

Von Rijun's Express

Craig Henderson

THE LAST TRAIN. Stations flash by, derelict, lifeless. Cities, whole countries in darkness, save for the diffuse yellow glow of the end. The rails spiralling deeper, orbiting the interior of all that once was. I push a button on the armrest and titanium shutters enclose the windows. I've seen enough of our subterranean remains—the rabbit holes we crawled into to escape what we've done to our world.

A disembodied voice announces, 'ETA twenty-two hundred hours.'

I tap a touch-pad on the armrest, and two tall, svelte figures enter the stateroom through a sliding door. One carries a tray of hors d'oeuvres, the other a bottle of champagne, two glasses and a slim, metallic case.

I motion to the table.

The blonde places the case on the table, uncorks the champagne with a flick of her wrist, pours a glass and sits. The brunette leaves the tray next to the glasses, sits next to the blonde, across from me. Neither speaks, or bothers to adjust their skirts, which have ridden up to reveal an expanse of tanned, sleek thigh. Something stirs in the cavity of my chest. I take a sip of champagne. The blonde's nipples point at me accusingly from beneath her sheer blouse. I have a semi-erection for a pair of nine-millimetres that can cut a man in half from fifty metres, and penetrate even the reinforced armour of this train. The irony doesn't escape me, but I realise it's pointless, as life is now pointless. I glance nervously at the case, scull my champagne.

The blonde, a UP-Spec 3000, flashes her eyes at me. Her thermal implants give a reddish hue to her irises that reminds me of a B-vid

I watched as a child. Terminal? Terminus? No, *Terminator*. That a simulation from the past replicates the constructed reality of our future somehow seems plausible, seems right. I glance at the brunette, a Retro-Spec 1000. She—I can't help assigning gender, though I know it's spurious—has a greenish tint to her eyes, reminiscent of the outdated night vision goggles that spawned them. Her hair is cut in a bob, her dress faux leather-look carbon-fibre-Kevlar. The technology of the future wrapped in trappings of the past.

The train slows. I open the window shutters to reveal a station alive with activity. LoBots scurry forward with cases of equipment in their crab-like arms, while row upon row of neat, uniformed figures silently await our arrival. I search each face for signs of . . . humanity? Behind the station, lit by the same sulphurous glow as the cities of the dead, stands Nu-Jak City. A ten-storey Buddha, carved from a rich seam of gold, squats between minarets that spiral into darkness.

The tele-vid snaps to life. 'Commander Hu to see you, sir. Loading underway. ETA as scheduled.'

The door hisses open as the tele-vid reverts to a display of the loading docks. Commander Hu is upon me before I can rise from my seat, crushing my hand in hers while gently chiding me.

'No need to get up, Jo.' She sits, my hand still in hers as she scoops up a syn-pork roll. She releases my hand, lets her palm rest above my knee. 'So these are the Lulus?'

'Lola,' I correct, indicating the brunette. 'And Veronika.'

'Nice tits. May I?'

I nod.

Hu skirts the table, eyeballs Veronika's breasts before slipping her hands up under the blouse and rolling the nipples between her fingers in a manner designed to taunt me. 'So real, Jo. You make one for me, please? Not so many Euro-trash whores around anymore.' Hu plants a kiss on Veronika's expressionless face, returns to her seat, placing her hand on my thigh. Her fingers drum against my synthetic hardness. She snaps her fingers. 'Champagne, bitch.'

Lola complies. Hu is hyped on testosterone for a reason, but will she take it too far? Will she be able to pull back once our means have brought about the end?

Hu's fingers creep up my thigh. 'Tell me again, Jo.'

I lean forward for my glass, and Hu's fingers graze my crotch. She jerks away with a gasp. 'Jo, you've been using.'

‘For focus, nothing more.’

‘You old dog. I haven’t felt a hard cock for years. Maybe—’

‘The Lolas will infiltrate their Command Centre and assassinate their leaders. The Veronika’s will act as insurgents, flooding the city via subterranean portals. They won’t stand a chance. UBer-Lin will be yours within twenty-four hours.’

‘And then?’

‘The Chosen will already be on their way to the Space Station. They’ll oversee gestation of the clones, ready for re-population when Earth regenerates.’

Hu clinks her glass against mine. ‘What about you and me, Jo Von Rjiun?’

I stand, my dwindling erection at Hu’s eye-level, and wink at Lola-1. ‘You, Suu Kyi, will rule the world, until the Chosen return. I won’t be around to see it. But I wish you well.’

Strapped into the rocket pod atop Nu-Jak City’s minaret, I brace against the thrust that will hurtle me from the dormant core of Krakatau like one last ejaculation. The ampule of testosterone will give me one final hour of manhood on Earth’s surface. The syringe of morph-amphetamine will mask any pain. Lola-1 has been programmed to destroy the final stocks of testosterone once victory is assured. The dominion of man will end.

The meek shall inherit the Earth.