

THE AVENGERS

" A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE STATION "

x

F A D E I N :

1. EXT. RAILWAY SIDINGS. DAY. (LOCATION)

CAMERA establishes first image: a thick cluster of railway lines going into the distance. They look as though they run for ever.

CAMERA next establishes crowded railway sidings. Various goods trains; comprising coal-trucks, livestock wagons, petrol containers, etc. SOUND of trains shunting and whistling in distance.

Everything is still, then suddenly we pick up LUCAS, a fifty year old ex-Indian Army British Agent. Face beaded with sweat and fighting hard for breath, he comes running between two trains towards CAMERA. He gives frequent over-the-shoulder glances. He then slips to the ground and slides desperately under a train. CAMERA follows his progress - shooting on his legs under the train - before PANNING to pick up . . .

TWO MEN, pistols in hand, searching amongst the trains. They split up. One drops to his knees and looks under the trains.

CAMERA PANS, from his eyeline, under rolling stock. No sign of LUCAS.

2. CLOSE SHOT - LUCAS.

Desperate, he has wedged himself up between two goods wagons. He is straining to hear SOUNDS of pursuit, over the rattle of his own heavy breathing.

2a. EXT. RAILWAY SIDINGS. DAY. (LOCATION)

The TWO MEN are approaching. One of them accidentally kicks an empty beer can.

2b. EXT. GOODS TRAIN. DAY. (LOCATION)

LUCAS hears this and frantically hauls himself up into the empty wagon. Breathless and exhausted, it takes all his strength. As he pulls himself up, he snags a piece of his jacket on a nail. He doesn't notice.

CAMERA PANS away to one of the MEN coming methodically along the train in which LUCAS is hiding.

2c. EXT. WAGON. DAY. (LOCATION)

LUCAS, hiding in the corner of the truck, suddenly spots the rip in his jacket. Thinking quickly, he whips off his tie, doubles it up and knots it - ready for strangling.

2d. EXT. GOODS TRAIN. DAY. (LOCATION)

The MAN draws steadily closer. He peers through the gaps between the various wagons. His partner is following a parallel route. It seems inevitable that he must notice the piece of fabric caught on the nail, but he doesn't. He passes it. Suddenly his partner whistles to him, he turns and walks back to the last gap between wagons. His partner motions him to slow down as he is going off to investigate something else. It's then that he spots the fabric. Smiling to himself, he closes on the wagon, feeding a bullet into the breech of his automatic as he does so.

Suddenly LUCAS pounces from behind him. He smashes the MAN's head savagely against the truck, then throttles him with his tie. He bundles the body under the wagon, then starts to run off down the length of the train.

16. EXT. PLATFORM. NIGHT. (STUDIO)

Identical set to Scene 5 - save that this station is derelict.

As SOUND of train dies away into the night, LUCAS realises he is alone. What little moonlight there is is reflected in the puddles on the platform. He flicks on his cigarette lighter. The station sign of NORBOROUGH reassures him. The lighter blows out. He walks slowly along the dark platform towards the single light shining beside the exit. His footsteps echo hollowly on the uneven cobblestones. It's now absolutely still apart from the wind, which makes the hanging signs creak, and a dog barking in the distance. LUCAS passes the derelict waiting room. As he does so, the door whips in the wind. It slams, then swings open again. LUCAS starts, then resumes walking. CAMERA PANS to the open doorway. Nothing. Then the GROOM suddenly steps forward into SHOT. We pick up the GROOM's faint humming: the Wedding March. LUCAS arrives at the exit. There is no-one in sight.

LUCAS (Calling out):

Hello? Hello.

He tries to open the door leading to the station vestibule. It won't open. He raps on the window.

29. INT. TRAIN CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

EMMA comes along the corridor. She passes the 'Just Married' compartment.

29a. INT. 'JUST MARRIED' COMPARTMENT. NIGHT.

SALT and the BRIDE sit opposite one another. SALT raises his glass to her.

SALT:
Sorry the 'Groom' was called away.

BRIDE (Coolly):
I'll survive.

SALT:
Not staying for the Honeymoon -
awful bad form.

BRIDE:
Who was Lucas phoning?

SALT:
I didn't hear.

BRIDE:
You sure he didn't say anything?

SALT:
Quite sure. He was hurrying to
catch the train.

BRIDE:
Lucky for us he made it.

SALT (Nervously):
Everything's gone so smoothly.

BRIDE:
Going, not 'gone'.

SALT:
I hope so. There isn't much time.

BRIDE:
Relax! The bomb'll be finished
tomorrow.

SALT:
How will you get it up there?

BRIDE:
By train. How else?

She smiles. The train jerks as it starts to slow.

30. INT. COMPARTMENT. NIGHT.

40. CONTINUED:

He prepares to resume work. As STEED moves away, he knocks a long parcel wrapped up in sacking. It crashes to the floor. STEED goes to pick it up. Doing so, he contrives to unwrap it. A 'NORBOROUGH' station name-plate is unrevealed. STEED and EMMA react, then look up at CREWE.

CREWE:

I found them in the Ladies' Waiting Room.

STEED (Disbelievingly):

Really?

CREWE:

Some prank I suppose.

STEED:

I suppose so.

EMMA:

Is this station identical with Norborough?

CREWE (Nodding):

In almost every detail. It's the 'Scott Simon design' - he was the architect. There's about a couple of dozen of them up and down the country.

STEED:

Very interesting. Thank you. (Turns, then as an after-thought) Four, one, sixty-seven. Does that mean anything to you?

EMMA:

Or four, aye, sixty-seven?

CREWE (Thinking hard):

No, I'm sorry.

Ad lib goodbyes. STEED and EMMA go out. CREWE crosses to the window and watches them pass outside on the platform. He's suspicious.

