AMAZING STORIES

GHOST TRAIN

Story by

Steven Spielberg

Teleplay by

Frank Deese

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FADE IN:

INT. - ERSTWHILE OLD AGE HOME - DAY

JOLEEN and FENTON GLOBE walk along through a lounge filled with old residents watching daytime T.V. The home's Administrator, MR. COLE, escorts them to the door.

MR. COLE
I've been running this home for twenty-five years, Mr. Globe, and I can count on one finger how many times a resident's has been checked out of Erstwhile. (X)

FENTON, an accomplished man of forty-three who's spent most of his adult life in the city, seems unusually satisfied with that remark.

FENTON
I've always thought Dad deserved the best. Now, with our new house and farm, I think he'll finally get what he deserves.

Fenton looks to Joleen, five years his junior with a demeanor perfect for motherhood, who offers her smile of approval.

MR. COLE
You don't know how refreshing it is to hear that. I only wish more young people today felt the same.

CUT TO:

EXT. - ERSTWHILE OLD AGE HOME

Mr. Cole stops Fenton and Joleen just after passing through the front door into the courtyard.

MR. COLE
There is one other thing I thought I should mention. Just in case.

JOLEEN
Is it something serious?

MR. COLE
Frankly, I haven't decided yet. It's just that in the last few weeks CONTINUED
since you told your father you'd be taking him home with you, he's been -- how do I say? -- behaving oddly.

Joleen appears genuinely concerned. Fenton doesn't.

FENTON
Probably just Dad behaving like Dad.

MR. COLE
The other day, we found him wrapping Christmas presents of all things.

FENTON
More power to him. He's thinking ahead for once.

MR. COLE
Yes...four months ahead. I've also heard some of our other residents talking about how old Mr. Globe is planning to go on a long trip. One he's been waiting for all his life.

Fenton finds this amusing.

FENTON
"Old Pa" telling stories again. He can make practically anybody believe almost anything.

MR. COLE
Maybe so. But it's not uncommon for folks his age to start having delusional fantasies. If that's the case, you shouldn't let it go unchecked.

JOLEEN
Maybe he's right, dear. It couldn't hurt to have it checked.

FENTON
My father's mind is as sound as a steel bridge. Always has been.

Pa hears this comment, smiles, acknowledging it. The three look over at a sturdy old man looking over a brand new CHRYSLER STATION WAGON in the parking lot.
Mr. Cole takes a BUSINESS CARD from his pocket.

MR. COLE
I'm sure you're right, Mr. Globe, but just in case you have any problems, here's the number of a doctor out your way who's very familiar with septuageneric "complications."

Fenton stuffs the card in his front pocket.

FENTON
Thank you. I'll save it for someone who needs it.

CUT TO:

looking at himself in the window of the new station wagon. He smooths back his gray hair like a teenager before a date. Joleen and Fenton approach from behind.

FENTON
So how do you like it, Dad?

JOLEEN
I wanted a Volvo but Fenton insisted that if were going to be farmers, we should drive something American.

Old Pa looks at the two, then back at the car, perplexed. He breaks out into a grandfatherly laugh.

OLD PA
Oh! The car! The car's fine. I was just catchin' a look at myself in the window. Wanna look my best when it's time to go.

This time, Joleen and Fenton look perplexed.

CUT TO:

Fenton drives through the Iowa countryside while Joleen looks back to talk to Old Pa standing in the middle of the backseat. Old Pa's head and torso stick out of the car's sunroof so that the others have to shout to talk to him.
And just last Saturday I put up one of those satellite dishes out back of the house.

You'll be able to watch every channel you can imagine.

Can't imagine too many.

And it gets movies too. All the pay stations.

Movies. From a satellite even. I'll be jiggered.

Old Pa notices the toggle switch on the backseat door. With the fascination and curiosity of a small child, he runs the electric window up and down in its frame. Joleen notices.

You're gonna love the new house, Dad. I designed it myself with three bedrooms on the second floor and another bedroom on the ground floor so you won't be tiring yourself going up and down the stairs.

I don't imagine I'll be doin' much of that.

And Fenton designed a special floor and wall heater in your room so you won't get cold at night.

That's mighty thoughtful of him. But I won't be around long enough to enjoy it.

Don't go talking like that, Dad -- People can convince themselves of anything. Whether to live or to die -- often the choice is up to you.
Old Pa starts to chuckle.

OLD PA
(continued)
Sorta funny you taking me to die in
the cornfields where I shoulda died
three quarters of a century ago.

JOLEEN
Fenton?

