



THE TRANS-CITY EXPRESS

1 The Trans-City Express was coming into the station as they arrived. It slithered up to the platform like a giant snake, all silver and aqua in colour. From a distance, its darkened windows looked like a perfect row of spots along its sleek body.

2 Ashlee could hardly contain her excitement. She sped ahead with Emma, leaving her parents behind to juggle the heavy luggage. Dad called out several times and asked them both to slow down, but to no avail; this was their first trip on an overnight train.

Ashlee and Emma were sharing their own private compartment, with their own beds, where they could sleep as the train raced through the night. Their carriage was going to be right next to the dining car.

3 "Next to the dining car!" Ashlee whispered to Emma.

"Nice and handy for midnight snacks!" Emma whispered back, her eyes shining.

"Not likely," said Dad, coming up behind and startling them. "The dining car will close after dinner, so you will have to survive on the chocolates and chips you have 'hidden' in your overnight bags."

Ashlee laughed with surprise - it was hard to keep a secret from her father!

After passing through the dining car, Ashlee broke back into a skip, leading the way through the tight corridor between carriages. Emma followed close behind.

4 Mum shook her head. "Hey, settle down, girls! You two are jumping around with enough energy to power the whole train."

At last Ashlee spotted their compartment. Giggling,

she bounced inside with Emma.

"It's too small," cried Emma. "There's not enough room."

"There's only a couch. We both can't sleep on the couch!" wailed Ashlee.

"Keep it down," said Dad, holding his hands up. "There are two bunks in there. I'll show you."

5 Dad folded the couch over, turning it into a bottom bunk and then pulled the top bunk out of the wall. The compartment now looked a bit more like a bedroom.

"It's going to be a long trip, isn't it?" Mum said to Dad.

Dad winked at Mum, then said, "We'll be right next door, OK? Oh, and by the way, I overheard some police officers talking about a pickpocket aboard. You two will both have to stay in your cabin until dinner."

Ashlee nodded and then went quickly back to her investigation of the cabin. For the next few minutes she climbed up and down the ladder, explored the small storage shelves and flicked the reading lights on and off.

6 Then she checked out their bathroom. "Woah, Em, look at this - the shower's in the toilet!"

"That's gross," replied Emma.

"No, it's cool. You don't stand in the loo, it folds up," called Ashlee. "Come and have a look."

After giggling at the strange bathroom, Ashlee realised she had explored every centimetre of their compartment. "Hmmm, there's still an hour before dinner," she said. "We need to find something to do."

7 Emma pursed her lips, trying to think of something. Her face suddenly lit up. "I've got an idea ... let's find this pickpocket!"

Forgetting her dad's words of warning, Ashlee chased her sister along the corridor, passing their parent's room, only pausing at the gangway between carriages, so they could move along in a single file. The chase, lasting several carriages, was only halted when they arrived at the spacious lounge car. Several travellers looked up in surprise as the two panting children burst through the door and jumped onto a large lounge chair.

8 Ashlee was breathless. The chair was spongy and comfortable and it felt good to sit quietly for the first time since she'd boarded the train. It was still light enough to watch the countryside flash past the windows.

Suddenly, a steward rushed past, bumping into Ashlee as he moved through the lounge. He must be in a hurry, thought Ashlee, he didn't even apologise.

9 Ashlee was leaning back in the seat, thinking of what they could do next, when the peace of the carriage was shattered. A man leapt to his feet and shouted, "Thief! There's a thief! Somebody's taken my wallet."

Everyone turned to look at the young man who was anxiously patting each of his pockets in turn.

The steward rushed up to him. "Could you have dropped it somewhere, sir?" he asked politely.

"No!" came the swift reply. "I still had it just a moment ago."

10 Ashlee looked at Emma - at last they had found something exciting to do!

Remembering how rude the steward had been

earlier, Ashlee suddenly realised why he must have been in such a hurry. He must be the pickpocket her father had been speaking about!

Ashlee leant over to the woman in the next seat and told her she thought that the steward was a pickpocket. She explained how the steward was the only person moving about at the time the man's wallet went missing and what a hurry he had been in.

- 11 Nodding, the woman jumped up and pointed her finger at the steward, yelling out that he was actually the thief. Two passengers grabbed the speechless steward and pinned him against the wall.

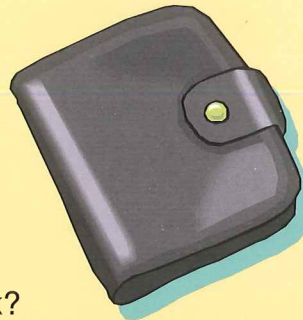
After almost being trampled by more passengers running to help, Ashlee grabbed Emma. "We better get out of here," she said.

- 12 Later that night, after having a gorgeous dinner, complete with some of the gooiest, tastiest cakes in the world, her parents started chatting about the train. Dad casually mentioned how there had been a huge fuss in the lounge car earlier in the evening. He explained that someone had lost a wallet and a steward had been accused of taking it. He went on to describe how the wallet had later been found in the men's bathroom. No money had been taken. Understandably, the steward was very upset about this, and the woman who accused him was in trouble for causing a small riot.

- 13 Ashlee felt her face turn red. Emma stared at her in disbelief. If her parents ever found out what she had done they would both be in big trouble. She hoped her part in the missing wallet incident would go unnoticed. At least until they were safely off the Trans-City Express.

Questions

- 1 The girls had their own
a dining car.
b private compartment.
c lounge car.



- 2 Where was the top bunk?
a in the wall
b in the couch
c on the floor

- 3 What wasn't in the girls' room?
a reading lights
b an armchair
c a toilet

- 4 Ashlee thought the steward was the thief because he was
a speechless.
b polite.
c in a hurry.

- 5 Where was the wallet?
a in the men's bathroom
b in the steward's pocket
c in the man's compartment

- 6 Why did Dad tell them the story about the pickpocket?
a The story wasn't made up; he was telling the truth.
b He wanted to play a trick on them for fun.
c He thought that it would keep them calm in their room.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 To be unblemished (1)
8 Something a clown might do (2)
9 Something unexpected (3)
10 Useful for climbing (5)
11 A long, narrow aisle (3)

Grammar

Adverbs describe how, when or where an action was done. They often end in **ly**. Find an **adverb** in these sentences from the text.

- 12 Suddenly, a steward rushed past.
13 It felt good to sit quietly.
14 He was actually the thief.
15 They were safely off the train.

Back To The Text...

- 16 The train looked a bit like a type of
a rodent. b reptile.
- 17 Prediction: What do you think will happen?
a The next morning the girls will tell Mum and Dad what happened.
b The girls will never tell unless they are asked.
- 18 What is the most significant thing Dad does in section 5?
a made the bunk beds
b mentioned the pickpocket

Think About This

- 19 What does "the girls were jumping around with enough energy to power the train" in section 4 mean?
a The girls were making electricity for the train.
b The girls couldn't contain their excitement.
c The girls were jumping up and down on the power cords.
- 20 In section 9 "the peace of the carriage was shattered", means?
a windows began to shatter
b a piece of the carriage broke
c someone yelled out
- 21 Ashlee and Emma could be described as
a inquisitive and calm.
b impulsive and boisterous.
c outgoing and thoughtful.
- 22 Why did the girls sit quietly in the lounge car?
a They were puffed.
b That was what the other passengers expected.
c They wanted to watch the scenery.
- 23 Who, if they found them, could spoil the rest of the trip for the girls?
a the traindriver
b the woman they spoke to in the lounge
c the steward who was working in the lounge

Challenge Option

Design: Draw a logo for the side of the 'Trans-City Express'.

