

## **Train 362**

by Cordelia Rodriguez

Train 362 was a gorgeous machine with its sleek, smooth body, and its speed of 1,000 miles per hour. The conductor was sitting in a lawn chair inside the engine room lulled asleep by the engine's steady roar. The workers had left to pick up the cargo the train would be carrying to Alix. But hiding in the shadows, listening to the engine roar, was a girl with unnaturally green eyes and dark brown curls that appeared to be black in the shadows,.

Glancing around, the girl suddenly burst out of the shadows, into the light of day, and then through the train door. A boy, younger than the girl, who was hidden in the shadows just as she had, followed her lead, and ran as though he had super speed through the train's door. If the conductor had been awake, and witnessed the scene, he would have noticed that as the girl and the boy hit the sunlight, their hair instantly turned blond. And not just a few shades lighter; it seemed as if their hair color had changed completely. But the conductor was not awake, and did not see such, and did not have the chance to wonder why two strange looking children were climbing aboard his train.

While the girl and the boy hid away on the train, the workers arrived and along with them, the cargo. The crates arrived one by one because many of them were so heavy they required all of the workers the train had just to carry one. They ranged from the size of a little boy's palm to the size of an elephant. Finally the last crate was delivered and brought to the cargo hold.

The train started up and the boy squealed. Having never been on a train before, the experience was thrilling, but his excitement would not help the two stowaways, so the girl put a damper on his joy.

"Be quiet Enryx!" she hissed at the boy.

Rolling his eyes, Enryx said, "Come on Sybil, it'll be fine. They can't hear me over the engine."

"No! No talking!"

"At least let me go see what's inside the crates."

"I don't know....."

"I won't get caught!"

"Fine."

“Really?”

“Yes, but I’m coming with you,” Sybil said with a grin. “I’m interested about what’s in those crates myself.”

Smiling ear to ear, Enryx bounced up and down. He ran out of the cramped closet where they had been hiding and towards the cargo hold, disregarding his promise to not get caught.

Sybil smiled at the young boy’s spirit, and wished that she had gotten the chance to live as he had. She climbed out of the closet, stepping over a couple of the workers coats, still dreaming how different her life would be if she hadn’t been born who she was. *I wouldn’t be stowing away on a train. I’d be with my family.*

Entering the cargo hold was like entering a freezer compared to the warm confining closet, and although Sybil was shivering, Enryx didn’t seem to mind, seeing as he was running around, investigating the boxes. Enryx picked up a smaller wooden crate and began to rip it open easily, as if tearing wood was no different than tearing wrapping paper. Inside the crate was a cage made with Akoy Tungsten, a rare metal stronger than any beast a scientist could create, and impossible to bend, scratch or break.

Yet, more interesting than the cage was the creature inside it. The creature had spikes on the top of its body, which was shaped like a globe. It had a long tail covered in spikes, and although they were smaller than the spikes on its body, they were just as dangerous. Curiously enough, other than the spikes, the creature looked rather like an anime character, because of its humongous eyes, and wide open mouth.

Enryx stared at the lock on the cage for a moment, and then began to fiddle with it. He moved the numbers around as if he knew the exact combination, and the creature inside the cage wiggled, waiting to get out.

“What are you doing? That thing could kill you!” shrieked Sybil when she saw him.

“Oh.” The cage was now empty and the creature was tearing through the other crates and what seemed to be cages inside. Several creatures emerged from the demolished cages, each more hideous than the last. One of the creatures was a giant spider, with lobster claws and eight empty bloody eye sockets. Another was a scorpion with millions of bees surrounding it, forming a shield. Then there was the lion. It came across as normal at first till it extended its 2 foot long razor claws and opened its mouth to reveal giant poisonous teeth.

But the most terrifying of all, at least to the two children, was the last creature to be freed. The last creature had the fangs of a snake, the wings of a phoenix, the tail of an eel and

the body of a dragon. But it was not the creature's appearance that scared them, but the fact that he was not a stranger.

"Run," Sybil ordered Enryx, in a commanding tone.

"But..."

"Find the conductor. Tell him about the creatures, but don't mention what we are. I'll find you later!"

Enryx glanced toward her hesitantly. "What about Aaron?"

Sybil looked at the last creature, the creature they knew as Aaron. "I'm sure. Now go before we both die!"

"Neither of us will die. Meet me soon."

Sybil nodded to him, and reassured that she would follow, Enryx scampered off to find the conductor. Sybil then turned to face Aaron. He had grown from the last time he had tried to kill her. He had been cramped in the cage, and now that he had been freed, his head had broken through the ceiling of the cargo hold.