FENTON
Now, Dad. It's one thing to tell
stories to your friends at the old
folks home but if you go telling
that one to Brian, he'll never get
to sleep.

Joleen smiles back at Old Pa as if to apologize for her
husband's stern language.

JOLEEN
He's really looking forward to
seeing you, Old Pa. That's all he
talks about, night and day.

OLD PA
Maybe sometime soon you can drive
us all out to the spot where it
happened.

FENTON
Maybe...but we won't have to drive.
It turns out that the accident site
is on my property.

Old Pa's eyes shoot open as if he'd heard the most
foreboding news of his life.

OLD PA
Your property? Exactly where on
your property?

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE GLOBE FARMHOUSE

In the middle of the Iowa cornfields, a brand new white
farmhouse, the dream of any plains state family, stands
proudly on a bed of green lawn, under the shade of a fifty
foot tall oak tree.

CONTINUED
The VOICE of a small boy can be heard in the foreground.

VOICE
All right, you varmints, come on out before we burn you out.

We move down to reveal BRIAN a small nine year-old with wide round eyes, playing with several dozen carefully placed COWBOY and INDIAN figures on the worn away dirt section underneath a SWING SET.

BRIAN
(continued)
Take off, white man. We don't move for nothin'.
(another voice)
Then you're askin' for it. Let 'em have it.

Brian pushes the figures together in a violent scramble, complete with sound effects.

He stops all of a sudden as if he heard something. We hear nothing. Brian stands up to look. Down the road a STATION WAGON approaches.

It turns into the driveway as Brian starts the long run across the expansive lawn.

BRIAN
Old Pa! Old Pa!

Just as Old Pa emerges from the backseat, Brian runs up to him and, with Old Pa's assistance, swings himself onto his piggy back as if it were a well-rehearsed routine.

JOLEEN
Brian! Be careful.

While he affectionately musses Brian's hair six or seven inches above his own head, Old Pa stares at the new farmhouse with a foreboding expression. Fenton waits.

FENTON
So what's the verdict, Dad?

Old Pa shakes his head.

OLD PA
I don't like it. No, sir. Not one bit

Joleen looks to a wounded Fenton, then back to Old Pa.
Continued - 2

Joleen

Maybe you'll like it better from inside. We just finished decorating the downstairs.

Old Pa

Oh, the house is fine, Joleen. It's a fine house. Nicest homestead I ever seen.

Fenton

(cautiously)

Then what's wrong, Dad?

Old Pa takes Brian down from his shoulders.

Old Pa

I don't like where you put it.

Fenton smiles to Joleen as if his father had been joking. Joleen doesn't appear to think so.

Cut To:

INT. - OLD PA'S ROOM

Old Pa opens one of his suitcases on the bed while in another room little Brian can be heard arguing with Joleen.

Joleen

(O.S.)

Don't make me say it again, Brian. Your grandpa is ten times older than you. And people that old need ten times as much rest.

Brian

(O.S.)

But I only want him to show me where the Indian fights were. He doesn't have to run or anything, he can just walk slow and point.

Joleen

(O.S.)

Maybe tomorrow. Today you'll have to make do by yourself.

Old Pa removes three carefully wrapped CHRISTMAS PRESENTS from the two suitcases and carries them over to the dresser. He closes the suitcase and puts it by the door with the other.

Cut To:
INT - THE KITCHEN

While Joleen walks back and forth, preparing for dinner, Brian follows her every move, pleading for his way.

BRIAN
But I never get to play with anyone ever. None of the kids at school come out 'cause it's too far on their bikes.

JOLEEN
You have plenty of toys to play with.

BRIAN
I hate my toys. I hate this house. I wish we never left Chicago.

JOLEEN
Brian!

Joleen stops her work to grab Brian by the shoulders.

JOLEEN
(continued)
Don't you ever let your father hear you say that. You understand?

Over his mother's shoulder, Brian notices Old Pa walking quietly past the kitchen door from his room. With his finger up over his mouth, he motions Brian to shush. Brian beams.

BRIAN
Okay. I take it back.

Brian runs past his mother and on out through the kitchen door.

JOLEEN
Don't ever say that again...
(when he's gone)
At least not before I do.

CUT TO:
THE GRASSY FIELD

where Brian walks around Old Pa like a journalist around the President. Old Pa appears to be looking for something.

BRIAN
Is this where the Indians used to fight, Old Pa?

OLD PA
It's one of the places.

BRIAN
Do you know which Indians it was?

