

BRIEFCASE ENCOUNTER

Eurostar disgorged its passengers like a pod expelling seeds.

Crosby, clutching his briefcase, allowed himself to be carried forward slowly, legs still stiff from the journey.

Security checks were in progress but Crosby moved forward confidently, certain his bland exterior would ensure cursory attention.

Waved through, he waited by the railing close to Betjeman's statue, briefcase resting at his feet.

He saw the woman approach; her stride confident. She gave him a quick, cold smile and set down her briefcase, departing with his. Crosby picked up her case, identical to his own, and hurried to board the returning Eurostar to Paris.

He wanted to be far away from London when Pandora released the deadly spores in Oxford Street.

Safely aboard the speeding train, Crosby cradled the briefcase, itching to handle the stacks of hundred-euro notes he knew lay inside. He thought of Pandora preparing to text him with the combination to open the case: his portal to a new life.

Of the devastation awaiting London's population, he thought very little. After all, who said life was fair?

Mid-way through the Tunnel, Crosby was on his third cognac when the text came through. He fumbled with the lock; suddenly remembered Pandora's icy smile, and felt terror engulf him as he opened the case.

(214 words)