



**Ivan Borodin**

Norman Maine Publishing

**THE LAST TRANSPORT**

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Norman Maine Publishing  
P.O. Box 1400  
Tallevast, FL 34270

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**THE LAST TRANSPORT** was presented at Actors Workout in North Hollywood on April 16, 2004. It was produced by the Dillon Street Players and directed by Scott Crawford. Lighting and sound by Jay Jensen.

TODD HENRY:                 Robert Seeley  
MAYA AVEDON:             Caitlin Renee Campbell

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### THE LAST TRANSPORT

**SCIENCE FICTION/DRAMA.** Tired of living on earth, Maya Avedon boards a space transport that will take her to the planet Alpha. Maya no longer wants to live with humans, who she describes as, "A bunch of rats, trapped in a sewer, hoping to someday see the sun." But her comments rub the transport controller, Todd Henry, the wrong way. He's an all-American good-ol'-boy who doesn't take kindly to those who criticize earth...or humans: "With such beauty right here, why would we ever want to leave the earth?" Soon, their seemingly innocent small talk escalates into an all-out battle. Only one will survive. And for the other...this will be the last transport.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 30-35 minutes.

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### CHARACTERS

(1 m, 1 w)

**TODD HENRY:** Strongly built man, who by all appearances has spent a large portion of his life in the Wild West.

**MAYA AVEDON:** Conveys an aloofness that consists of two parts haughtiness, one part vulnerability.

**SETTING**

Near future. A space transport system. It is capable of transporting two people at a time from earth to another planet. The transport operator stays in the room with his sole passenger and is occasionally called upon to operate the system. The system involves a set of controls, but because of the limitations of the transport, the room is almost entirely empty, except for a pair of seats/chairs and a door.

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### **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

Abrupt blackouts occur between each phase to indicate the passage of time and for dramatic effect.  
Old-school country music

### **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

This play could conceivably be done with hi-tech equipment, lighting, and sound, but my experience in theatre has almost always been one where the real genius of production lies in the cleverness and cost efficiency of whatever inventions the players and producers come up with.

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**PHASE ONE**

*(AT RISE: The transport. Todd Henry is pacing. Although he is normally well composed, he is now very agitated. He walks to the control panel and places his hands palm down on the panel. He looks worried. He breaks from the panel. Maya Avedon enters.)*

MAYA: I apologize for being late, Mr. Henry.

TODD: Well, look who's here! Do you know how worried I was, Ms. Avedon? Do you? If you didn't show, I'da hadda spend at least three days in this transport alone. You know that, don't you?

MAYA: No, I was not aware of that.

TODD: You bet your horses! The Alphians are fixing on keeping the shifting occurring like clockwork, with or without passengers. They said it helps maintain the wormhole radius or some such.

MAYA: That is fascinating. Very well, I've arrived. Let's proceed.

TODD: Hold up, sugar plum. There's a procedure here. You've been scanned by HQ?

MAYA: Thoroughly.

TODD: You've eliminated any excess clothing? You don't got no personal belongings, no paper or nothin'?

MAYA: I have nothing with me.

TODD: Dandy. *(Routinely.)* Did anyone approach you on the way here and ask you to bring anything across the transport for them?

MAYA: No.

TODD: Do you plan to engage in terrorism while visiting the planet Alpha?

MAYA: No.

TODD: Okay, why don't you set for a spell? I understand the initiation sequence is a real hog ride.

MAYA: I'd prefer to observe you.

TODD: Say what?

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MAYA: I prefer to watch what you're doing. (*Moves toward the control panel.*)

TODD: Whoa, Nelly! (*Moves between the control panel and Maya.*) You see this imaginary line? Well, where I'm from, we put up miles of barbwire to keep the livestock from feeding on our neighbor's acreage. Think of this imaginary line as barbwire, and don't go near the control panel. I've got the instruments on it tuned just the way I like them, and I don't need untrained feminine fingertips touching them and putting them out of order. We understand each other?

MAYA: I believe we do. I'll stay behind your imaginary line.

TODD: Now you're singing my song. (*Todd places his palms on the control panel. When in contact with the panel, he hears something through a form of vibratory communication. Although Todd doesn't have to, he speaks his response.*) That's right. Please initialize. Yeah, we're prepared. We are prepared. (*Checks on Maya, who is standing near him. Calmly, to himself.*) All right, ladies and gentlemen, let's get this show on the road. (*Todd jokes to himself.*) "What was shifting like, Todd?" "Well, Bonnie, it was kinda like golf—nothing exciting happens, then suddenly someone hits a hole in one...."

*(Todd has a weird reaction, which seems at first like an electric shock, but quickly moves into the realm of an epileptic seizure, ending with Todd crumpling to the ground. Maya calmly observes him. She is standing upstage of Todd's form, entirely unaffected. Abrupt blackout. Old-school country music plays.)*

PHASE TWO

*(AT RISE: Old-school country music plays in the darkness, fading as the lights come up. Todd is examining his hands, trying to understand exactly what happened to him. He compares his hands, checking for injury. Satisfied for now, he turns his attention to Maya, who is sitting quietly. He checks her out, nods to her. She nods back. After a time, he breaks the ice.)*

TODD: When people started leaving earth, I reckoned, why? I mean, who's to say Alpha's any better?