OLD PA
It was right around here that the Sac Chief, Keokuk, the "watchful fox," fought off the Sioux, who were after the Sac land. Old Keokuk was crafty, alright, but he grew too big for his boots and one day he was poisoned by one of his own tribesmen who thought he was stealing from the tribe.

BRIAN
Did you ever know someone that was scalped by an Indian?

OLD PA
Little Brian -- the Indians were the first people on this land. It was theirs -- all of it. You ask me, they had a right to do what they had to do to protect their families, their land -- their way of life.

Brian spots something in the grass. He picks up a sharp rock with a somewhat oval shape.

BRIAN
Look, Old Pa! An Indian arrowhead. I found an Indian arrowhead.

Old Pa glances at it as he squats down for something else.

OLD PA
Uh uh. 'Fraid it's just a rock that looks like one.

CONTINUED
Brian tosses it aside as Old Pa intently pushes aside some thick weeds. Brian kneels down to watch his grandfather pull up from the black Iowa soil a RUSTY OLD RAILROAD SPIKE about six inches long.

BRIAN
Wow. Is that an Indian arrowhead?

Old Pa laughs.

OLD PA
No, Brian. It's a railroad spike.

BRIAN
A railroad spike? You mean a real train used to come through here?

Old Pa nods his head.

OLD PA
The Highball Express. Came through right here where we're sitting.

BRIAN
Right here? Which way did it go?

Old Pa stands up from his squat.

OLD PA
That's what we're gonna find out.

CUT TO:

10 ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

Where Old Pa walks in the direction of a renovated BAILING DEPOT and an newly painted WATER TOWER. Brian spots something in the grass.

BRIAN
Old Pa! Is that something?

Brian shows Old Pa to the twisted and rusting pieces of an ancient SEMAPHORE which appears to have been torn apart by some metal eating monster.

Old Pa raises his eyebrows. He seems overcome by a rush of memory.
OLD PA
Yes, little Brian. That's something.

Old Pa turns around and walks over to where some old RAILROAD TIES, still perfectly intact, indicate where the track once lay. Brian still examines the mangled semaphore pieces.

BRIAN
God! What happened here?

OLD PA
This is where the Highball Express ran off its tracks.

BRIAN
Really? When did that happen?

OLD PA
Back when I was your age, Brian. Ran clear off its tracks one night. Killed everything on board.

That was more than Brian asked for. He kneels down on the railroad ties next to Old Pa.

BRIAN
Killed everything on board? Did you see it?

Old Pa nods his head "yes" as he bends over his knees on the railroad ties and puts his ear to the ground where the rail once was.

BRIAN
(continued)
That musta been a great wreck. How'd it happen?

OLD PA
Ssshh!

All is quiet as Old Pa listens for something on the antiquated railroad track. Brian waits with patient expectation. Old Pa seems to hear something. A smile grows across his face which is immediately tempered by some sort of realization.
He stands up from the track.

OLD PA

'Fraid this might not be good.

BRIAN

What's gonna happen?

OLD PA

The way I remember it, the Old Highball went straight east to west without veerin' an inch.

Old Pa carefully positions himself on the track, bends down again and shoves the rusty spike into the ground. Looking carefully at the shadow it casts, he points his finger.

OLD PA

(continued)

Thataway.

Brian follows Old Pa's finger pointing straight at the farmhouse several hundred yards away. He becomes excited.

BRIAN

Bam! Right through our new house.

Old Pa's serious gaze brings Brian back to reality.

In measured three-foot strides Old Pa follows the line suggested by the spike, the platform, and the semaphore. He mumbles to himself as he walks.

OLD PA

No. T'ain't good, this.

CUT TO:

A MODEL TRAIN

speeding around its figure-eight track.

It does several turns before we see, from the locomotive's point of view, a truck stopping on the tracks.

The train hits the truck and, in slow motion, buckles up on itself before it derails with an unusually authentic sounding CRASH.
Sitting on the floor of his remarkably tidy room, Brian looks up from the crash to Old Pa sitting across from him cross-legged.

Brian stares at him for a second then proceeds to put his train back on the track.

BRIAN
Old Pa. What made the Highball Express go off the track back then?

Old Pa rolls it over in his mind as if he were going to recount something painful.

OLD PA
Some little boy, about your age, was waiting for the Old 407 to pick him up and take him to visit his Grandpa in Sioux City. Well the train was running late so the boy laid down on the track with his ear to the rail so he could hear if the train was coming. I guess he musta just got tired of listening 'cause he fell asleep right there where he lay. When that train came around, the whistle blew, the semaphore clanged away, the track rumbled, but none of it woke up that sleepy boy.

