

RUNAWAY TRAIN

By Johnell DeWitt

On the title page or opening shot: photos on the fridge of Marisol's sister Maya posing with a trophy or award for swimming. On a calendar for April, on every night is written "Maya's Swim Meet." The world revolves around Maya in Marisol's mind and she feels ignored and unloved.

PAGE 1**PANEL 1**

A new note on the fridge, taped onto the calendar to claim space in all the plans for Maya, is the following note from Marisol: "Dear Family, No one cares about me. I'm running away to find a family who does. Goodbye forever, Marisol"

PANEL 2

Marisol is in the hallway with a packed backpack getting ready to exit the house. Behind her and out of view, Coral, Marisol's dog, barks.

Coral: Rruff!

PANEL 3

Marisol leans down to Coral. She is sad. So is Coral.

Marisol: Shh, Coral. Grandma will hear.

PANEL 4

Marisol puts her head on Coral's.

Marisol: I'll miss you.

PAGE 2**PANEL 1**

Marisol heads to the exit, but a plate of cookies on the entry table attracts her attention. Coral watches in the background. There's a note on the cookies from Grandma, which we won't fully see yet. Also on the entry table are family photos and some of Maya's trophies.

PANEL 2

Marisol is taking the plate of cookies, but her eyes are locked in on a family photo, which we will see more clearly later.

PAGE 3PANEL 1

Marisol exits the house, stuffing the photo into her bag. The house has a front porch. Marisol has an umbrella. Coral watches her through the window. No car is in the driveway.

Caption: If you're going to run away,

PANEL 2

Marisol runs through the rain with her umbrella open. In the background, a hand--can be subtle--holds the door open for Coral to exit.

Caption: DON'T do it in the rain,

PANEL 3

A strange light catches Marisol's eye that leads to a path through the forest.

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Marisol has stepped onto the path staring at a train descending from the sky. The "engine" is currently a rain train that will lose its rainy/cloudy exterior when it lands in the train station ahead and off frame. Marisol sees it. The train sees her.

Caption: because you might meet a mysterious train.

Marisol: *Gasp*

PANEL 2

Marisol sees the train entering the train station ahead and shedding some of the cloudiness. The station has a "Train Station" sign spanning the entrance, plus a "Crystal Coast" sign hanging below that. Billboards are on the side of the path. The most visible one says: Grand Re-Opening! Escape from All Your Troubles." Another says: "No destination off limits with our fleet of water trains." Examples of the different trains are on the billboard but don't have to be totally clear.

PANEL 3

Marisol sees the billboard with the "No destination is off limits..." The trains are pictured but not all have to be wholly visible except the Runaway Train, which Marisol zeroes in on. Examples of trains: Ness Express; Royal Atlantian; Wisherail; Lacrimotive; Runaway Train.

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Spread: Marisol passes through the station entrance. The mysterious train waits there as the clouds around it dissipate to reveal the “engine.” Strange human-ish creatures under umbrellas walk toward the train, all intermingling with other sea/fishy creatures. Some creatures exit the train. Marisol takes it in. Option: close ups of some of the strange creatures to indicate that Marisol has spotted them or that they have spotted her. A child creature and its mom stare at Marisol. A cloaked, human figure is in the crowd, but very subtle.

Child creature: What is it, mommy?

Mom: It’s not polite to stare, darling.

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PANEL 1

A conductor calls out. Marisol sees the conductor and is shocked at its appearance.

Conductor: All aboard!

PANEL 2

The conductor sees Marisol and is pleasantly surprised. Marisol is sad and grumpy.

Conductor: A human? Here? You must be special.

Marisol: I’m not special. My sister is.

PANEL 3

Marisol addresses the conductor. The conductor has a wily look in his gaze.

Conductor: I see. Troubled are we? Looking to escape?

Marisol: Um, yes. What train is this?

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PANEL 1

Multiple Frames: The conductor talks to Marisol, who is curious, with a slightly carnival-master-esque delivery of each line.

Conductor: This is the Aquamotive 7thOUSAND. [Or it could be 7th000]

Conductor: A water train all the time.

Conductor: A rain train now.

PANEL 2

The conductor leans in conspiratorially close to Marisol. She's sad, a tear slips out.

Conductor: And soon, a runaway train.

Conductor cont.: If you're running away, that is?

Marisol: I am, so this is the train for me.

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PANEL 1

The conductor points at the Runaway Train fare on a nearby billboard that reads: "The Aquamotive 7thOUSAND." Different fares and trains are listed but don't have to be wholly visible: Ness Express—a tumbler of loch water; Royal Atlantian—a cruets of mermaid spit; Wisherail—7 drops of well water; Lacrimotive—a vial of graveyard dew. Runaway Train—1 runaway's tear. Small print on the bottom: "Passengers must sign a contract before boarding."

Conductor: You have to pay the fare first, ducky.

PANEL 2

The conductor captures a tear from Marisol, which feeds the train.

Conductor: A tear for the train...

PANEL 3

View of the train, which Marisol also sees. She is surprised when a segment of the train (like a train car) near the head/engine poofs into a replica of a house that looks a bit like Marisol's. Note: Various segments of the train change to a corresponding car depending on the fare each passenger pays and visually reflects that train, such as a mourners car for the Lacrimotive.

SFX: POOF

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PANEL 1

The conductor holds a long contract. Some lines are visible such as: "All arms, hands, fins and tentacles must remain inside at all times." "We are not responsible for loss of items or limbs."

Conductor: And a promise for me.

PANEL 2

Marisol enters the back of the train. In the foreground, the conductor holds the contract behind its back. More of the contract is visible—an asterisks clause that reads: "*You may forget everyone you left behind." Even finer print: "We are not responsible for any changes that *will* occur."