GRAHAM GREENE

STAMBOUL TRAIN

PENGUIN BOOKS

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Graham Greene was born in 1904 and educated at Berkhamsted School, where his father was the headmaster. On coming down from Balliol College, Oxford, where he published a book of verse, he worked for three years as a subeditor on *The Times*. He established his reputation with his fourth novel, *Stamboul Train*, which he classed as an 'entertainment' in order to distinguish it from more serious work. In 1935 he made a journey across Liberia, described in *Journey Without Maps*, and on his return was appointed film critic of the *Spectator*. In 1926 he had been received into the Roman Catholic Church and was commissioned to visit Mexico in 1938 and report on the religious persecution there. As a result he wrote *The Lawless Roads* and, later, *The Power and the Glory*.

Brighton Rock was published in 1938 and in 1940 he became literary editor of the *Spectator*. The next year he undertook work for the Foreign Office and was sent out to Sierra Leone in 1941–3. One of his major post-war novels, *The Heart of the Matter*, is set in West Africa and is considered by many to be his finest book. This was followed by *The End of the Affair*, *The Quiet American*, a story set in Vietnam, *Our Man in Havana*, and *A Burnt-Out Case*. *The Comedians* and twelve other novels have been filmed, plus two of his short stories, and *The Third Man* was written as a film treatment.

In all Graham Greene has written some thirty novels, 'entertainments', plays, children's books, travel books, and collections of essays and short stories. He was made a Companion of Honour in 1966. Among his latest publications are his long-awaited autobiography, *A Sort of Life* (1971), *The Pleasure Dome* (1972), *The Honorary Consul* (1973), *An Impossible Woman: the Memories of Dottoressa Moor of Capri* (edited; 1975) and *The Human Factor* (1978).

'Everything in nature is lyrical in its ideal essence; tragic in its fate, and comic in its existence.'

GEORGE SANTAYANA

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AN ENTERTAINMENT

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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PART ONE

Ostend

1

THE purser took the last landing-card in his hand and watched the passengers cross the grey wet quay, over a wilderness of rails and points, round the corners of abandoned trucks. They went with coat-collars turned up and hunched shoulders; on the tables in the long coaches lamps were lit and glowed through the rain like a chain of blue beads. A giant crane swept and descended, and the clatter of the winch drowned for a moment the pervading sounds of water, water falling from the overcast sky, water washing against the sides of channel steamer and quay. It was half past four in the afternoon.

'A spring day, my God,' said the purser aloud, trying to dismiss the impressions of the last few hours, the drenched deck, the smell of steam and oil and stale Bass from the bar, the shuffle of black silk, as the stewardess moved here and there carrying tin basins. He glanced up the steel shafts of the crane, to the platform and the small figure in blue dungarees turning a great wheel, and felt an unaccustomed envy. The driver up there was parted by thirty feet of mist and rain from purser, passengers, the long lit express. I can't get away from their damned faces, the purser thought, recalling the young Jew in the heavy fur coat who had complained because he had been allotted a two-berth cabin; for two God-forsaken hours, that's all.

He said to the last passenger from the second class: 'Not that way, miss. The customs-shed's over there.' His mood relaxed a little at the unfamiliarity of the young face; this one had not complained. 'Don't you want a porter for your bag, miss?'

'I'd rather not,' she said. 'I can't understand what they say. It's not heavy.' She wrinkled her mouth at him over the top of her cheap white mackintosh. 'Unless you'd like to carry it – Captain.' Her impudence delighted him. 'Ah, if I were a young man now you wouldn't be wanting a porter. I don't know what they are coming to.' He shook his head as the Jew left the customs-shed, picking his way across the rails in grey suède shoes, followed by two laden porters. 'Going far?'

'All the way,' she said, gazing unhappily past the rails, the piles of luggage, the lit lamps in the restaurant-car, to the dark waiting coaches.

'Got a sleeper?'

'No.'

'You ought to 'ave a sleeper,' he said, 'going all the way like that. Three nights in a train. It's no joke. What do you want to go to Constantinople for anyway? Getting married?'

'Not that I know of.' She laughed a little through the melancholy of departure and the fear of strangeness. 'One can't tell, can one?'

'Work?'

'Dancing. Variety.'

She said good-bye and turned from him. Her mackintosh showed the thinness of her body, which even while stumbling between the rails and sleepers retained its self-consciousness. A signal lamp turned from red to green, and a long whistle of steam blew through an exhaust. Her face, plain and piquant, her manner daring and depressed, lingered for a moment in his mind. 'Remember me,' he called after her. 'I'll see you again in a month or two.' But he knew that he would not remember her; too many faces would peer during the following weeks through the window of his office, wanting a cabin, wanting money changed, wanting a berth, for him to remember an individual, and there was nothing remarkable about her.

