

Sleep Story Script for Adults

A twenty-five minute night train through winter countryside. Nothing happens, nobody speaks, and the story runs out rather than ending.

25 min · 5 segments

Twenty-five minutes, five segments. A long one on purpose — most listeners will not hear the last ten minutes, which is the point.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Flat narration throughout. No rising inflection at the end of sentences — that's the thing that keeps people awake.
- Twenty-five minutes is a long single take. Mark three points where you could stop, breathe and pick up cleanly.
- Nobody speaks in this story and nothing happens. Resist every instinct to add incident.
- Detail gets richer in the middle and thinner at the end. Let the last segment be almost bare.

01. Before the story

1 min 30

[the only part addressed to the listener; brief, then never speak to them again]

A story for going to sleep. Nothing to follow, nothing to remember, and no ending worth staying awake for.

Get comfortable. Let your eyes close. *[pause for 20 seconds — drop your volume here and leave it down]*

This is about a night train, crossing a country in winter.

02. The carriage

6 min

[establish the small enclosed world — warm, lit, contained, moving]

The carriage is old, and the heating is the kind that comes up through metal grilles under the seats, so the air near the floor is warm and the window is cold. There are eight seats and three people in them, all asleep, none of whom know each other.

The lights have been turned down to the setting they use after eleven. Not off — just low enough that the window becomes a mirror in places and a window in others, depending on where you look. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

The sound is the thing you notice most. A long rush underneath everything, and inside it the rhythm of the rails — two beats, then a gap, then two beats. It is not quite regular. Every so often the gap is longer, and then it settles back.

Somewhere further down the train a door opens and closes, and the rush gets briefly louder and then goes back to what it was. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

On the little table there is a paper cup with an inch of tea gone cold in it, and the surface of it trembles in time with the rails. Nobody is going to drink it. It has been there for an hour.

03. Outside the window

7 min

[the richest segment; let the images arrive slowly and don't connect them to anything]

Outside there is snow, not falling, just lying where it fell a few days ago. Enough to soften the shapes of things without hiding them. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Fields go past, mostly. Fences with the posts showing dark against the white. A line of trees along a boundary, then a gap, then more trees.

Now and then a farmhouse with one window lit, a long way back from the track. Somebody up late, or somebody who leaves a light on. It passes in about two seconds and then it's dark again. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

A level crossing, with its lights blinking to nobody at all. A single car waiting behind the barrier at one in the morning, headlights on, driver invisible.

Then a bridge, and for four or five seconds the sound changes completely — harder, closer, echoing back off the girders — and then the fields return and the sound goes soft again. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

A river, black between white banks, going the other way.

04. A station in the night

6 min

[the one near-event in the whole story; keep it as undramatic as everything else]

The train slows, without any announcement, the way night trains do. The rhythm stretches out and the gaps get longer. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

A small station arrives. Two platforms, a shelter, a clock with a face lit from behind. The name on the sign is one you don't recognise and won't remember.

The train stops. And now the sound is completely different — no rush, no rails, just a low hum from somewhere underneath and the tick of something cooling. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

One person gets off, further down. You hear the door, and then nothing, because snow takes footsteps away.

The clock on the platform says ten past two. Nobody gets on. *[pause for 35 seconds]*

And then the train moves again, so gently you feel it in the cup before you feel it anywhere else.

05. Thinning out

4 min 30

[strip the detail away; sentences get shorter until they stop, and there is no ending]

The rhythm comes back. Two beats, a gap, two beats. *[pause for 40 seconds]*

The warm air near the floor. The cold glass. The low light. *[pause for 45 seconds]*

Fields. A fence. A light a long way off. *[pause for 50 seconds]*

And the train goes on through the dark, for hours yet. *[stop here; let the recording run 30 more seconds, then fade]*

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