(he pauses to reflect)

The brakeman must not have had the heart to run him over because he locked the wheels on Old 407 and all that weight and pressure made the track turn up on itself. The little boy woke up just in time to see that train roll over just fifty feet in front of him....

Old Pa takes a deep breath to finish his story. He carefully unfolds a handkerchief from his front pocket.

OLD PA
(continued)

...and just in time to hear the screams and cries of the passengers who died just an instant later.

CONTINUED
Old Pa wipes his eyes with the handkerchief while Brian waits for more.

BRIAN
Were you that little boy, Old Pa?

OLD PA
I am that little boy, Brian. And tonight that old 407 is going to do what it shoulda done seventy-five years ago. It's going to take me where I should be.

BRIAN
How long are you gonna be gone?

OLD PA
Brian. When that train comes through here tonight, I'm never coming back.

Brian is speechless. All of a sudden this game they've been playing has frightening implications. Old Pa changes the mood with a clap of his hands.

OLD PA
Well, sir. The way I got it figured the Highball should just miss your parents' room and only take out half the kitchen below so even if they don't get out, which I warned them they should, the train won't hurt 'em when it comes through the house. But you and me, we're right in the way.

FENTON (o.c)
Dad!

ANGLE - FENTON
standing in doorway.

FENTON
If you're going to be living here, you're going to have to follow house rules and the first rule of the house is about not telling scary stories to Brian.
Old Pa breaks out into a hearty chuckle.

OLD PA
After tonight, son, you're not going to have any house to have rules by and any old father to break 'em.

FENTON
Stop! You have to stop this nonsense now. It isn't one bit funny.

OLD PA
(working himself up)
No, son. Not one bit. It ain't. That's why y'all gonna have to pack up and move out now. Better by daylight but no later than the late show. Just take what you can carry. Go on and uproot that fancy ice cream scooper if you gotta watch 400 channels of TV, but for God's sake get little Brian out of here first 'fore you do another thing!

Fenton is so rattled by his father's crazy outburst...he leaves the room.

A beat. Old Pa turns to Brian

OLD PA
(sotto)
Around midnight, you'll be seeing a yellow light like you've never seen a yellow light before 'cause this one'll be turning in your house from the eye of an iron dragon. Then you'll smell wood burnin' but you won't know where it's coming from.

Brian is captivated by Old Pa's description.

OLD PA
(continued)
Then, just before it comes crashing through, you'll hear a slow mournful whistle warning you to get the hell outta the way.

CONTINUED
What're we gonna do?

I supposed the only thing we can do, seeing is your Pa won't listen and the train is only a few hours away, is to move some of your favorite things out of harm's way. We don't have time to move everything so if you wanted to save something in here, what would be first?

Brian surveys the room where he sits. He stands up and walks around the room. He picks up and autographed baseball, a "Cubs" baseball cap, a Revell model of a WWII bomber, and an old stuffed elephant with one eye missing.

As he looks back around the room for whatever else, he catches his grandfather's friendly gaze. He drops all of his precious toys and runs into Old Pa's arms.

You Old Pa...I'd save you first!!

You didn't understand, Brian. I have to go. It's me it's coming for. It's what's supposed to be!

Comforting Brian with one hand, Old Pa reaches into one of his drawers and starts taking out clothes.

While Joleen wipes the counters around her Mr. Coffee machine, Cuisinart, and G.E. Toast-R-Over, Fenton dries dishes from the rack.

He stops to listen to the rest of the house. It's silent.

There. I think they've gone to bed.

Joleen gives an assenting smile as she goes on with her work.
FENTON
(continued)
You know, all his life he's never
been able to live down that accident.

JOLEEN
Who could? It's a hideous awful
thing to live with.

FENTON
But it's funny. He never talked
about it much before. It was always
something better left unsaid.

JOLEEN
That's the way it was with my
Grandpa Noble. He never talked
about the fleet he steered into
German waters until the day he told
everyone that same fleet had docked in
Lake Michigan to give him another
chance.

Fenton looks sharply at his wife.

FENTON
It's not the same thing.

Joleen doesn't look up. She continues to wipe off the
counter that's already been wiped off.

JOLEEN
Then what is it?

FENTON
The move. Being back where he grew
up. Seeing Brian again. If I know
Dad, he'll be laughing at us and
his own ridiculous story by morning.

JOLEEN
And what if he isn't?

Fenton gives his wife a marital kiss.

FENTON
I'll have him fitted.

JOLEEN
Fenton!
A THUNDEROUS RUMBLE can be heard from upstairs. Fenton and Joleen rush into:

THE LIVING ROOM

just in time to see Old Pa and Brian negotiating a LARGE TRUNK around the curve in the stairway.

