

Haunted Station

Station Kim watched as the train passed through the enlarged pupils of her eyes. She had traveled this track many times as a child and adult, but never really noticed this creature of the past. It was dark except for a light bulb or two, revealing grotesque graffiti hanging on the walls, reminding riders that The Worth Street Station still had visitors. The view lasted for a few moments, while the mind played tricks on what was seen and unseen. The ghost station, an indelible marker of urban legend. They were there, you just had to catch, then release this fathom of the underground. Kim was researching a project for her class at Baruch College. There had been a few murders on the subway in the last few months, and she thought this could be a timely project. The vacant ghost station added another element to the overall arc of the sub noir atmosphere of her narrative. She was making her way from downtown Manhattan to The Bleecker Street Station in Greenwich Village. It was there that she would meet her brother for lunch and maybe gain some guidance tracking these subway killings. Mark was a homicide detective with the City of New York, and was that rare individual with a doctorate in criminal justice and the ability to move along the road from scene of crime, to solution, to apprehension of suspect. The afternoon was rainy and cold with the winds playing their games while whistling down the avenues at full steam. It was the kind of day everyone kept their heads down and grimaced a full blown death mask. Mark was seated by a table at The Hard Edge Café, waiting for Sue. The small room was busy with twentysomethings, college students, and people on a limited budget. The siblings enjoyed meeting here because it was convenient and the service was quick. The food, well, was an adventure not to be taken lightly. They usually ordered the same thing, tea and muffins. "So tell me Kim, what are you working on?" "Murder most fowl, deep in the bowels of the city. You know Mark, there were fifty people killed last year in the subway system. Some were pushed, some jumped, other were looking the wrong way, maybe trying to take a picture. Some drunk, fooling with fate and daring the train to run them down. I am trying to discover a pattern, if any to this waste of human life. I've found a website of information and pictures of the victims. Do you see anything that would move me in a certain direction?" She hands Mark her tablet. He starts scrolling the site. "Have you ever investigated a subway murder?" "They have a special squad of officers that deal with subway deaths. I was involved with several cases of gang activity. They were quite curious. It seemed in order to join a certain gang a potential member had to

have an initiation of some kind. Some of them had to attack a woman in a certain way, or stab someone, sometimes on the subway.” “Stab to kill or to maim?” “Some superficially, the other were serious, but survived. There are reports from Brooklyn that tell of more subway gang activity that involves kissing the back of the neck before they strike.” “Kind of like a perverse kiss of death.” “If you want to call it that. They seem to do it when the platform is crowded so it’s hard for the victim to walk away. Their targets are attractive, young women who are alone.” He hands her back the tablet. “Gee Mark that sounds like me. Should I be worried about this?” “The odds of this happening are very steep, and you are always careful about your surroundings. But maybe Sue, you should be extra careful because I heard that the gang initiation is starting to work it’s way from Brooklyn to downtown Manhattan.” Kim and Mark finish their tea and muffins in an atmosphere of gloomy togetherness. Exiting the café they hug and say their goodbyes, looking at each other for more then a brief amount of time. The rain has picked up it’s power making it more difficult to walk to the subway station. The structure standing as a beacon of final destination. Standing on the platform she notices more people then usual at this time of day, or maybe her mind is toying with subway placement theory. She has an appointment with her college advisor in 15 minutes, which is just enough time to make her way to the 23rd Street Station and Baruch College. She had remembered another ghost station at 18th Street, the one just before her college. Hopefully the train will really slow down so she can view a more memorable and intense passing then The Worth Street Station. Kim will get her wish and more, as the platform starts filling with more people then a comfort level allows. The crowd seemed to take on a more sinister quality with their dark clothing, their funky rainwear, and umbrellas looking like weapons. Doesn’t anyone believe in lighter colors in the rainy weather? Why does everyone look so grim? She thinks to herself. And why do people keep pouring into the station. Suddenly one of those crazy New York citizens come to life. More homeless then homey, he begins to do a little dance in his rag torn attire. He places a tip jar on the ground, and taps with small steps and a nervous rhythm that has the onlookers beguiled. The heads bob and something that resembles a smile crosses the lips. Others fish around for change and clap their hands when he picks up his jar and moves away. Kim looks up to see the platform now filled with more passengers then she thought was possible. They are backed up the stairs, to almost the top step. A sense of panic is gripping The Bleecker Street Station , when a train slowly, quietly, and even ghostly, pokes it’s head paralleling the waiting throng. You could almost feel the collective gasp, for a moment, then the mob pushes it’s way through the

open doors. Kim is feeling the weight of her investigation into the subway murders. Somehow it wouldn't be surprising if something happened right here, right now. She must get on the train and pushes through the doors, while others are trying to exit around her. Her small body type is a major advantage in getting a spot around a middle pole. She is not alone for long. Riders surround her position trying for a loose hug from a misbegotten posse. She wraps her tablet of subway victims around her chest wondering if the day will bring another posting of a doomed passenger. The train takes off to the next station, when it suddenly halts with a dramatic screeching of the brakes. Then inches forward, stops, inches forward, and the lights go out. There is a deafening silence, then a smattering of annoyed grumbling through out the car. Kim feels a pointed object touching the small of her back. Perhaps an umbrella that's been lifted during the controlled cacophony. She feels it again and again, as it rests and penetrates in a most uncomfortable manner. Kim thinks what Mark said about the gang element moving from Brooklyn to Manhattan. Just then someone's head gazes the back of her neck. The lights come on and the train lunges forward to the next station. Half relieved, and half concerned, she watches a number of passengers exit the train. Feeling light headed, she takes an empty seat, and turns to the page to review the faces of subway death. The stations rush by as more and more people leave the train. The 14th Street Station is next. Kim is feeling tired and sweaty, with the heat coming on too strongly in the car, making more difficult to breathe. The train glides into the busy express stop, and everyone leaves her car. Kim is alone. Finally, she thinks next stop 23rd Street and Baruch College. But first Sue will be able to view the 18th Street Ghost Station. Kim still feeling weak, rises from her seat to watch the station go by. The train moves slowly down the track, while Kim looks out to see the station at a distance. She realizes instead the train is pulling into The 18th Street Station. The vehicle stops, the doors open, and Kim knows she must exit. This is her stop. She moves to the door and starts walking down the dimly lit station, noticing the ghostly art work on the walls. Kim removes her jacket, that is so thick with blood, it is difficult to drag across her body. The train closes its doors and leaves the station. Kim seats down at the lone bench in the center of the deserted carved out tunnel. She opens her tablet and makes her way through the pictures of the dead. The ghostly images from the site appear and disappear, along the walls then magically drift towards her bench. She recognizes all of them. Another train suddenly comes rushing passed The 18th Street Station. Kim looks up to see herself looking out from a car. The mirage quickly dissipates. Her head falls down to the tablet.