

Mainline

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EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

ERNEST (30s) walks down the empty sidewalk. He's surrounded by quiet, empty streets. His eyes are barely open while his hands are jammed deep in to his pockets. His pace is slow and sluggish. He seems barely awake.

He walks toward a concrete staircase leading down to the subway. He sings an Irish folksong, The Fields of Athenry, in his head. He hums the tune simultaneously.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
By a lonely prison wall,  
I heard a young girl calling,  
Micheal they are taking you away,  
For you stole Trevelyn's corn,

Ernest yawns long and deep. The song pauses as he yawns only to start again as he begins down the subway stairs.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
So the young might see the morn,  
Now a prison ship lies waiting in  
the bay,

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM

Ernest is again completely alone. He sits on a bench on the empty platform. Eyes closed and arms crossed, his head is leaned forward. The clock on the wall sits at 4:30. The song continues, lethargically.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
Low lie the Fields of Athenry,  
Where once we watched the small  
free birds fly,  
Our love was on the wing we had  
dreams and songs to sing,  
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of  
Athenry,

The song slurs to a slow stop.

The silence is broken by the METAL ON METAL of an approaching subway train. Ernest stirs as the train GRINDS to a stop.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
This is the Sheol Park bound  
express. Next stop at Jahannam  
Street.

Ernest shuffles through the doors on to the car.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Another completely empty space. Ernest begins singing in his head again as he shuffles toward the back of the car.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
By a lonely prison wall,  
I heard a young man calling,

A CHIME sounds.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Stand clear of the closing doors,  
please. Stand clear of the closing  
doors.

Ernest sits down at the back of the car and leans his head back against the glass. Eyes closed. The song sluggish and halting.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
Nothing matter Mary when you're  
free,  
  
Against the Famine and the Crown,  
I rebelled -

Silence as Ernest's head slowly lolls forward and drops.

His head jerks back quickly as he wakes. He looks around at the empty subway car. His eyes close again and his head slowly drops in to his chest.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
Against the Famine and the Crown,  
I rebelled they ran me down,  
Now you must raise our child with  
dignity.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - LATER

Ernest jerks awake violently as a ROTUND LADY collapses down in seat beside him. He looks at her wildly, shocked out of sleep. She's nearly sitting on him. The Rotund Lady clears her throat loudly.

ROTUND LADY  
Sorry.

Bleary eyed he quickly scans the subway car. He is surrounded. The car is filled with rush hour traffic and packed end to end, shoulder to shoulder. He shrinks away from her.

ERNEST

Shit.

The Rotund Lady scoffs.

ROTUND LADY

I said sorry. Fuck you.

ERNEST

No, I --

Ernest brings his hand to his mouth and continues looking over the passengers in the car with him.

ROTUND LADY

You what?

No response comes forward.

ROTUND LADY

That's what I thought.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Oh God. Oh. I need to get off. I need to get up. Get up right now and work my way toward the door. There's so many people. I don't know.

A man in a TWEED JACKET sitting across from Ernest catches his eye between the standing passengers. He sits staring at Ernest in return. His breathing is slightly laboured out through red rimmed nostrils.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Why are you staring at me?

All the noise in the train quickly falls off to silence.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Why are you staring at me?

Tweed Jacket's BREATHING slowly, forcefully whistles through those red rimmed nostrils.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Stop staring at me.

The BREATHING gets louder. Ernest looks away from Tweed Jacket and turns his eyes to the floor.

ERNEST (V.O.)

I can just wait. That's what I'll  
do. God, look at all those feet.  
There's so many of them.

Ernest closes his eyes. The BREATHING gets louder. Ernest begins singing in his head again. Anxious and loud.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Low lie the Fields of Athenry,  
Where once we watched the small  
free birds fly,  
Our love was on the wing we had  
dreams and songs to sing,  
It's so lonely 'round the Fields --

The song is interrupted by a very loud COUGH. Ernest opens his eyes. The COUGHER is sitting right beside him.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Oh my God.

A flood of COUGHS, SNIFFLES, SNEEZES, and THROAT CLEARINGS becomes a cacophony around Ernest from all angles. He covers his ears. With his eyes closed tightly he gently rocks in place. His singing in his head is nearly a scream.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Low lie the Fields of Athenry,  
Where once we watched the small  
free birds fly,  
Our love was on the wing we had --  
I can't do this. They're oozing  
sickness. Every one of them. I  
can't fucking do this. I have to  
get off this train now. Right  
goddamned now or my fucking head is  
going to explode. I have to go now.