FENTON
What in hell's name is going on here?

Old Pa loses his grip on the front end letting the trunk drag a laughing Brian down the carpeted stairs.

BRIAN
Outta control! Highball Express!

JOLEEN
Brian!

The trunk flips up when it hits the bottom step sending Brian over the top and onto the floor. Joleen rushes to help the laughing boy up with the kind of worried expression only mothers get.

BRIAN
Stop fussing, Mom. I'm okay.

(X)

Fenton looks over the whole situation, unable to act. Old Pa notices his helpless look.

OLD PA
Don't worry, son. The way I got it measured the Highball'll miss your room completely and only take out half the kitchen. But Brian and I, well hell, we're right in the way. So you two run along to bed. Me and the boy'll fend for ourselves.

BRIAN
Yeah! We'll fend for ourselves.

FENTON
All right, Dad. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Show me where the tracks are.

(X)

CONTINUED
Old Pa starts to laugh. Brian joins in on the chuckle.

OLD PA
Don't be silly, son. They tore out those tracks years ago.

FENTON
Then do you mind telling me how a train could pass through our new house if it isn't on tracks?

OLD PA
The Highball Express don't need no tracks to run just as a ghost don't need wings and a propellor to fly.

Holding Brian as if he were a four year-old, Joleen looks to Fenton as if to ask, "What're you going to go?"

Fenton reaches into his front pocket and takes out the BUSINESS CARD Mr. Cole gave him.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

17 EXT. - THE FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A white sedan pulls into the driveway behind the Globe's station wagon. DR. STEELE, about Fenton's age, steps out of his car to see Old Pa on a LADDER over the front door spray painting a big RED LINE down the front of the house as he descends each rung.

Dr. Steele shakes his head as if he'd seen it a million times before. SHOUTING can be heard from inside the house.

CUT TO:

18 INT. - THE FARMHOUSE

Brian comes down the stairs with two more cans of model SPRAY PAINT when Joleen accosts him at the front door.

JOLEEN

Brian! Stop this!

BRIAN

But, Mom. Old Pa needs 'em for when the train comes.

Brian opens the door to reveal Dr. Steele holding a black bag and wearing a reassuring smile.

JOLEEN

He's here, Fenton.

Fenton turns from the couch where he's been sitting with resignation. Joleen goes out to talk to Old Pa.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. - THE FARMHOUSE

Joleen is just about to call up the ladder to Old Pa when Dr. Steele motions her not to.

DR STEELE

Mr. Globe. I've come to talk to you about a train. A train called The Highball Express.

Old Pa stops what he's doing to study the doctor.

OLD PA

Well it's about time.

CUT TO:
INT. - THE LIVING ROOM

OLD PA
I know we don't have time to move
the house but if we could just take
out some of the valuables, it might
save some time when they make their
insurance claim tomorrow.

Dr. Steele prepares something with both his hands inside
his black bag.

DR. STEELE
Why are you so sure it's coming
tonight?

OLD PA
'Cause I did what I used to do all
the time as a boy. I put my ear to
the track and heard it. Now don't
you think we ought to get to
evacuating this place?

DR. STEELE
And you think it's going to stop for
you?

OLD PA
I know it is. I've got a ticket.

While Old Pa reaches into this pocket to extract an
ancient and yellowed RAILWAY TICKET, Dr. Steele wipes
alcohol on his inner elbow with a cotton ball.

OLD PA
(continued)
I only hope it'll still be good after
all these years.

DR. STEELE
I'm sure it will be, Mr. Globe.
I'm sure it will be.

Old Pa hands the ticket to Brian who studies it with utter
fascination.
BRIAN
Wow, it says 'Highball Express'
right on it.

Brian looks up at Old Pa's smiling face then refocuses his
attention to Dr. Steele inserting a SYRINGE with a two-inch
NEEDLE into Old Pa's inner elbow.

OLD PA
Ouch! What was that? One of those
danged yellow jackets?

Dr. Steele returns the syringe to his black bag.

DR. STEELE
No, Mr. Globe. Just something to
help you sleep before your trip.

Old Pa turns white.

OLD PA
No. No. I can't fall asleep or
I'll miss my train.

DR. STEELE
Don't worry. You'll be awake and
alert by the time the roosters crow!

OLD PA
No, it's coming before the morning.
I gotta be awake for it when it comes!

DR. STEELE
You can catch the next train.

Old Pa stands up in a panic.

OLD PA
Take it out of me. I can't fall
asleep now. Take it out of me.