When he went on board, the decks were already being

washed down for the return journey, and he felt happier to find the ship empty of strangers. This was how he would have liked it always to be: a few dagoes to boss in their own tongue, a stewardess with whom to drink a glass of ale. He grunted at the seamen in French and they grinned at him, singing an indecent song of a 'cocu' that made his plump family soul wither a little in envy. 'A bad crossing,' he said to the head steward in English. The man had been a waiter in London and the purser never spoke a word more French than was necessary. 'That Jew,' he said, 'did he give you a good tip?'

'What would you believe? Six francs.'

'Was he ill?'

'No. The old fellow with the moustaches – he was ill all the time. And I want ten francs. I win the bet. He was English.'

'Go on. You could cut his accent with a knife.'

'I see his passport. Richard John. Schoolteacher.'

'That's funny,' the purser said. And that's funny, he thought again, paying the ten francs reluctantly and seeing in his mind's eye the tired grey man in the mackintosh stride away from the ship's rail, as the gangway rose and the sirens blew out towards a rift in the clouds. He had asked for a newspaper, an evening newspaper. They wouldn't have been published in London as early as that, the purser told him, and when he heard the answer, he stood in a dream, fingering his long grey moustache. While the purser poured out a glass of Bass for the stewardess, before going through the accounts, he thought again of the schoolteacher, and wondered momentarily whether something dramatic had passed close by him, something weary and hunted and the stuff of stories. He too had made no complaint, and for that reason was more easily forgotten than the young Jew, the party of Cook's tourists, the sick woman in mauve who had lost a ring, the old man who had paid twice for his berth. The girl had been forgotten half an hour before. This was the first thing she shared with Richard John – below the tramp of

feet, the smell of oil, the winking lights of signals, worrying faces, clink of glasses, rows of numerals – a darkness in the purser's mind.

The wind dropped for ten seconds, and the smoke which had swept backwards and forwards across the quay and the metal acres in the quick gusts stayed for that time in the middle air. Like grey nomad tents the smoke seemed to Myatt, as he picked his way through the mud. He forgot that his suède shoes were ruined, that the customs officer had been impertinent over two pairs of silk pyjamas. From the man's rudeness and his contempt, the syllables '*Juif, Juif*', he crept into the shade of those great tents. Here for a moment he was at home and required no longer the knowledge of his fur coat, of his suit from Savile Row, his money or his position in the firm to hearten him. But as he reached the train the wind rose, the tents of steam were struck, and he was again in the centre of a hostile world.

But he recognized with gratitude what money could buy; it could not always buy courtesy, but it had bought celerity. He was the first through the customs, and before the other passengers arrived, he could arrange with the guard for a sleeping compartment to himself. He had a hatred of undressing before another man, but the arrangement, he knew, would cost him more because he was a Jew; it would be no matter of a simple request and a tip. He passed the lit windows of the restaurant-car, small mauve-shaped lamps shining on the linen laid ready for dinner. 'Ostend – Cologne – Vienne – Belgrade – Istanbul.' He passed the rows of names without a glance; the route was familiar to him; the names travelled back at the level of his eyes, like the spires of minarets, cupolas, or domes of the cities themselves, offering no permanent settlement to one of his race.

The guard, as he had expected, was surly. The train was very full, he said, though Myatt knew he lied. April was too early in the year for crowded carriages, and he had seen few

first-class passengers on the Channel steamer. While he argued, a bevy of tourists scrambled down the corridor, middle-aged ladies clutching shawls and rugs and sketch-books, an old clergyman complaining that he had mislaid his *Wide World Magazine* – 'I always read a *Wide World* when I travel' – and in the rear, perspiring, genial under difficulties, their conductor wearing the button of an agency. '*Voilà*,' the guard said and seemed to indicate with a gesture that his train was bearing an unaccustomed, a cruel burden. But Myatt knew the route too well to be deceived. The party, he guessed from its appearance of harassed culture, belonged to the slip-coach for Athens. When he doubled the tip, the guard gave way and pasted a reserved notice on the window of the compartment. With a sigh of relief Myatt found himself alone.

He watched the swim of faces separated by a safe wall of glass. Even through his fur coat the damp chill of the day struck him, and as he turned the heating-wheel, a mist from his breath obscured the pane, so that soon he could see of those who passed no more than unrelated features, a peering angry eye, a dress of mauve silk, a clerical collar. Only once was he tempted to break this growing solitude and wipe the glass with his fingers in time to catch sight of a thin girl in a white mackintosh disappearing along the corridor towards the second class. Once the door was opened and an elderly man glanced in. He had a grey moustache and wore glasses and a shabby soft hat. Myatt told him in French that the compartment was taken.

'One seat,' the man said.

'Do you want the second class?' Myatt asked, but the man shook his head and moved away.

Mr Opie sank with conscious luxury into his corner and regarded with curiosity and disappointment the small pale man opposite him. The man was extraordinarily commonplace in appearance; ill-health had ruined his complexion. Nerves, Mr Opie thought, watching the man's moving

fingers, but they showed no other sign of acute sensibility. They were short, blunt, and thick.

