

# TRAM LIGHT

Stephen Loveless

Aleister Crowley boarded the number 31 tram near the Embankment. I recognised him immediately despite the veil of night and fog, the shaved head and unmistakable tall and bulky figure wrapped in a cloak turned red in the beam of the tram's single headlamp.

Crowley who *John Bull Magazine* had dubbed 'the wickedest man in the world' now climbed the steps to the upper deck to see me, a stranger to him, outside of letters.

I had done all he had asked, rode the tram route three times, both ways going through the Kingsway subway on every journey, whispering his name at each dip underground as he had instructed. He had written that those 'little dives into hell' would cleanse the tram of all its passengers to allow our meeting.

Other than the crew it had worked. I rode the 74-seat tram alone.

I continued to follow his instructions and sat near the front, the money in one pocket and his letters in another while under the order not to turn around.

The tram's rhythmic rattling noise turned to silence and the smells of stale tobacco and soot seeping in from outside became replaced with the odour of London, its River and an under scent of memory an aroma I could not place.

Crowley suddenly appeared as a reflection in the window in front of me. I had not seen him arrive yet he sat behind me smiling.

"Mister Crowley?"

He did not answer.

I suddenly felt weak, transfixed to a reflection, unable to look away from his dark eyes mirrored in the window. I did not see evil in his large face, his whole pose reminding me more of the portrait of William Blake by Thomas Phillips than the 'Great Beast'. But I did feel his power.

"Will you kill her?"

"Who?"

"Faye"

"Faye. That means Fairy. I do not remember agreeing to kill a fairy"

"But ..."

“My letters”

I took them from my pocket and handed them over my shoulder without looking – my gaze fixed on the left sided image of Crowley in the glass ahead. Something big and waxy white like a hand emerged from under his cloak and absorbed rather than took the missives. The hand vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

“The money?”

One hundred pounds in notes vanished in the same way as the letters.

“Why do you wish this young woman to die?”

“Faye’s kisses suck on my life – her touch congeals my blood and numbs my heart”

“Is she your wife?”

“No”

“Is she someone else’s?”

“No”

“Then Faye is with child”

“No”

All the time he spoke I imagined her waiting for me at Holborn Tramway station, slender Faye gripping her large handbag in small-gloved hands.

“Then walk away”

“I cannot – the sin is done”

“Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law”

I had read that line of his philosophy without understanding.

“Can’t you kill her with your mind?”

“Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law – wilt – the will. You talk of her freezing your blood. Then let blood be your thought – think blood in the darkness. Make blood your will and from that will come...”

Sound returned to the tram as a roar as all the lights inside and outside went out. London disappeared. Crowley laughed and the darkness turned red and I knew that the noise throbbing in my ears to be the rush of blood surging through Faye’s veins. I clamped my hands over my ears; in my mind I saw her standing in a crimson glow. As the tram dipped, which I assumed to be down into Aldwych Tram station, the headlamp came back on as a beam of blood jetting out of a wound. I screamed –

Crowley laughed and a ghost voice living in my soul called for the spilling of blood and hushed my yell.

The Tram did not stop and raced on through the tunnel. The man I thought to be Crowley now jeered: "Into the first shallow level of hell."

I jumped out of my seat and staggered forward letting go of the sides of my head as I bumped into the front window.

The number took up most of the centre pane but through the left glass I saw the tram's bloody light turn yellow to illuminate Holborn station ahead. Faye would be waiting for me there. Unaware of the trespass I had made on her flesh, the ungodly act that could only be eradicated by her death.

In disbelief my eyes travelled the tram beam and I saw Faye stood on the tramlines her little hands holding a big handbag. The tram braked too late. I had willed her to suicide.

Blood filled the tram light, fountains of blood; so much you would think the tram had slaughtered an elephant and not just a small woman.

Faye's blood had burst out of her body and up through the headlamp beam to become a crimson shower splattering the tram windows, soaking the white tiles of the Kingsway station platform.

I swung around to face Crowley but he had gone, vanished. When I turned back to the front window, looking through the smears of blood on the glass and down into the station I saw him caught briefly in the ray of the single headlamp stood on the tramlines before he turned to become part of a red fog that swirled in from the northern end of the tunnel.

Blood stopped sprouting and the tram light returned to a stark white brightness. In that glow and many feet from the corpse under the tram stood the ghost of Faye, my once unknown and now dead sister. She turned away and walked into the red mist and disappeared as fast as the man I thought to be Aleister Crowley, leaving me to stare through bloodied glass at the point where the tram light ended.