OMIT SCENE 41.

42. EXT. CHASE HALL PLATFORM. DAY. (STUDIO)

EMMA and STEED return towards the vestibule.

EMMA:

Think he's involved?

STEED (Punning on word):

Very involved. 'Obsessed', I'd say.

75. INT. SIGNAL BOX. DAY. (STUDIO)

CREWE looks fondly out of his window as the SOUND of the passing train fades. He glances at his watch, smiles - reassured, then pops it back in his waistcoat pocket.

CREWE:
Like battleships they were,
Mrs. Peel.

CAMERA PANS to include a very patient-looking EMMA.

CREWE:
Great iron-ships of the line.
Even their names were household
words: The Flying Scot, The
Pequod ...

EMMA:
Captain Ahab on the footplate?

CREWE (Smiling):
If you're raised on Diesel fumes
you can't appreciate it. Can't
begin to. Individuality replaced
by anonymity, mass-production ...

EMMA:
Mr. Crewe

CREWE:
I know, I know ... (Points to
signal levers) Those levers,
Mrs. Peel. Polished by the
sweat of the human hand. Just
think how many people - famous,
infamous, unknown - have reached
their destination safely because
of the man who worked those levers.
Hundreds of Thousands? Millions?
(Businesslike) Well, what is it
you want?

EMMA:
I'd like you to listen to this.

EMMA switches on a portable tape-recorder. We hear the same 'diddly-pom, diddly-pom' train SOUNDS. After a moment, EMMA switches off. She looks at him enquiringly.

78. CONTINUED:

TICKET COLLECTOR:
That's all very fine, but never
anybody as important as

As he says the name of the person they're about to kill,
a TRAIN shoots past outside, drowning him out. He
watches the BRIDE working for a moment.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
What triggers the bomb off?

BRIDE:
A radio signal.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
Where will it come from?

BRIDE:
From this train.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
Sounds dangerous.

GROOM:
Not at all.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
There must be at least a mile
between us.

BRIDE:
There will be.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
Don't want to blow ourselves
up as well.

GROOM:
We won't. Now relax. We
all have our problems.

TICKET COLLECTOR:
What's your's?

GROOM:
We-ell. Thing that intrigues
me is - how do we get this
carriage off this train and on
to his?

TICKET COLLECTOR:
Easy.

GROOM:
Hold on. And then ... how do we
get him into this carriage?

TICKET COLLECTOR:
(Slightly pompous)
Leave it to the Railwaymen,
will you.

85. CONTINUED:

EMMA (Pained)
Mr. Crewe. You've disappointed
me again.

CREWE:
It wasn't my fault.

MAN:
Keep quiet. Get your hands up.

EMMA complies. As the MAN comes in close to frisk her,
EMMA hooks her foot round the MAN's leg and smartly
upends him.

EMMA grabs up a table lamp and is about to brain him when
he shouts out.

MAN (Desperately):
Mrs. Peel!

EMMA (Lamp poised):
I don't know you.

MAN:
George Warren. I'm a friend of
Steed's.

EMMA:
Where does he buy his trilbies?

MAN:
He wears bowlers and he gets
them from Arkwrights in St. James.

Satisfied, she hauls him to his feet.

EMMA:
What are you doing here?

MAN:
I could ask you the same thing.

EMMA:
I thought of it first.

MAN:
Special security watch: the
London-Liverpool Line.

EMMA:
Oh? Someone important travelling
along it?

MAN looks at CREWE - then:

MAN (Confidentially):
Very important.

Slight pause. CREWE feels 'out of it' - then:

CREWE:
Mrs. Peel? The recording.
It isn't a train at all.

EMMA:
Not a train?

CREWE:
Stake my life on it. It's
just a lot of jumbled noises.

86. INT. EMMA'S FLAT. NIGHT.

The tape recorder is playing the familiar diddly-pom, diddly-pom train SOUNDS. STEED and EMMA have obviously been hard at work, deciphering same. STEED stops the tape. EMMA has a padful of pencil jottings. STEED rubs his eyes tiredly.

STEED:
What've we got?

EMMA:
D - vowel - L - B - L - vowel -
D - G - E. Dolblidge.

STEED:
Dolblidge and Son. Family grocer ...

EMMA:
And Purveyor of Cooked Meats.

STEED:
Famous since 1840.

EMMA:
'Blidge'. That sound promising?
Care to make up a four for Blidge,
Steed.

STEED:
Delblidge? Dalblidge! No.
Delblidge. (As if making
introduction) 'Mr. Dalblidge -
Mr. Delblidge'.

EMMA:
Dilblidge. Dilblidge pie.
Old country recipe.

STEED:
First find your dilblidges.

EMMA:
Dulblidge. Are you congested?
Try a spoonful; now!

STEED:
Dulblidge. (Shaking his head)
Doesn't say anything, does it?

EMMA:
Might to a Chinaman. (Oriental)
'Dulblidge, sah'.

STEED (Eureka):
Durbridge!

EMMA:
Yes?

STEED:
Yes.

EMMA:
Where is it?

STEED grabs railway map.

STEED:
Durbridge Junction. I've seen
the name from a train. Be about
half an hour from somewhere.

EMMA:
How do you know that?

STEED:
Twenty minutes for the newspaper.
Ten minutes to doze off. If it
was after that, I wouldn't have
seen it at all.

EMMA (Looking):
Durbridge Durbridge.

STEED (Pointing):
There it is. 'Durbridge Junction'.

EMMA:
On the Norborough Line.

STEED quickly glances at his watch.

STEED:
And you know who's travelling
on that line tonight?

EMMA:
Us?

STEED (Nodding):
Besides us.

She shakes her head.

STEED:
The Prime Minister!

F A D E O U T :

COMMERCIAL BREAK