

HELL TRAIN

By

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## TITLE SEQUENCE

We open on a strange painting of a Victorian train. It has the face of a horned devil in billows of fire. It's the lid of a children's board game: 'Hell Train'

A young girl is teetering dangerously on a chair, pulling the game from a high shelf.

She gets the game, blows the dust off it, removes the lid of the box and takes out the board.

She sets passengers on the board, which has a mechanical railway track running through countryside, marked with stations. The figurines are perfect representations of the characters we'll meet. Special care is taken with one passenger, a blonde girl. Around the board runs a caption that reads:

*'When the Devil was summoned to earth, he built a train to take the damned to Hell.'*

The young girl takes out a beautiful clockwork train.

We read the name of the train on the boilerplate. It is 'ARKANGEL'.

She winds the engine up with a tin key. Sparks flash around the wheels of the Arkangel.

She sets the train down on the track and lets it go off on its journey. The train heads around the board, passing beneath a banner that reads:

*Play By The Rules & Shame The Devil.*

The train moves through painted countryside scenes, bridges and ravines.

GIRL (V.O.)

Life is a journey.

Cards are dispensed from a little ticket machine. They read: 'Godliness' - 'Deception' - 'Lust' - 'Greed' and so on. The girl throws a dice and takes a card. With each new card, the train moves forward.

GIRL (V.O) (CONT'D)

How do we know if we're good or bad? And who will test us?

The train heads between 'The Primrose Path Of Righteousness' and 'The Way To Eternal Damnation.' Down into the board it heads - and the Arkangel's wheels become real.

They spin and thunder past in a blast of steam and smoke, revealing...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The spinning wheels of a bicycle. ISABELLA, a beautiful country girl, cycles past, heading toward her village. Smoke curls from distant chimneys. Seeing it, she smiles and pedals faster.

**CAPTION: ROMANIA, AUGUST 1916**

As she passes, ringing her bell furiously, she almost runs over a young man emerging from a wheat field. NICHOLAS watches her go.

He looks down and sees a distant town. Smoke. Returning cows. Railway lines. It's already too late to hail the girl. She's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Nicholas walks up the deserted village street, past barking dogs. A dark church. Shuttered shops. A pair of drunk old men.

NICHOLAS

Excuse me, is there an inn  
around here?

He is met with troubled looks.

VILLAGER

You are English?

Nicholas nods.

VILLAGER (CONT'D)

It is not safe to be here. There  
is a curfew. The army has  
already reached the next town.

NICHOLAS

When will they arrive here?

VILLAGER

Tonight, after dark. You must  
go! Go!

NICHOLAS

Is there a train I can catch?

There's the sound of a distant train whistle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VILLAGER

That was it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - SUNSET

Beyond the village is a deserted rural railway station. Smoke from the train still hangs in the air.

A young couple in English touring clothes, THOMAS and MIRANDA, come running onto the platform with their cases.

THOMAS

Missed it! How is that possible?

MIRANDA

You said they never leave on time.

THOMAS

Damn and blast!

MIRANDA

Thomas, remember yourself! I told you we should have set off earlier. We'll have to go back.

THOMAS

We can't go back, Miranda. Apart from anything else, I've no more money for another room.

MIRANDA

We should never have left England.

THOMAS

There must be someone who knows when the next train is.

He heads for the ticket office and disturbs the stationmaster, who is packing up for the night.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I say, you there. Are you in charge? The train has gone.

STATIONMASTER

Then you have missed it.

THOMAS

I expect there's another, yes?

STATIONMASTER

No. You can expect nothing here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS

But my good man -

STATIONMASTER

There are no more trains. And I am not your good man.

THOMAS

But what are we to do? We cannot go back. Your country is heading for civil war.

STATIONMASTER

Then you will have to choose a side, Englishman.

The stationmaster slams the ticket window and spits close to Thomas's boot, then leaves.

EXT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHTFALL

Nicholas arrives at a picturesque local inn. He looks up at the inn sign, which shows a train with devil's horns running over the severed body of a naked woman on the tracks; **'The Sacrificed Virgin'**.

INT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHTFALL

Nicholas stands in the doorway and all the locals stop talking, turning to look at him. He has obviously interrupted a town meeting.

NICHOLAS

I need a drink. Whisky.

The landlord - boozy-nosed, bucolic and rotund, with wild sideburns - pulls a cloudy, frothy pint of ale and slops it in front of him.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

And a room.

The landlord is clearly displeased.

LANDLORD

Look, Englishman. You are no friend to us. You can't stay here.

NICHOLAS

I'm not asking you to hide me.

He opens a handful of notes.

LANDLORD

Isabella!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The landlord's daughter Isabella appears in the doorway behind the bar. She is the beauty on the bicycle.

ISABELLA

Yes, father?

LANDLORD

Where have you been? Give him a room. (To Nicholas) If they ask for you, I will tell them.

ISABELLA

Follow me.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - NIGHTFALL

Isabella shows Nicholas to a sparsely furnished room. Nicholas is taken with Isabella. She, in turns, stares at him. Despite her shyness, she is radiant, stunning.

ISABELLA

Please excuse. No-one visits anymore.

NICHOLAS

You speak English.

ISABELLA

Our schoolteacher was English. They shot him.

