

Glory Train

by

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FADE IN

INT. - ASHMONT/MATTAPAN HIGH SPEED TROLLEY, IN BOSTON - DAY

Summer, very hot, no air conditioning in the trolley.

PREACHER MAN, old before his time, Latino/Caribbean, gets on, nods to the DRIVER, African American, dressed in his uniform. He holds a Bible and wears a blank nametag. He stands at the head of the aisle and looks at the other passengers of various ethnicities scattered around, all fanning themselves. He wears an absurdly optimistic smile.

DRIVER

Move to the back, please.

PREACHER MAN

Say hey, I obey.

Preacher Man walks to the back of the trolley.

DRIVER'S SEAT

The driver watches Preacher Man walk to the back in his rear-view mirror. He shakes his head in mild disgust.

AISLE

Preacher Man passes one passenger, WOMAN, African American, perhaps, or Haitian, of an age that could be young but certainly looks worn. She sits wrapped in herself, her arms crossed tightly across her chest. She wears a "belly bag." As

the train pulls out, Preacher Man speaks, and he walks back down the aisle as he delivers.

PREACHER MAN

Good morning, people.

No response from anyone—doesn't faze Preacher Man.

PREACHER MAN

Thank you for letting me talk to you. I'm from Victory Outreach, doing the Lord's work today. We work mostly with kids, trying to get them away from the streets, away from the evil, and into something that's gonna turn them around. I know—I was there. Heroin. Crack. Alcohol. Homeless. Hooked. All by eighteen. My mind was clouded, closed—

(holds up Bible)

—until the Lord Jesus Christ spread his light in me. The Lord Jesus can save you from evil with love. That's why I'm riding the rails with you.

(holds up Bible again)

It's all right here, the only roadmap you'll ever need.

Preacher Man begins handing out business cards.

PREACHER MAN

If you know anyone who needs help, if you know anyone needing the Lord's juice—maybe yourself—give us a call. I made the call a long time ago. You make the call.

Preacher Man sits next to PASSENGER 1 and begins talking. The two sit across from Woman.

PREACHER MAN

Good day, brother.

Passenger 1 nods. They shake hands.

PREACHER MAN

How are you today?

PASSENGER 1

Fine.

PREACHER MAN

Read the Bible?

PASSENGER 1

Used to.

PREACHER MAN

Accepted Jesus into your heart?

PASSENGER 1

I don't know. What's that feel like?

PREACHER MAN

Joy—that someone loves you. Sins and all.

PASSENGER 1

I just be trying to make a living. I don't have time for sins.

PREACHER MAN

Ah, sins aren't something you do, brother—they're in the blood.

Woman, not directly to either one of them, speaks in a loud, clear, cracked voice.

WOMAN

Bullshit.

Preacher Man and Passenger 1 look at her.

DRIVER'S SEAT

The driver looks in his rear-view mirror again, just to make sure.

TROLLEY CAR

Woman still does not speak directly to them.

WOMAN

So much fucking bullshit.

PREACHER MAN

Young lady—

WOMAN

Fuck you. Fuck the Bible. Piss on it.

(to Passenger 1)

Don't buy this bullshit about Jesus savin' you. Jesus can't save no one. There ain't no escape. From nothin'. All of us already dead.

Rather than dismay, Preacher Man shows the sermonizer's enthusiasm for the possible convert.

PREACHER MAN

You just have to let Jesus—

WOMAN

Been there. Had it done to me. Didn't take.

Preacher Man is really excited now. He leans in to talk with her, Passenger 1 momentarily forgotten.

PREACHER MAN

I can't believe, woman, that you really believe—

Woman turns on him with a snarl.

WOMAN

Didn't you hear me? You already a dead man. Sins and all.

Woman reaches into her belly bag and pulls out a small glass vial, holds it up. It has a cloudy liquid in it.

PREACHER MAN

What's that?

WOMAN

What do you think it is?

PREACHER MAN

I don't know.

WOMAN

You?

Passenger 1 shrugs.

WOMAN

It be the comin' death. Yours.

EXT. - TROLLEY STOP - DAY

The next stop.

INT. - TROLLEY - DRIVER'S FOOT

The driver presses the brake hard.

INT. - TROLLEY

The trolley lurches as it comes to halt, and they all jerk forward and back in their seats.

The doors swing open, but no one gets on or off.

With another jerk, the trolley pitches as it pulls away.

Woman pretends to almost drop the vial.

WOMAN

Don't want to drop this! Not yet, at least.

PREACHER MAN

What is it?

WOMAN

Know any of that Latin?

Preacher Man shakes his head no.

WOMAN

You?

PASSENGER 1

No.

WOMAN

I do. I do. Bacillus anthracis.

(shakes vial)

Anthrax.

PASSENGER 1

What's that?

WOMAN

Don't you read the papers? Remember that Sa-damn Hussein bastard, all them chemical weapons they were tryin' to take away from him?

Woman shakes the vial again.

WOMAN

I have my own little weapon here. Kill everybody on this train, and then some, if I just threw it down on the floor and broke it.

She looks right into Preacher Man's eyes.

WOMAN

Kill you outright if I opened it up and threw it on you. Would the Lord save you then? Sins and all? Huh?

Holds up the vial.

WOMAN

Now here's a real effective Bible for you.

DRIVER'S SEAT

In the rear-view mirror, the driver sees Woman hold up the vial, but he can't hear a word because of the trolley's clatter.