'I always think,' Mr Opie said, wondering whether he had been very unfortunate in his companion, 'that as long as one can get a sleeper, it is so unnecessary to travel first class. These second-class carriages are remarkably comfortable.'

'Yes – that's so – yes,' the other answered with alacrity. 'But 'ow did you know I was English?'

'I make a practice,' Mr Opie said with a smile, 'of always thinking the best of people.'

'Of course,' the pale man said, 'you as a clergyman – '

The newsboys were calling outside the window, and Mr Opie leant out. 'Le Temps de Londres. *Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? Rien du tout?* Le Matin *et un* Daily Mail. *C'est bon. Merci.*' His French seemed to the other full of little copy-book phrases, used with gusto and inaccurately. '*Combien est cela? Trois francs. Oh la-la.*'

To the white-faced man he said: 'Can I interpret for you? Is there any paper you want? Don't mind me if you want *La Vie.*'

'No, nothing, nothing, thank you. I've a book.'

Mr Opie looked at his watch. 'Three minutes and we shall be away.'

She had been afraid for several minutes that he would speak, or else the tall thin woman his wife. Silence for the time being she desired more than anything else. If I could have afforded a sleeper, she wondered, would I have been alone? In the dim carriage the lights flickered on, and the plump man remarked, 'Now we shan't be long.' The air was full of dust and damp, and the flicker of light outside reminded her for a moment of familiar things: the electric signs flashing and changing over the theatre in Nottingham High Street. The stir of life, the passage of porters and paper-boys, recalled for a moment the goose market, and to the memory of the market she clung, tried to externalize it in her mind, to build the bricks and lay the stalls, until they had

as much reality as the cold rain-washed quay, the changing signal lamps. Then the man spoke to her, and she was compelled to emerge from her hidden world and wear a pose of cheerfulness and courage.

'Well, miss, we've got a long journey together. Suppose we exchange names. Mine's Peters, and this is my wife Amy.'

'Mine's Coral Musker.'

'Get me a sandwich,' the thin woman implored. 'I'm so empty I can hear my stomach.'

'Would you, miss? I don't know the lingo.'

And why, she would have liked to cry at him, do you suppose I do? I've never been out of England. But she had so schooled herself to accept responsibility wherever and in whatever form it came, that she made no protest, opened the door and would have run down the slippery dusky road between the rails in search of what he wanted if she had not seen a clock. 'There's no time,' she said, 'only one minute before we go.' Turning back she caught sight at the corridor's end of a face and figure that made her catch her breath with longing: a last dab of powder on the nose, a goodnight to the door-keeper, and outside in the bright glittering betrayal of the dark, the young waiting Jew, the chocolates, the car round the corner, the rapid ride, and the furtive dangerous embrace. But it was no one she knew; she was back in the unwanted, dreaded adventure of a foreign land, which could not be checked by a skilful word; no carefully-measured caress would satisfy the approaching dark.

The train's late, Myatt thought, as he stepped into the corridor. He felt in his waistcoat pocket for the small box of currants he always carried there. It was divided into four sections and his fingers chose one at random. As he put it into his mouth he judged it by the feel. The quality's going off. That's Stein and Co. They are getting small and dry. At the end of the corridor a girl in a white mackintosh turned and gazed at him. Nice figure, he thought. Do I know her? He chose another currant and without a glance placed it

One of our own. Myatt, Myatt and Page. For a moment with the currant upon his tongue he might have been one of the lords of the world, carrying destiny with him. This is mine and this is good, he thought. Doors slammed along the line of coaches, and a horn was blown.

Richard John, with his mackintosh turned up above his ears, leant from the corridor window and saw the sheds begin to move backwards towards the slow wash of the sea. It was the end, he thought, and the beginning. Faces streamed away. A man with a pickaxe on his shoulder swung a red lamp; the smoke from the engine blew round him and obscured his light. The brakes ground, the clouds parted, and the setting sun flashed on the line, the window, and his eyes. If I could sleep, he thought with longing, I could remember more clearly all the things that have to be remembered.

The fire-hole door opened and the blaze and the heat of the furnace for a moment emerged. The driver turned the regulator full open, and the footplate shook with the weight of the coaches. Presently the engine settled smoothly to its work, the driver brought the cut-off back, and the last of the sun came out as the train passed through Bruges, the regulator closed, coasting with little steam. The sunset lit up tall dripping walls, alleys with stagnant water radiant for a moment with liquid light. Somewhere within the dingy casing lay the ancient city, like a notorious jewel, too stared at, talked of, trafficked over. Then a wilderness of allotments opened through the steam, sometimes the monotony broken by tall ugly villas, facing every way, decorated with coloured tiles, which now absorbed the evening. The sparks from the express became visible, like hordes of scarlet beetles tempted into the air by night; they fell and smouldered by the track, touched leaves and twigs and cabbage-stalks and turned to soot. A girl riding a cart-horse lifted her face and laughed; on the bank beside the line a man and woman lay embraced. Then darkness fell outside and passengers through the glass