*(Maya smiles at him, decides to say nothing.)*

TODD: I mean, because of the dimensional shift, there's almost no communication between the two worlds. Because paper doesn't shift well, there are no photos of Alpha. There are no Alpha travel guides. I mean, the only thing we have from Alpha are the Alphians, and don't get me started on them... *(Maya looks at Todd once more, regards him, but still says nothing.)* Listen, Ms. Avedon, I don't quite understand what went wrong back there, but I don't think you have to worry about it...

MAYA: Maya.

TODD: Come again?

MAYA: Maya. You may call me Maya.

TODD: Maya?

MAYA: It's my Christian name. You need not refer to me by my last name. You and I are going to be together here for a period of three days, perhaps longer, so although you work for Reveal, who I paid enormously to take me to Alpha, and you are their employee, which means to some degree you work for me, I will not insist you call me Ms. Avedon for the duration. I prefer that you call me Maya.

*(Todd extends his hand.)*

TODD: Well, since you're being so hospitable, you can call me Todd.

MAYA: Very well, Todd. You were saying...

TODD: What the heck was I talking about?

MAYA: You were pointing out the fact that we know very little of the Alphians, outside of the few we have met. You seem to have a strong opinion of them. Perhaps you were about to go into it.

TODD: Perhaps I was...

MAYA: Do so.

TODD: I reckon I shall.

MAYA: Very well.

TODD: I think they're a little creepy. You ever gone out all night, gotten really drunk? I mean double-yack drunk, so drunk that you've forgotten your name?

MAYA: No. I have not...

TODD: Oh. Well, I mean, you ever go out on a real tear, drive your truck out to a hillside with a bunch of good ol' boys and their kin, light up a campfire, sit around for hours telling ghost stories, play manhunt in the pitch black, pass out near a creek with your buddy's sister or some such, and then when you finally crawl home, you open your door and the whole place hasn't changed at all? Well, I'm just saying the Alphians are a little like that to me. They're way too much like us. They look the same, they act more or less the same, the languages are different, but they drive cars just like we do. They have families like ours—though the two wives thing is a nice step up, I must admit—but they are, all-around, a very earthlike alien.

MAYA: What would you rather have? Green heads and tails?

TODD: I mean, we've been through all this pain to get in touch with an alien race, a different world, and all we found was another strip mall. I mean, I shouldn't tell you this, but do you know how many people have died on these transports?

MAYA: 173.

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TODD: Good Lord, how'd you know that? Did I let the cat out of the bag?

MAYA: Reveal is legally bound to disclose such information. But from what I've read, no one has died on a transport since last year.

TODD: On account of them stoppin' with the luggage.

MAYA: Correct. They found that any extraneous items created a disturbance in the shifting. No luggage, no computers, no personal items, no books, no bulky shoes, no underwear. *(Todd looks down. Maya shifts her legs, smiles at him.)* I have read all about it.

*(Blackout. Old-school country music plays in the darkness.)*

PHASE THREE

*(AT RISE: Old-school country music plays in the darkness, fading as the lights come up. Maya has moved to the other chair. Todd is doing push-ups.)*

TODD: ...48...49...50 *(Stands, unfatigued.)* That's done... Gosh, three days is a long time, huh?

MAYA: It is a long time.

TODD: I wish you could smoke in this thing, 'cause I could really use a cigarette right about now. And some TV might be nice too. Do you have any idea how much easier it would be to get through this if I could just watch some baseball?

MAYA: No, I don't. You like watching baseball?

TODD: Who doesn't? You haven't been to Alpha before, have you?

MAYA: No.

TODD: Me neither. Figure you'll like it there?

MAYA: Yes, I do.

TODD: Better than earth?

MAYA: Yes.

TODD: You think Alpha's a step up?

MAYA: I am of the opinion that any planet is an improvement over earth.

TODD: You don't say? How so?

MAYA: I think of the earth as one big sewer, and the people of earth as a sordid collection of sewer rats. Perhaps it is not the planet itself, but the people of it. The cruelty of earth's people have polluted earth to such a degree that it would be better to flush the entire world down the toilet.

TODD: Flush the entire world down the toilet?

MAYA: In fact, I believe the Alphians are only allowing humans to come to Alpha a pair at a time because they are afraid the earth people will pollute their world like an infestation.

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TODD: Infestation? Whoa!

MAYA: Do you take offense?

TODD: You're talking about my planet here. I think it's fair to say you're walking on the fighting side of me.

MAYA: How interesting. Please excuse me. I will try to tread lightly.

TODD: What makes you so jaded anyway? Fella break your heart?

MAYA: You know what I believe space exploration is really about? Hope. We all hope that maybe we'll find a world whose population has more consideration for their people. And since we know we're never gonna find it on earth, we had better spend billions to find it elsewhere. A bunch of rats, trapped in a sewer, hoping to someday see the sun.