TROLLEY

PREACHER MAN

That isn't—

WOMAN

How you know?

PREACHER MAN

It can't.

WOMAN pulls a tattered news clipping from her bag.

WOMAN

Read this, God-fuck-up.

Preacher Man scans it but doesn't read it out loud.

PASSENGER 1

Go on.

PREACHER MAN

"Biological terror. Prepare for it, US cities are urged."

WOMAN

Read the circled part.

Preacher Man shakily hands the clipping to the Passenger 1.

PASSENGER 1

"The terrorists released an odorless aerosol in the airport terminal. Several days later, passengers from all over the world began dying from anthrax, a deadly bacterial infection."

WOMAN

Give it back!

Passenger 1 hands it back to Woman.

WOMAN

Weapon of choice among truth-seekers.

PREACHER MAN

Where would you get it?

Woman makes to unscrew the cap.

WOMAN

Lord Jesus gonna save you now? He's gonna have to be quicker than me.

Woman fakes a motion to throw the contents on Preacher Man. He raises his Bible to block it.

PASSENGER 1

You a sick woman.

WOMAN

No I'm not. I'm not. I'm just dead. I don't care. Dead people don't hafta care.

PASSENGER 1

Jesus raised the dead.

WOMAN

Raised dead bodies. Betcha Lazarus had maggots all through him. What'dya think that did to his self-esteem?

Makes to drink the vial herself, with an eye on the two of them.

WOMAN

Or maybe I'll just save myself. Sins and all.

EXT. - NEXT TROLLEY STOP - DAY

A large black woman, PASSENGER 2, waits, a flowered bag and a clump of magazines in her hands.

Train lurches to a stop.

INT. - TROLLEY

Passenger 2 gets on the train, sits, can see everything going on. The magazine is The Watchtower.

PREACHER MAN

That's not real. That can't be real.

PASSENGER 1

I'm gettin' off.

PREACHER MAN

No, you gotta stay, see this through.

PASSENGER 1

Not me.

Train lurches as it starts up.

PASSENGER 1

Ain't another stop between here and the end.

PASSENGER 2

Warm today, ain't it?

PREACHER MAN

Ma'am, you might not want to sit here.

PASSENGER 2

Why?

WOMAN

I am the coming death, that's why.

WOMAN shakes the vial.

PASSENGER 1

She says its anthrax. You might want to move.

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax.

WOMAN

What makes you almighty smart?

PASSENGER 2

That ain't anthrax.

PREACHER MAN

She says—

PASSENGER 2

Dishwashing liquid, or something like that.

PREACHER MAN

She says—

PASSENGER 2

I seen sheep and cattle die of anthrax as a kid in Tennessee. Burn the bodies, burn the fields to get rid of it. No fool would carry it around.

WOMAN

I'm not just any fool.

Passenger 2 leans forward, looks directly at Woman.

PASSENGER 2

Look at me, honey. No, you not just any fool. Some special kind of fool, eh? Holy fool.

WOMAN

I could open it right here! Right now!

PASSENGER 1

You shouldn't push her.

PASSENGER 2

(to Passenger 1)

Don't talk about what you don't know.

(to Woman)

Honey, you can put it away now.

Train lurches to a stop, then starts again.

WOMAN

I could do it.

PASSENGER 2

I know you could. These two fine gentlemen know you could, too. They got it. Right?

They nod.

PASSENGER 2

You made your point.

A hesitation, then Woman stuffs the clipping and vial away in her belly bag.

WOMAN

You gotta die to be saved. I'm halfway there.

PASSENGER 2

Whatever was your point, honey, you made it.

Woman cocoons herself again.

PREACHER MAN

If you came to the Lord—

PASSENGER 2

That dog ain't gonna hunt here.

PREACHER MAN

But Jesus—

PASSENGER 2

You have to be reachable.

PREACHER MAN

Jesus can reach anybody!

Passenger 2 indicates Woman with a nod of her head.

PASSENGER 2

You got a lot to learn about the limits of your employer.
There's gold in the center of the earth no one is ever going
to reach.

Train lurches, comes to a stop.

DRIVER

Last stop.

The four of them look at each other for a moment. Woman gets up, pats her belly
bag.

WOMAN

You just never know.

Woman gets off the train and disappears.

DRIVER

Last stop.

EXT. - TRAIN STATION - DAY

The others get off the train. The train pulls around the yard, ready for its return
trip.

PASSENGER 1

You know her.

PASSENGER 2

I do.

PREACHER MAN

Who is she?

PASSENGER 2

She's had pain you can't even imagine. She just wants
attention. Human attention. Not ghosts. She has enough of
those. It's only gonna get hotter today.

Passenger 2 turns to walk away.

PREACHER MAN

So it wasn't anthrax?

She turns to face them.

PASSENGER 2

I didn't say it wasn't anthrax. You just never know.

She hands them each a copy of The Watchtower.

PASSENGER 2

Might as well, since I got'cha here.

She smiles, then makes her way off.

TRAIN STOP - OPPOSITE SIDE

The driver pulls the trolley around, RINGS the bell to announce its arrival.

PREACHER MAN

Gotta go back.

Passenger 1 hands Preacher Man his copy of The Watchtower.

PASSENGER 1

Won't do me any good.

Passenger 1 moves away.

The driver RINGS the bell again.

FADE OUT