

Since Vancouver Station

Erick Lake

“We’re about to leave The Station, we need the lounge opened. Over.”

“Yeah alright, I’m on my way.”

“Out, girl, use the damn jargon. Over.”

“Out.”

She returned the radio to her belt and took a drag from her cigarette. She rolled the burnt end between her gloved fingers and stuffed it in her pocket. He told her that she had to quit, so now it was half a cigarette before she left and the other at The Station.

She slipped her way out of The Station to reach the employee car. She made her way through the business cars, dodging a passenger’s complaints about his seat that were rapidly increasing in volume, as if that were her job or she gave a shit.

She entered the lounge car, where there were already several passengers gathered. That one in the corner had been in there since Vancouver Station. The way he looked at her creeped her out. Didn’t that guy have a seat? When the hell was that guy’s stop? He hadn’t even ordered anything. They told her to stop whining, that if that one in the corner had a stamped ticket there wasn’t fuck all she could do about it.

*Greetings passengers. This is your trusty pilot speaking. I’ll be guiding
this adventure safely to your destinations. To those who have just
joined us from The Station, welcome aboard the Pacific Coast
Moonlight Passenger Train Number Nineteen. We’ll be reaching our
final destination at ... oh ... roundabout
Midnight Twenty-Three.*

She heard him chuckle to himself over the intercom and she started to zone off as he gave the same spiel he gave at every Station. She could hear his mustache scratch against the intercom mic.

... Lastly, be sure to stop by the lounge car for drinks, snacks, and the best view in the house, at your leisure. Over and Out.

She told her friends that she was in the “restaurant business.” What she did was pour watered down coffee and distribute granola bars to people who paid 120 bucks a ticket and still had to pay for dinner. The view was nice though. Like leaving every Station, she sat and watched the coast go by for hours.

She, startled out of her trance, saw that one in the corner check his watch and then get up to approach the bar counter, the first time he’d moved since Vancouver Station. The sunlit lounge car full of passengers had turned dark and empty from the night without her noticing. Staring at her the entire way, that one in the corner leaned over towards her and reached for her.

“You got a cigarette? For later.”

She reached into her pocket and pulled out the cigarette from Vancouver Station, full and unburnt. That one in the corner beamed a crooked smile and showed her his watch; leaning over the counter, he whispered.

“Midnight Twenty-Three”

*Evening passengers, please prepare your luggage for departure.
Welcome to Vancouver Station.*