Old Pa tries desperately to suck the poison out of his
inner elbow as if it were a snake bite.

FENTON
Dad! Sit down! You're making a
fool of yourself.

CONTINUED
BRIAN
But you don't get it. He was asleep
the first time. That's why he
missed the train and the train
missed him. That's why it's coming
back.

Dr. Steele stands up to subdue Old Pa who now begins to
stagger from the drug.

OLD PA
No. This isn't right. This can't
happen. I gotta stay awake. I

BRIAN
Mom! Dad! You gotta do something.

DR. STEELE
Relax, Mr. Globe. We won't let you
miss your train.

When Dr. Steele tries to lay his hand on him, Old Pa pushes
him away, then staggers back into his arms.

DR. STEELE
(to Fenton)
Let's get him to bed.

Dr. Steele and Fenton carry Old Pa off.

BRIAN
is close to tears, seeing his grandfather and best friend
in such a delirious state.

BRIAN
No! No! He can't sleep there. The
train goes through there. It'll run
him over.

Joleen holds her son's shoulders so that she is looking
straight into his eyes.

JOLEEN
Look at me, Brian. Do you really
think your father and I would put Old
Pa somewhere he could get hurt?
CONTINUED

BRIAN
You don't understand.

JOLEEN
Would we do that?

BRIAN
No, but...

JOLEEN
No, we wouldn't.

CUT TO:

INT. - OLD PA'S ROOM

Fenton and Dr. Steele lay the unconscious Old Pa across the bed.

FENTON
I'm sorry, Dr. Steele. He's never been like this before.

DR. STEELE
Nothing to be ashamed of. It's just part of his time of life. (X)

Fenton still seems not to accept that as true.

FENTON
Thank you.

DR. STEELE
You think he might be more comfortable in his bed clothes?

FENTON
He'll be fine, thank you. You can go on home.

DR. STEELE
No, really. It'll be better for his circulation if he's in something lighter.

Fenton lays a blanket over his sleeping father.

FENTON
Please. Just go.
Dr. Steele looks straight at Fenton with a certain amount of incredulity.

DR. STEELE
You don't actually believe any of this, do you?

Fenton pauses for a moment, then shakes his head.

FENTON
No. I don't.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE LIVING ROOM

Brian sits under Joleen arm on the bottom steps of the stairway. Fenton passes on his way upstairs, patting Brian on the head.

JOLEEN
(to Fenton)
I'll be up in a little while.

Fenton nods then continues on up the stairs. Brian fingers the old railway Ticket in his hand.

BRIAN
Will he ever get better?

JOLEEN
He might. But it's not like being sick with the flu or having a cold. Sometimes you just don't get better and you have to have other people take care of you.

BRIAN
We'll take care of Old Pa.

JOLEEN
Yes. We'll do that.

CUT TO:

INT. - BRIAN'S ROOM

Brian lies awake in bed studying every detail of the Highball Express railway ticket by the moonlight coming through his window.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

He climbs out of bed, walks over to a bulletin board next to his desk, then pins the precious ticket next to an autographed picture of Ron Cey.

Before getting back into bed, he opens his window facing the driveway and looks out into the moonlit distance. The night is still and crystal clear.

But no sign of the Highball Express.

Not giving up, Brian takes his ASTRONOMY TELESCOPE and stands it on its tripod in front of the open window.

He looks through it. Nothing.

Just as he is about to get into bed, he remembers one more thing.

He gets down on his knees and puts his ear to the floor on his miniature train tracks. Nothing. He squints as if to listen harder.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE GRASSY FIELD

The bailing depot and water tower lie still in the night. There is no sign of the train.

The mangled semaphore looks even more grotesque in the blue moonlight.

DOGS start to bark in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. - OLD PA'S ROOM

The sound of dogs is even fainter inside the house. Old Pa sleeps with his mouth open, looking like a man put to sleep against his will.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE PARENTS' ROOMS

Both Joleen and Fenton sleep soundly after their night's ordeal.

CUT TO:
INT. - BRIAN'S ROOM

still lying on the floor with his ear to the ground, Brian sleeps soundly holding the ENGINE CAR from his train set as if it were a teddy bear.

The room is dead quiet and still until the wind starts blowing through the window left open by Brian. The curtains ruffle and a few loose papers scatter around the room.

ANGLE - THE TELESCOPE POINTING OUT THE WINDOW

and its eyepiece which gradually illuminates the dust particles in the air behind it with a faint but flickering YELLOW LIGHT.

As if it were from some feverish dream, a faint harmonic AIRHORN sounds in the far far distance.

