

An extract from 'The Rope' for you to read

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As I watched, Saskia changed from Saskia in normal clothes to Katya in her little super costume. Turning horizontal in the air, she shot away down the tunnel. I grinned as I copied her, Kyra in my case, of course, although you couldn't tell by looking at us.

The train was doing well over the speed of sound but we can fly much, much faster than that. We caught up with the train in just a few seconds.

Saskia dove down to within a few centimetres of the tunnel floor and disappeared under the speeding train. I followed close behind.

Counting the cars, I slowed and stopped under the second one from the front. I say stopped, what I really mean is stopped relative to the train, we were still actually doing umpteen hundred miles an hour.

Saskia copied me as I turned myself in the air so as to be flying with my back to the ground. This let us inspect the bottom of the car in the area Voices' 'information pack' said the bomb should be. We just needed to look for something that didn't belong there.

"That's it, there, Twin," I said, pointing. Due to speed and the noise, Saskia was now hearing me directly in her mind, our telepathic abilities having cut in as we couldn't use ordinary speech.

"Is it connected to the train or is it self contained?"

"Seems to be self contained. If it goes off there, it'll trash that control box, the foam system, and the stabilising magnet just there. That'll make the train touch the tunnel wall."

"We need that to happen, but without busting the foam system."

"So we cut the bomb free and carry it forwards about half a car length. That'll trash the magnet system and leave the foam system untouched."

I used my heat vision to cut through the straps fixing the bomb to the underside of the car.

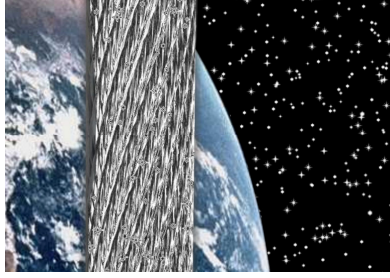
"Ok. Moving forwards."

I let my speed increase slightly until I was near another stabilising magnet, well away from the foam system.

"How're you going to make it go off?"

"Shouldn't need to do anything. The timer should detonate the thing anytime now anyway."

It's nice to be right, sometimes anyway. The bomb chose that exact moment to explode, right there in my hands!



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It was a surprisingly large bang, considering the actual size of the box I was holding - had been holding. Naturally, the huge explosion had no effect on me at all. The train was another matter altogether.

The underside of the car was armoured, so that if it touched the bottom of the tunnel, the effect on the people inside would be fairly minimal. The force of the explosion lifted the train upwards and the top of the car smashed into the maglev rail. At the same time, the sideways stabilisers were destroyed. The car hit first one side of the tunnel then the other. Then it dropped - right on top of Saskia and me still underneath it.

I found myself being dragged along, probably leaving a Saskia-shaped groove in the concrete floor. Had to be like that. Trying to lift the car or generally trying to get out of the way would probably have done even more damage. Then, insult to injury, the exterior tunnel safety systems triggered.

Foam generators in the tunnel wall began to operate. This was *not* like the stuff the passengers would be embedded in somewhere above us. This was designed to stop a multi-tonne train travelling at over the speed of sound. It began as a soft goo but rapidly hardened as the train slowed down.

Quite quickly the whole train was embedded in a rapidly hardening foam cocoon - with Saskia and me embedded with it squashed under car number two.

"That worked well," said Saskia, dryly. "How d'we get out of this, Houdini?"

"Could simply call for Voice," I said.

"Where's your sense of adventure. Besides, if we *couldn't* get ourselves out, Voice would've been here by now."

"Point taken. Ok. This is what we do. I lift the car up a bit, you dig a tunnel through the stuff to the front."

"Sounds like a plan. Initiate Phase One."

I grinned as I forced my arms to move through the foam coating until I could push upwards on the bottom of the car lying on top of me. I could actually lift *way* more than this little tunnel car, but I was having to compress the foam above the car as I went. I managed.

"Ok. That's enough. Commencing Phase Two."

Saskia began to dig her way through the hard foam surrounding her. The only way I could see what she was doing was to use my x-ray vision. Her first task was to dig towards me so we could move forwards together. In a short space of time the wall of stuff around me crumbled away and Saskia appeared beside me. The first thing she did was give me nice kiss, after which she began to make a tunnel towards the front of the train.

I followed behind her, holding up the car as we went, shifting my grip hand over hand as we moved down the tunnel.

With Saskia using super speed and her super strength, we popped out from under the front of the train in short order. Standing up in the tunnel, I looked at Saskia.

“What *do* you look like!”

Her little super costume is as indestructible as she herself is invulnerable so that was fine, if a bit grubby. But the rest of her was *filthy* and her hair - well - let's just not go there.

“Pretty much like you do, I should imagine,” she laughed. “I think a change is in order, don't you?”

More or less at the same time we changed our appearance to be Kyra and Katya, the SuperTwins. Since we were *already* Kyra and Katya, the only effect of this was to make us clean and neat again with brushed and shiny hair.

“Woo. That's better,” grinned Saskia. “What now?”

“First off, where are we,” I said. I could answer this myself. I changed myself again, only this time I ended up holding Bertie, the GPS unit. Hundreds of metres of rock and water? No problem. Unlike the original Bertie, way back in 2010 or thereabouts, *this* Bertie worked anywhere. I consulted it.

“Hm. we're about twenty miles from Marseille. I suppose that's where the train was going.”

“The train is ok here for the moment. Take us *ages* to extract it from the crash foam anyway. The passengers are all ok inside the stasis field. Let's let the emergency boys and girls deal with it.”

“Good thinking. Lets head for the Marseille end and make sure they know there's a teeny problem here.”

“A *teeny* problem? Still, you always were prone to understatement.”

“Am not.”

“Yes you are, you know you are.”

“Well, since you mention it...”

Laughing together, we lifted into the air in the centre of the tunnel, turned horizontal, and flew towards Marseille, twenty or so miles away.