

SAFE PASSAGE

FADE-IN:

INT. CITY TRAM (MOVING) - NIGHT

An empty, dimly lit tram. Dark, frosted windows. An occasional passing light FLICKERS outside the windows. The tram seemingly navigates itself, as a gray, metallic enclosure conceals the driver.

INT. CITY TRAM (MOVING) - FRONT SEATING AREA - NIGHT

A MAN lies on a torn seat, curled up in the fetal position, shivering from the cold. He is dressed in a dirty, green city transport uniform with a cap covering his face. He lies motionless, oblivious to the RATTLING and SHAKING of the decrepit, old tram.

EXT. CITY STREET CORNER - NIGHT

The tram's headlights illuminate TWO YOUNG BUSINESSMEN standing at a deserted street corner. They wave hesitantly to the tram, then stagger forward.

INT. CITY TRAM - FRONT SEATING AREA - NIGHT

The tram SCREECHES to a stop, as the conductor's cap falls to the floor, revealing a wizened old man. He stirs, then slowly swings his feet around to meet the floor.

He rubs his eyes, sitting in quiet contemplation, listening to the CLANGING of the tram bell. He hears the sound of a disgusted SIGH, then looks up and sees

A YOUNG MAN WITH A LOOSENED TIE AND JACKET

Standing, waiting impatiently.

YOUNG MAN

They paying you to sleep?

He unceremoniously stuffs a five-dollar note into the conductor's shirt pocket.

YOUNG MAN

Two tickets - end of the line.

(pause)

And keep the change.

He snickers, then swaggers down the aisle, as the conductor pulls the note out of his pocket.

VOICE (O.S.)

Eddie, leave the guy alone.

The old man leans back against the window, sighing softly to himself, studying the money. He stands, pulling on the cord. The tram GROANS, then slowly inches forward.

INT. CITY TRAM - REAR SEATS - NIGHT

Eddie drops into a seat opposite JUSTIN, his companion. He flashes a cocky smile, fumbling through the pockets of his suit jacket.

EDDIE

Damn.

JUSTIN

You're not allowed to smoke.

Eddie glances up at a NO SMOKING sign, then scoffs.

EDDIE

That figures.

Justin shakes his head, as Eddie leans back, then emits a bored sigh. Eddie's appearance is in marked contrast to Justin's. His hair is a bit less disheveled, clothes a bit more polished, and overall posture more self-assured. Both men are in their early thirties and reasonably good-looking.

EDDIE

Tugs on his tie, looking about the tram with disdain. Footsteps SHUFFLE in their direction, as they look up into the lined and marked face of the conductor. He has the sort of nondescript face that makes his age virtually indistinguishable. He calmly hands Eddie a couple of coins.

CONDUCTOR

Your change.

Eddie eyes him suspiciously, then takes the money.

EDDIE

Slow night?

CONDUCTOR

You're the first.

Eddie glances at his watch, then exchanges grins with Justin, as the tram slows down.

EDDIE

It's going on midnight. First
passengers you've seen maybe.

The conductor ignores him, as the tram CLANGS its bell, then slows to a halt. The doors FLING open, as a diminutive Chinese WOMAN climbs aboard the tram. The doors SLAM shut behind her, as she stands quietly, looking thoughtfully about the tram. The tram doesn't move, remaining silent.

Eddie impatiently looks at his watch, then exchanges stares with the woman. She looks at Eddie with a hint of familiarity. Her passive countenance abruptly turns to a scowl, as she marches to where Eddie is seated, then SLAPS him across the face. She stands over him, BREATHING heavily, staring with contempt.

Eddie's mouth drops open in shock, as Justin nonchalantly tugs on Eddie's sleeve.

JUSTIN

Friend of yours, Eddie?

Eddie collects himself, then frowns bitterly. He jumps to his feet, towering over her. The conductor quietly steps in between them, motioning her to a seat in the far corner at the front of the tram. She slowly backs away, keeping her eyes glued on Eddie, who shuffles uncomfortably next to the conductor.

Eddie's gaze darts back and forth from the conductor to Justin, seeking admonishment.

EDDIE

I didn't touch her. Both of
you saw.

JUSTIN

Sit down, Eddie.

EDDIE

I could have - no, SHOULD have
hit her back. But I didn't.

JUSTIN

You're a model of restraint.

The conductor says nothing, motioning for Eddie to return to his seat. Eddie hesitates, then manages a sheepish grin.

EDDIE

Screw it. What do I care? Just
keep her away from me.

The conductor turns away, as Eddie takes a seat opposite Justin with his back to the woman.

EDDIE
This is what I get for riding
public transport. Never again.

Justin lazily looks away, sighing wearily.

JUSTIN
Pretty weird.

EDDIE
The night's still young.

The conductor YANKS twice on the tram cord, as the tram CREEKS and GROANS, then RUMBLES forward into the blackness.

INT. TRAM (MOVING) - REAR SEATS

Eddie and Justin sit in silence, as Justin removes party streamers and confetti from his shirt pocket. Eddie steals a glance at

THE CHINESE WOMAN

Sitting quietly, staring out the window.

EDDIE

Turns back to Justin.

EDDIE
Probably a flashback to the war
or something.

JUSTIN
Keep your voice down.

Eddie looks around the empty tram with amusement.

EDDIE
You know what your problem is?

JUSTIN
Here we go -

EDDIE
You worry too much about what
other people think.

Eddie extends his arms, as if presenting Justin to an audience.

EDDIE

I give you - the conscientious man. A dying breed. A man who still thinks that hard work and dedication actually gets noticed.

JUSTIN

I believe in poetic justice.

EDDIE

What goes around comes around?

JUSTIN

Something like that.

EDDIE

That's the spirit. Accept your fate with quiet dignity. Like standing before a firing squad.

Justin seethes quietly, pinching his lips together.

EDDIE

Not me. I see what I want - and I take it.

He thrusts a defiant fist toward Justin, who recoils with irritation. Eddie grins, then lets out a loud GUFFAW.

EDDIE

Relax.

Justin shuffles in his seat, exchanging a quick stare with the conductor and the Chinese woman. The tram bell CLANGS, as Justin turns his gaze back to the window.

JUSTIN

Wish I could see where we are.

Justin rubs the window with his elbow, squinting into the blackness. Eddie glances back at the conductor, who's slumped over in his seat, SNORING quietly. The Chinese woman sits upright, staring blankly ahead.

EDDIE

Leans forward, lowering his voice.

EDDIE

Let me ask you something. What's the worst thing you ever done?

JUSTIN
You mean like stealing
something or lying?

He stares fixedly at Justin, who squirms uncomfortably.

EDDIE
No - I mean something you
didn't think you were capable
of. The absolute worst thing
you could ever imagine doing.

JUSTIN
Well, I sure wouldn't tell you.

EDDIE
I'll tell you mine.

JUSTIN
No thanks.

He looks over his shoulder, and then turns back to Justin
with a gleam in his eye.

EDDIE
Come on. It won't go any
further than this tram.

JUSTIN
What's the point?

EDDIE
Just to show you that feeling
guilty about doing something
bad is just a state of mind.

Justin folds his arms, then looks apprehensively at the
conductor, whose head remains lowered.

JUSTIN
Let's not say something we'll
regret later.

EDDIE
I never have regrets.

JUSTIN
Suppose I murdered someone or
cheated on my wife? I'm sure
as hell not going to tell you.

EDDIE
What if I told you I already did?

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For the complete script (for production or representation consideration only)
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