The light projected from the eyepiece becomes more intense as the faint yellow light starts to play a pattern across the curtains fluttering in the wind.

The airhorn sounds again, this time a decibel louder.

ANGLE - THE RAILWAY TICKET

pinned to the bulletin board and flapping in the wind. The yellow light dances across it in the same bizarre pattern as on the curtain.

ANGLE - BRIAN'S FACE

and the yellow light playing across his eyes. He squeezes them shut then rubs his closed fists over them -- like children do -- as he turns onto his back.

The airhorn sounds again, this time as if to intentionally wake the boy up.

Dazed and disoriented, Brian opens one eye, and then the other. He sees a yellow light show across the ceiling of his bedroom but doesn't quite know what to make of it.

Brian suddenly bolts upright on the floor. He hops onto his feet knocking the telescope to the floor as he rushes to the open window.

CONTINUED
The wind flattens his hair and ruffles his pajamas. The yellow light plays its strongest across his white face. And -- he sees it. His eyes bug out like squished frogs. He tries his best to yell but...

BRIAN
Mo...... Da......

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY

Which is reasonably quiet until Brian bursts out through his closed door, screaming.

BRIAN
Mom!! Dad!! It's coming! It's coming fast!

Brian bangs on his parents' door.

BRIAN
(continued)
The train! The Highball Express! I saw it! I saw it coming full steam ahead!

Fenton yells through the door.

FENTON
Brian. Sssshh! You'll wake your grandfather.

Brian freezes. He suddenly remembers what this is all about.

BRIAN
Old Pa.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE PARENTS' ROOM

Fenton sits up in bed. Joleen rolls over.

FENTON
He probably already has.
JOLEEN
I knew that story would give him nightmares.

Fenton grudgingly gets out of bed when the house starts to shake on its foundations. The two adults look at each other.

CUT TO:

BRIAN
running down the stairs when they start to shake. He suddenly remembers something and runs back up the stairs.

CUT TO:

THE RAILWAY TICKET
flapping in the wind on Brian's bulletin board. Brian takes out the pin and pulls the valuable ticket from its place of distinction.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE LIVING ROOM
Brian runs down the stairs and is immediately captivated by a bright yellow revolving light approaching rapidly in the distance.

BRIAN
MOM!! DAD!! IT'S COMING!!!

He turns and runs into Old Pa's room. The whistle blows again.

CUT TO:

INT. - OLD PA'S ROOM
Brian practically dives onto Old Pa's sleeping body.

BRIAN
Old Pa! You gotta get up. It's your train. It's coming through this room.

OLD PA-
W-w-w-hat? The 407?

Brian tries lifting him up off the bed but can't.

CUT TO:
INT. - THE LIVING ROOM

Fenton and Joleen rush down into the living room, shaking at its foundations and flooded with yellow light.

Outside, a WHISTLE and HORN shriek together indicating a train not far from impact.

Brian runs in to throw Old Pa's two suitcases into the corner.

BRIAN
Old Pa! He's right in the way!

Not waiting for his parents' help, Brian disappears again.

FENTON
What in God's name is this!

JOLEEN
You don't think...

Fenton moves to the front door.

CUT TO:

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BRIAN
practically dragging Old Pa out the door of his room.

41

JOLEEN
screams at the same time the SCREECHING of metal wheels on metal track cuts loose from outside.

JOLEEN
Fenton!! Don't!!

Fenton opens the front door to see the HIGHBALL EXPRESS knocking aside the Chrysler station wagon as it-speeds up their front walkway.

Joleen pushes Fenton out of the way and Brian pulls Old Pa down behind the couch just as --

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A TREMENDOUS CRASH AND EXPLOSION OF WOOD, GLASS, AND CEMENT

followed by:
AN EIGHTEEN TON LOCOMOTIVE

PLOWING EFFORTLESSLY THROUGH THE HOUSE. STEAM GUSHING FROM ITS WHEELS.
It slowly trundles to a stop, half in and half outside the house.

STEAM ENVELOPES

the Family now standing back up from the ordeal.

JOLEEN AND FENTON

stare at the apparition, hardly believing what they are seeing.

FENTON

Why'd it stop?

OLD PA

Ha! Leave it to my son not to listen.

Old Pa turns to the living room mirror and straightens his hair.

GREEN EERIE LIGHT

glows from the windows of the passenger compartment, now facing everyone in the half-destroyed living room. The PASSENGERS inside, all dressed in clothing contemporary to 1910, stare out the window in utter fascination.

