, breathing very hard. When the unlit cigarette dropped on the carpet, Lisa turned around and left. It would be a sign of things to come.

“We received our tickets at the same time,” replied Lisa. “She feels much better here.”

“That’s good.”

A few minutes of silence went by before Lisa thanked him for the tour and excused herself.

Fiona was reading the second notebook when she returned. “Hey Lisa, listen to this.” Fiona quickly gestured for Lisa to sit with her and thrust the open notebook on her lap. “This sounds lovely. ‘August Thirteen, Nineteen-Thirty-five. I woke up early to watch the sun rise. There isn’t much to expect if you’re running on white, but the sun came out all the same. I left the compartment so I wouldn’t disturb Murphy and watched it from the corridor windows. The darkness had begun to fade when I reached the window and I could see the rays merging with the last of the night. When there are no houses or hills to cover your view of the horizon, you can see the light pushing the dark in its entirety, pulling across the sky like a hand opening a scroll. There is a grandness that reduces whatever feeling of self-importance we may have, and yet we feel more than ever a natural balance in the world, a benevolence that rarely reveals itself were we to see houses or hills.’” Fiona leaned over. “Hey, do you want to see the sunrise tomorrow?”

I AM SAM

The fields of white are...hum. Perhaps not. But it is the first thing that comes to mind. I thought it would make a good opening and everything would flow and fall into place. What is there to say of the fields of white? That they are as white as...as...well, there are a hundred million things that are white. The lump of sugar I put in my tea. The papers I sort in the baggage vans, though the paper does oxidize into yellow. The walls in the salon-cars? Certainly. But then what? The fields of white are as white as the walls on the salon-cars. Hum. Perhaps I am taking the wrong approach. I have read a great deal of wonderful opening lines from those reams and reams of paper the passengers leave behind. It seemed as though the writer merely took a seat on the table and randomly teased the line out of the void and made it grand, and that grandness lent itself into a story or a poem or a song that managed to write itself naturally. I don’t have that nonchalant grandness, as is obvious. But perhaps I am being too harsh on myself. This is my first time.

Perhaps I should make an outline first, or make some notes of what I want. Five thousand words seem like a nice, round sum, and hardly ambitious. It shall be about someone who has felt as though he has spent all eternity in a train and gradually becomes claustrophobic. But the revelation shall be quite subtle. I want a cup of coffee somewhere. That shall be a recurring image in the story. Perhaps it symbolizes the short moments of respite he has? What is there in the careful measuring of beans, the mixing of a drink, that is so freeing? How can something so trite provide such an escape?

That sounds good, the beginnings of a philosophical argument. Five thousand words. World-weariness in the train, in himself and in the train. The stacks of paper in the baggage vans, maybe, too, that provide him with something to do, showing the extent of his boredom. Yes, I like that. It sounds very much like what I’ve read. That he

should depend on the commonplace lives of other to make his bearable. Coffee and liberation.

Let me think.

Again, none of the grandness. Nothing follows.

This is extremely odd. I do not claim myself much of a writer, but certainly writing a story should be easier than this. I cannot seem to begin properly.

How can there be a lack of something to write about? I've sat in that baggage van hours upon hours reading everything the bellboys bring in and there seems to be an endless stream of matters to be discussed, to be written about. Well, perhaps I do not read everything. Sometimes I take a risk and send a tower of paper into the incinerator when it looks much too intimidating to me. Little odds and ends interest me more, short stories, poems, diaries. They are easier to carry around than novels. But that only strengthens my argument. There is already much said in those I keep; imagine what more are in those that were unfortunate to find me in a lazy mood.

Why does it seem that other people's lives seem to lend themselves so readily on paper? It seems hardly fair. They can only meet a finite number of people to give them something to write about. I have met everyone here. I have talked to every passenger. I know they talk nonsense. They misunderstand everything in the world and give themselves unnecessary anxieties. No one who comes here knows what he's talking about. It's abominable when you get people who have worked in the same profession.

There is a story I read yesterday that I included in my collection. It was a short story written by a nice Finnish grandmother and she titled it "Sirja Finds a Fortune". It was short and gave me a nice warm glow.

They are always writing about themselves. They manifest themselves in characters that seem far removed from them but in the end it's all about them. I am aware of that practice, and that's why I have decided to write about myself, and disguise it with the characteristics of a human being. I will imitate them. But that is, I think, where the problem lies. Wouldn't that be too limiting? To view the world through the eyes of a handful, at best? If they only knew how skewed their views are. They have everything wrong. I am sorry, but even Sirja was stupid, if one must be crass.

Benedict. That shall be his name. It can be titled "Benedict and the Train".

Perhaps I should allocate even more into the incinerator in the future. There are millions and millions of these papers coming in every day and every person thinks that the story of the universe is the story of his life. Benedict shall talk of the end of the universe. A matter far off in the future, yes, a matter written about many times, undoubtedly so, but now, no more lies.

Hum.

Benedict watched as the fields of white grew even whiter. It was the end of the universe.

That sounds fine. Now where shall coffee come in?

Benedict drank his coffee as he watched the fields of white grow even whiter. It was the end of the universe.

What then?

This shall prove rather difficult. What's there to write about between life and the end of the universe?

Hum.

Perhaps it shall dawn upon me in a moment. Right now I think I need a cup of coffee.