Ernest darts up out of his seat blind. He opens his eyes as he bumps into the man standing in front of his seat. The man could be a PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER for all his mass. Ernest rebounds right off the man and back in to his seat.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

Hey. Watch it.

The Professional Wrestler turns to Ernest who has gone completely white and is sweating. His eyes like saucers.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

Hey. You okay, man?

Ernest nods and mutters something completely incoherent. Ernest is careful to avoid eye contact with the massive man. The Professional Wrestler puts out his hand for Ernest to take.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

It's okay. I can help you if you need me to.

Ernest glances up at the man. As he does the Professional Wrestler's face distorts in to grimacing mask with black, empty eyes. His joints jut out at random angles. His posture arches into something hunched and grotesque. His entire likeness takes a demonic look.

ERNEST

No. No. I'm fine.

Ernest slips around the man in to the packed aisle. He jams his hands into his pockets and puts his head down. He tries to push through the crowd.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Stay small. Stay out of the way. Everything is going to be just fine. Make it to the door and get off at the next stop.

A hand brushes again Ernest back. He jumps and bumps into a teenager with DREADLOCKS. Dreadlocks shrugs back against Ernest pushing him back.

DREADLOCKS

Man! Watch where you're going.

ERNEST

Sorry. Sorry.

Ernest tries to steady himself.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Can't keep my balance with my hands in my pockets. Can't stay small otherwise. I can't touch them. Getting off the train is more important.

Another hand reaches out. This one touches his ass. Another reaches for his hair. They're followed by a dozen hands each taking swipes at his body. One is bold enough to grab his crotch. Ernest protests under his breath.

ERNEST

No. No.

The train jerks and all passengers sway slightly to the right. All passengers except Ernest. Off balance and hands in his pockets he's tossed in back in to Dreadlocks. The response is violent as Dreadlocks shoves him hard.

DREADLOCKS

The fuck did I tell you, man?

The passengers prop Ernest up. Ernest instinctively puts a hand up in front of his face and looks away while responding to Dreadlocks. Dreadlock's face twists back and his body morphs.

ERNEST

I'm sorry.

DREADLOCKS

You touch me again and I will break your fuckin' head open. Are we clear?

The Professional Wrestler pushes through to Dreadlocks.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

Let the guy alone.

DREADLOCKS

Man, fuck you too.

The Professional Wrestler steps in between Ernest and Dreadlocks. He stands facing Dreadlocks.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

The guy's clearly not doing well. Just let him be, alright? He's not hurting anyone.

DREADLOCKS

Whatever, man.

Dreadlocks turns his back. Professional Wrestler turns to face Ernest.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER

You gonna be okay?

Professional Wrestlers features and joints are still distorted.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
Not at all.

ERNEST  
Mmm hmm.

Ernest nods while keeping his gaze away from Professional Wrestler's. Professional Wrestler stands looking at Ernest trying to get Ernest to look back at him.

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER  
Maybe you should get off at the next stop.

ERNEST  
Maybe.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
Definitely.

Professional Wrestler turns back and heads toward where he was standing previously.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
This is the Purgatory bound express. No stops until the end of the line.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
No.

Ernest looks up toward the sign on the bus. Sure enough the digital display reads:

13. Purgatory

He looks around the subway car. All eyes are averted away from him. Every face a twisted mask with black eyes. Every body hunched over with joints jutting out at awkward angles.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
There's no air in here.

Ernest starts to hyperventilate.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
I can't breath. This is the train to purgatory and there's not enough air. Not enough air for all of us.

All eyes turn, simultaneously, toward Ernest. Black and empty. Their twisted mouths open and salivating.

ERNEST (V.O.)

That's it. There's not enough air  
for all of us. Someone has to go.  
They need to pick off the weak.

The passengers begin to close in on Ernest. Pressing in on  
all sides.

ERNEST (V.O.)

They're going to suffocate me.  
They're going to kill me just to  
have a little bit more air for  
themselves.

He struggles, bracing against the crowd.