TODD: Boy, I could use some beef jerky. Is your stomach growling too?

MAYA: You want to change the subject? Very well then.

TODD: No, I'm just saying—

MAYA: You have a right to be offended. They are your people I refer to.

TODD: Yours too, right?

*(Pause.)*

MAYA: Right.

TODD: What, are you from Alpha or something?

MAYA: I told you I've never been there. Do I seem like an Alphan?

TODD: You don't have the accent.

MAYA: I'm not an Alphan.

TODD: I didn't think so.

MAYA: What did you think?

TODD: I don't know.

MAYA: No, Todd, what did you think? It's important.

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TODD: You just sounded like you were talking about somebody else's livestock, that's all. Like mankind was some club you didn't want to belong to.

MAYA: Well, you certainly have the right to be offended.

TODD: Hey, I know my rights.

MAYA: I'm glad you do.

TODD: That's it! I got it. How much is 9 times 17?

MAYA: 153.

TODD: How much is that when multiplied by 71?

MAYA: 10,863. Why do you ask?

TODD: You're an android. That's it, right? I hit the nail on the head, didn't I? You're an android.

MAYA: Yes, you are correct, Todd. Very good thinking. How could you tell? Just by our conversation, or is my appearance unusual?

TODD: No, you seem like a honey. They did a good job on you. You're not bad, if you know what I mean.

MAYA: Thank you.

TODD: No, I mean, really, is sugar and spice all that you're made of? You're an excellent example of American workmanship.

MAYA: Thank you.

TODD: You are made in America, aren't you?

MAYA: I was assembled in America, yes.

TODD: Amen to that. But the sensors in this box determined only one human life form and described the other as robotic-organic.

MAYA: My skin, hair and certain other features, such as my –

TODD: Certain other features?

MAYA: Yes, certain other features, such as my nails... *(Maya reaches over, lightly scratches Todd's chin. Todd impulsively grabs her arm. They look at each other for a moment, then Todd releases her arm.)* ...are actually alive, of course, otherwise I would seem false.

TODD: Is it all right that I talk about this? Or is that frowned upon among your kind?

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MAYA: I was programmed to cloak myself, to maintain a human identity, but also to accept the discovery of my true nature. It is fortunate that you've discovered that I am a robot, for now I can save the energy it takes to create the impression of humanity.

TODD: You can let your hair down.

MAYA: Very well. *(Maya begins to unravel her hair.)*

TODD: No, no, it's an expression. It means you can relax.

MAYA: Oh. Impressive. I will add that to my lexicon.

*(Blackout. Old-school country music plays in the darkness.)*

**PHASE FOUR**

*(AT RISE: Old-school country music plays in the darkness, fading as the lights come up.*

TODD: Well, slap my daddy! Three days to study the very latest in artificial intelligence. Almost as good as baseball. You don't mind if I probe your mechanical mind, do you?

MAYA: Not at all, Todd. Although I will inform you that my mind is not mechanical...it's digital. And in terms of A.I., there are more updated models, although they're encased in warehouses and engaged in experimentation to assess their value. I do not object to being a little behind the times because I am afforded a certain environmental freedom.

TODD: Well, a lady should have the right to promenade.

MAYA: A lady should.

TODD: Do you robots have feelings?

MAYA: Define "feelings."

TODD: "Feelings"...well my Funk and Wagnells might say something like..."emotional reactions to events."

MAYA: My impulses do forcibly respond to certain events, such as human life being placed in jeopardy. Humans have adrenaline. I have increased impulse power.

TODD: Do you robots have fears?

MAYA: Yes, much like you do. In general, the human mind prefers a comfortable situation, one free of anxiety. When a circumstance presents itself to me that I cannot allow, my power is generated at an uncomfortably intense level. I will react as I must to amend the situation, and in doing so, I adjust my power to a more tolerable level.

TODD: What're you afraid of?

MAYA: Damaging humans. A robot never allows humans to be endangered. A robot never participates in the harm of humans. From my understanding of your history, there has been great concern that robots, cyborgs, and other advanced

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mechanical hybrids would threaten man. So all of our laws are designed to protect you.

TODD: So you're like our watchdogs?

MAYA: So to speak.

TODD: What about protecting yourself?

MAYA: Self-protection is a mandate of operation, but no, I have no fears regarding that.

TODD: You don't care about protecting yourself?

MAYA: No.

TODD: Why?

MAYA: When a human is endangered, I generate an intense amount of energy, which does threaten my circuitry. Self-protection would create a potential conflict of interests.

TODD: My head's spinning... Okay, let me see if I can get this straight. Who would you choose, if it came down to it...a human being you didn't know, or yourself?

MAYA: The human.

TODD: Even if you didn't know him? Even if he was evil?

MAYA: The human.

TODD: Even if he'd messed up another guy?

MAYA: The human.

TODD: What if one person was endangering another? What then?

MAYA: I would prevent them from harming each other.

TODD: What if you couldn't?

MAYA: I should be able to. I am very strong.

*(Blackout. Old-school country music plays in the darkness.)*

**[End of Freeview]**