SOME POINT OUT

particular objects in the late twentieth century home that they find particularly interesting: The Television, the Digital L.E.D. Clock and the Family standing in their bed clothes.

THE CONDUCTOR

fumbles with the COLLAPSIBLE BOARDING STAIRS.

CONDUCTOR

Dang this thing! Never works.
Never works.

CONTINUED
Once off the train, he calls out as if on a crowded platform.

CONDUCTOR
(continued)
Tickets! Tickets!

OLD PA
pats his clothes in a brief panic.

OLD PA
My ticket! I can't go without my ticket.

He feels inside each pocket. Brian taps him on the back.

BRIAN
Here's your ticket, Old Pa.

Old Pa falls onto one knee so that he is eye level with Brian holding the old railway ticket. Brian starts to give it to him but can't.

BRIAN
(continued)
Can I come along too, Old Pa?

OLD PA
You know that's not right, Brian. You belong here with your Mom and Dad. And I belong on that there train. I am goin' somewhere!

Brian still holds back the ticket.

BRIAN
But who's gonna tell me stories about where the Indians fought and all that stuff?

Old Pa thinks for a moment.

OLD PA
You remember all the stories I told you already? About the trading posts. And the war parties and the Pony Express.
Brian nods, his eyes now welled up with tears.

OLD PA
(continued)
Well as long as you remember those stories, I'll always be there to tell 'em.

Brian rolls this over in his nine year-old mind. He offers half a smile of understanding as the Conductor calls out once more.

CONDUCTOR
Tickets! Tickets!

Brian little hand puts the ancient and worn Railway Ticket in Old Pa's large hand. Old Pa pats Brian on the head before turning to the conductor with the ticket.

OLD PA
Is my ticket still good? It's kinda old.

CONDUCTOR
It always was good, Mr. Globe.

The conductor punches the time worn ticket.

CONDUCTOR
(continued)
And we've been waiting a long time for it.

Old Pa turns to say good-bye to the befuddled parents.

OLD PA
Thanks for taking me in, Joleen.
I'm sorry I couldn't stay a while longer.

when he gives her a hug, Joleen notices the ENGINEER and the BRAKEMAN hopping off the train and wandering into the half kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITCHEN

With a 1910 THERMOS in hand, the Engineer studies the MR. COFFEE MACHINE while the Brakeman goes through the cupboard and refrigerator.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

ENGINEER
(reading)
Mis-ter-Cof-fee. Hmm.

The Engineer takes the half full carafe, still hot from Old Pa's tirade, and pours it into his Thermos. He replaces the carafe, still staring at the machine.

ENGINEER
(continued; polite)
Why thank you, Mister Coffee.
(tipping his cap)
Much obliged.

The Brakeman walks over holding a BOX OF TWINKIES and SIX-PACK OF COCA COLA.

BRAKEMAN
Lookee here. Each one's all wrapped up inside.
(shaking the six-pack to his ear)
Don't know what this is.

ENGINEER
Figure it out on board. We're late, as usual.

The two turn and walk past Joleen who has come to investigate.

The Engineer tips his cap to her while the Brakeman continues to shake the six-pack.

ENGINEER
(continued)
Sorry about the house, ma'am. But ya never shoulda put it here. Not when the train comes through.

Joleen doesn't know what to say except --

JOLEEN
Sorry.

THE TWO MEN

step back to the locomotive.

CONTINUED
CONTINUED

ENGINEER

ALL ABOARD!!

CUT TO:

OLD PA

giving his son Fenton a hug and a pat on the back.

OLD PA

And you thought I was losing my marbles. You sure don't know your Old Pa.

Old Pa backs to the train handing the Conductor his bags.

OLD PA

(continued;
pointing to
his head)

Got a mind as sound as a steel bridge. Always have.

Brian smiles at his grandfather's manner. Old Pa winks to him as he gets on the train. He straightens his hair again.

OLD PA

(continued;
to Brain)

Your Christmas present is in your parents' closet. Keep your hands off it.

STEAM SPEWS FROM THE ENGINE

as the gigantic pistons start to churn. As the train begins to move, the Family watches Old Pa being received by the Passengers with great adulation.

After offering a final wave to his family, Old Pa wastes no time motioning out the story of the train crashing through the farmhouse. As the train slowly pulls through the house, the last anyone sees of Old Pa is him with the passengers inside, laughing and on the edge of their seats.

Several more cars pass through the house until the caboose disappears into a cloud of steam. When the wind blows the steam away, there is nothing but cornfields and stars...

CONTINUED
...and a family from Chicago with a big hole through the center of their new farmhouse.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END