NICHOLAS

We're not all bad. I'm Nicholas.

ISABELLA

I am Isabella.

NICHOLAS

I am traveling to London.

ISABELLA

London. I have heard of it.

NICHOLAS

There's nowhere else in the world as exciting.

ISABELLA

I have never left this town.

NICHOLAS

Never?

ISABELLA

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS

Do you know where a beautiful  
girl can go, Isabella?  
She can go anywhere she pleases.

He watches as she leaves his room, embarrassed.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

And you are so very beautiful.

CUT TO:

EXT. STATION PLATFORM - DUSK

Miranda sits on her luggage. Thomas paces the platform.

MIRANDA

Is there nowhere safe in Europe?  
It's as if the world has gone  
mad.

THOMAS

There's supposed to be another  
train.

MIRANDA

When?

THOMAS

I can't be sure. Towards  
midnight.

MIRANDA

But what if the army arrives  
before then?

INT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHT

Nicholas watches Isabella delivering drinks to tables.  
The villagers treat her like a whore. As she returns to  
the bar, Nicholas catches her arm.

NICHOLAS

Why do you let them do that?

ISABELLA

I have no choice. A woman is  
nothing here.

NICHOLAS

Can't you get away?

ISABELLA

It's not possible.

Isabella looks back desperately at the rowdy, drunken  
villagers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS

Isabella, the war will tear this village apart.

ISABELLA

I know nothing of war.

NICHOLAS

You will soon enough. Is there is a cafe in the village?

ISABELLA

Yes, it is called The Pig.

NICHOLAS

The Pig. Meet me there.

ISABELLA

But I cannot.

Isabella turns back to the bar, in turmoil.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

Nicholas walks through deserted streets to the cafe.

On the way he passes an old woman violently beating a child with a stick.

A drunken farmer is slung out of a doorway and falls into the gutter, where he is violently sick. Nicholas watches in growing disgust.

He stands before The Pig - dark and bloody grim.

INT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHT

The innkeeper grabs Isabella as she passes.

INNKEEPER

What did the Englishman want?

ISABELLA

He was being polite.

INNKEEPER

Polite!

ISABELLA

He's a gentleman, Father.

INNKEEPER

I know gentlemen. They bring trouble. Tend to your future husband.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Isabella looks over at the drunk Josef, seated with his cronies by the fireside, and she hesitates.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Nicholas is the cafe's only patron. He points to an item on the menu.

NICHOLAS

And this one?

WAITER

It is pig.

Nicholas stares from the window and checks his pocket watch.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Miranda paces the platform - in the fields, an animal releases an unearthly scream.

MIRANDA

What was that?

Miranda settles herself in the primitive waiting room. Thomas is checking a wall map.

THOMAS

Snerinska - Schlopelo -  
Blankenberg - Zoribskia - four  
stops, then nothing.

We see the map. The part showing the final destination has been torn away.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

We got in, Miranda. There must  
be a way out.

MIRANDA

This is no longer neutral  
territory. They are closing the  
borders.

THOMAS

We have to stay ahead of the  
army.

MIRANDA

And if they arrive? We could be  
shot!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Then we have to be on this train.

MIRANDA

What train? There's nothing on the schedule!

THOMAS

We must have faith.

Thomas touches the crucifix at his neck and we realise for the first time that he is a priest.

INT. VILLAGE INN - NIGHT

Isabella obeys her father and takes a tray of beers for Josef and Ivan. Ivan is jealous of Josef's success with Isabella.

JOSEF

The army will destroy the train station.

IVAN

Our comrades are fighting beside them, Josef. We stay as their allies, or run as their enemies.

JOSEF

I can't leave Isabella here. Look at her. They won't leave her alive.

Isabella is bringing over beer, and overhears Ivan's response.

IVAN

Then take her virginity. Tell them she's diseased. Scar her face. You must do something so that they won't look twice at her. Take this. Do it soon.

He removes a lethal-looking razor from his belt.

Horrified, Isabella leaves the beers and goes behind the counter, removing her apron.

JOSEF

Wait - Isabella!

EXT. TOWN INN - NIGHT

Isabella runs out into the courtyard. She stops, fearful that she is being followed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks back through the window and sees Josef still arguing with his mates. She runs to the cafe.

EXT. TOWN CAFE - NIGHT

Isabella arrives. Nicholas is stunned by her beauty once more.

NICHOLAS

You came!

ISABELLA

I have to leave. They spoke of cutting my face. So the soldiers wouldn't -

NICHOLAS

Your country has joined the enemy. It won't be safe for you when the troops arrive.

ISABELLA

They wanted me to bear his children because Josef will inherit the iron foundry. It is the lifeblood of the village.

NICHOLAS

Come with me, Isabella. You'll be safe in London.

ISABELLA

They'll never allow me to leave.

NICHOLAS

Each minute brings you closer to danger. Look at you - what will the soldiers see?

Isabella sees her reflection in the picture of the train.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Life doesn't run on a track like one of your trains. This may be the only time you can choose.

Nicholas kisses her. She kisses him back, feverishly.

ISABELLA

This is madness.

NICHOLAS

No, it's the only sane answer.

ISABELLA

I know a way out.

(CONTINUED)