"Sybil! Were you the one that freed me? I thought all those times I tried to kill you might teach you some caution." Aaron had seen Sybil, and had morphed back to his human form. He was a Faer, a beast that could change from its natural form to a human one. His natural form made him appear ferocious, but Sybil thought that in his human state he seemed like an arrogant schoolboy.

"No, I opened her cage." Sybil motioned towards the small creature Enryx had freed. "And then she tore through the other cages."

"So the boy didn't have anything to do with it?"

"What boy?"

"Still lying to me?" Aaron barked out a laugh. "He's from The Cage, isn't he?"

Sybil flinched at the mention of The Cage. She couldn't let Aaron put them back there; she couldn't be in captivity again, surrounded by monsters like herself. "No."

"So he is...."

"Don't hurt him. You've already killed the others, just leave us. Let us be free, and you'll never have to see us."

“You know I can’t.”

“Why? Why continue on with this feud? We both want the same thing: Freedom.” Sybil positioned her legs so that she could run at any moment. Aaron was known for his temper in The Cage and she had a habit of provoking him.

“We’re not as similar as you make us out to be, Sybil. Even with our similar ability to look human. I am not as weak and foolish as you. My goals are not as ridiculous and impossible as your goal of freedom.”

“Then what are your goals?” Sybil thought she knew the answer but she still was curious about what he would say. Aaron had always been a bit of a mystery to her.

“Revenge.”

And then he lunged at her. Sybil dodged him and ran through the train, towards the engine rooms. Aaron followed her, remaining in his human form, which prevented him from using his full speed, but if he had been in his natural form he would barely be able to fit in the train car, much less chase after her.

After passing through several train cars Sybil found the engine room. The engine room door was locked from the inside, and she couldn’t waste the time it took to break in.

“Let me in!” she screamed, knocking on the door.

“Sybil?” Enryx asked from inside the locked engine room.

“Don’t listen to her, kid,” an unfamiliar voice said from inside the engine room. *Most likely the conductor*, thought Sybil. “It’s probably another monster.”

Sybil wondered how many of the monsters had come over near the engine room. None of them were here now, but they had likely backtracked or gotten off the train when they heard Aaron coming this way. Everyone was scared of Aaron.

“Let me in the door, Enryx!” Sybil shouted. Aaron was only two train cars away from them. “Before he gets to me!”

“Stop-No!” Sybil heard the conductor yell out, as Enryx opened the door. Sybil quickly went in, and locked the door behind her.

“He’s right behind me, we need to block this door,” she said.

“But-“

A loud crash interrupted Enryx. Someone was ramming their body into the door from the outside.

“That’s Aaron!” Sybil yelled.

“Who?” the conductor asked.

“Not important!” Sybil said, “Can this train go any faster? We might get a head start on Aaron in the Alix forest!”

“We’re at 700! I could go 1,000 but that might overheat the engine!”

“1,000.” Sybil said. The conductor ran back to the control panel, and put the train at full speed. The train was now zooming towards Alix; if the engine didn’t overheat they could be there soon.

“Sybil,” Enryx said, trying to get her attention. “We could use our combined force to block him. Maybe it will be enough to stop him from entering until we’re there.”

They ran for the door and pushed hard against Aaron. Alone they wouldn’t have stood a chance against his strength, but together they could hold him off for a time. Sybil’s hair was changing to a different color each second, and Enryx’s eyes were flashing from blue to amber. They were scared, more than they had ever been in their lives, so in response to the unknown emotion, their systems were malfunctioning.

With their systems malfunctioning, their strength was decreasing, and Aaron had almost shoved open the door. He squeezed his hand through the opening, and grasped Sybil’s ponytail. He yanked the ponytail, and Sybil stumbled.

The conductor turned the train on auto pilot, and ran to help. The conductor managed to shove Sybil away from the door, but he wasn’t paying attention to Aaron, who wrapped his hands around the man’s neck, and squeezed. The conductor fell to the floor with a thud, and Aaron walked into the engine room easily, now that no one was blocking his way.

Sybil lay a couple of feet away from Aaron. She stood up, and tried to run, but her leg was injured, so she fell right down again. Her eyes and hair were changing colors, her ears and nose into varying shapes, and her fright into overdrive.

When Enryx moved to help her, Aaron blocked his path. “I’ll make you a deal.” Aaron said, “Her death for your survival.”

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Enryx stared at Sybil's body through the train window. Her hair and eyes had faded out to a dull gray, and she looked nothing like Sybil, only a monotonous version of herself. Aaron and the others had left long before, and only Enryx was there to care for her body. So he did.

He went inside the train car, picked up her body and ran. He ran for Sybil, he ran to fix the mistake he had made, and he ran for himself. Finally, when the tears became too strong to hold, he let them out. Enryx sat in the forest for hours, crying. *Sybil is dead. I killed Sybil,* He thought, *I am free but I am alone. I am a true monster.*