ERNEST

Please! Could I just have a little  
room.

They continue pressing inward. The singing begins as  
screams.

ERNEST (V.O.)

By a lonely harbour wall,  
She watched the last star falling,  
As that prison ship sailed out  
against the sky,

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The next stop is Matthew Street.  
Transfer is available to the D  
train.

ERNEST

Thank you.

Ernest begins pressing against the crowd toward the door.  
They press back. Compacting him. Forcing him to fight for  
every step.

ERNEST

Please. Please just let me  
through. I just want off the  
train.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Of course I want off the train.  
They all want off the train. They  
can't get off so they don't want me  
to get off either. They'd rather I  
died. They'd rather I died here  
than escape and leave them behind.

The train slows to a stop. Ernest finishes pushing through to door just as it slides open. He's greeted by another dozen twisted faces like those behind him waiting on the platform.

ERNEST  
Please, just let me off.

He tries to take a step forward and the passengers on platform press in. They push him back deeper in to the car. He's nearly frantic.

ERNEST  
No! Please!

He reaches for the doors as he's swept away by the tide. A CHIME rings.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Stand clear of the closing doors,  
please. Stand clear of the closing  
doors.

ERNEST  
No!

ERNEST (V.O.)  
I'm gonna die here. I'm gonna die.

The crowd of passengers reconfigures and surges. Ernest is ejected from the train.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM

Ernest stumbles and lands on his hands and knees on the platform. He looks back to the train as the doors close. All eyes are turned looking at him at inside the train. Black and empty.

ERNEST  
Thank you.

He jumps to his feet and sprints toward the stairs. He makes wide arcs around others on the platform to stay as far away from them as possible. He begins singing in his head very rapidly.

ERNEST (V.O.)  
By a lonely harbour wall,  
She watched the last star falling,  
As that prison ship sailed out  
against the sky,

He takes the stairs to the street two and three at a time.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Sure she'll wait and hope and pray,  
For her love in Botany Bay,  
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of  
Athenry.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Ernest emerges from the stairs into daylight and nearly runs in to a WOMAN walking her dog. Her features distorted. She sneers and hisses at him. He stops his song and stumbles off to the side. He retreats toward the building away from people. He glances at his watch. 9:27.

ERNEST

Damn it.

He pulls out his phone and dials a number.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Good morning, Dr. Augustine's  
office.

ERNEST

Hi, uhm, my name is Ernest  
Kaufmann.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Hello Mr. Kaufmann. We're expecting  
you in this morning, correct? Oh,  
that's right, in about five  
minutes. What can I do for you?

ERNEST

Can you please hold the  
appointment? I'm just running a  
little behind.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

That's not--

ERNEST

Appropriate I know. It's my first  
appointment with Dr. Augustine and  
it's very important. I know I  
should be there now and it's  
inappropriate for me to ask her to  
wait. I've got a really good reason  
why I'm late though.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
Mr. Kaufmann, I'm not--

ERNEST  
Interested in excuses. I get it.  
But I tried really hard. I knew it  
was gonna be difficult so I got up  
really early to get on the subway  
so I could miss the rush. It'd just  
be easier if I waited outside the  
building. I must have gotten up too  
early. I feel asleep on the train.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
It's fine, Mr. Kaufmann. We don't  
have a lot of appointments today.  
I'm we can shuffle some things  
around.

ERNEST  
Are you sure?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
I'm positive. Dr. Augustine is  
looking forward to meeting you.

ERNEST  
Thank you so much.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
How long do you think it will be  
before you'll be in?

ERNEST  
I'm about six or seven blocks away.  
Maybe fifteen minutes.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
Is there anything I can have ready  
for you? Some tea, coffee, or a  
bottle water.

ERNEST  
Thank you. No.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)  
We'll see you soon, Mr. Kaufmann.

ERNEST  
I'll be there as fast as I can.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Bye-bye.

Ernest hangs up his phone and starts down the street at a very fast walking pace. He stays close to the buildings and away from others on the sidewalk. Each looks up to him with their twisted faces as he goes. He nervously sings to himself.

ERNEST (V.O.)

Low lie the Fields of Athenry,  
Where once we watched the small  
free birds fly,  
Our love was on the wing we had  
dreams and songs to sing,  
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of  
Athenry.

THE END.