

321 Lumina Dot Com presents

The Last Fast Train to the Past

Episode 4



321 Lumina Dot Com presents

The Last Fast Train to the Past

Episode 4

Copyright © 2026 by 321 Lumina Dot Com.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without written permission from the publisher, except for brief quotations in a review.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Visit us at 321lumina.com

Cover art and interior illustrations created with the help of AI image generation. Story by 321 Lumina Dot Com.

Episode Four

World 321 Lumina

Pete glanced at the small device in his hand.

"Ramona, coordinates are set for Agnes's house. Your mother will be there too." He looked at his brother. "As soon as we get there the world will take care of you." He pocketed the device. "Let's go."

Ramona set the not-a-compact.

They went through one at a time. Pete first. Then Marcus. Then Eli. Then Thad, who stepped through last.

321 Lumina received them the way it received everyone — without ceremony, without announcement. Just a shift in the air and suddenly everything was different. Warmer. Lighter. The kind of light that seems to come from everywhere at once rather than from any particular direction.

They were standing on a quiet street. Linden trees. Stone steps. A small house with the front door already open.

Agnes came out of that door at a run.

She reached Marcus and took his face in both hands and looked at him. Not frantically. Steadily. The way you look when you have been waiting long enough that you need to be sure before you believe it.

Marcus looked back at her.

Behind Agnes, Julie appeared in the doorway. She came down the steps and went straight to Pete. Then to Ramona.

The street was quiet. The linden trees moved. 321 Lumina went about its business around them, unhurried, unconcerned, already doing what it did — the happy thought particles in the warm air finding Marcus Clark and beginning their work without being asked.

They gave him time.



That was the thing about 321 Lumina. Nobody rushed. The world didn't rush. The particles didn't rush. They simply surrounded Marcus Clark with everything he had ever chosen to be and waited for him to remember he had chosen it.

He and Agnes sat in the garden every afternoon. The linden tree at the edge of it threw good shade and the light that came through the leaves was the particular gold of a world that wanted you to be comfortable. A small table. Two chairs. Tea that Agnes made the way she had always made it.

On the third day Marcus said, "Do you remember our first portal?"

Agnes looked at him.

"The apricot tree," he said. "In my backyard. Our friends were on the trampoline and we slipped behind the tree." He smiled at the middle distance. "Like a dream. We went downtown. There was a carnival. We got all sorts of free stuff. We were there for hours. You got a blue teddy bear."

Agnes was quiet for a moment. Then she said, "We tried to find it again. And we couldn't."

Marcus nodded slowly.

"We found one in my backyard," Agnes said. "All we had to do was stand on the big rock. We spent all summer traveling."

Marcus turned and looked at her. Really looked at her. The careful distant expression had shifted into something warmer and more present.

"All summer," he said.

"All summer," Agnes said.

Pete was sitting on the back steps ten feet away pretending to read. He wasn't reading. He set the book down and looked at his brother and didn't say anything at all.

Eli had never seen anything like it.



He had been on enough worlds now to know that every world had its own texture — its own smell, its own quality of light, its own way of being itself. But 321 Lumina was different from anything he had a category for.

"What is this place?" he said to Thad.

"Walk with me," Thad said.

They walked.

One street over from Agnes's 1938 the world shifted and they were in something that felt like 1962 — a record store, a coffee shop, a woman in a yellow dress walking a small dog on a leather leash. Music coming from somewhere. The particular confident optimism of a decade that hadn't run out of hope yet.

One street beyond that something older. Cobblestones. Gas lamps. A tailor's shop with a hand-lettered sign. A man in a waistcoat sitting outside reading a newspaper that Eli couldn't quite date but felt like somewhere in the 1890s.

And beyond that something Eli had no time period for at all — clean and quiet and humming with a technology so unobtrusive it took him a moment to realize it was there.

"Every Traveler who retires here chooses their time," Thad said. "And the world accommodates them. All of it coexisting. All of it chosen."

Eli stopped walking. "How?"

Thad considered this. "You know what this world is made of?"

"Ramona mentioned something. Happy thought particles."

"Everything here chooses the form that makes you happy. The cobblestones choose to be cobblestones because the Traveler on that street loves cobblestones. The record store chooses to be a record store. The coffee chooses to be good." He paused. "Nothing here is forced into anything. Not the people. Not the world. Not the matter itself."



Eli looked at the street around him. The gas lamp. The coffee shop. The clean quiet hum of the newest realm just visible at the end of the block.

"The Keepers," he said.

"Can't function here. Their entire system runs on forcing their will onto others. On a world where nothing can be forced —" Thad left it there.

"They'd have nothing," Eli said.

"They'd have nothing."

They walked a little further in silence. A woman came out of the tailor's shop and nodded pleasantly at them in a language the cloaked interpreter rendered without effort. Eli nodded back.

"How many worlds like this are there?" he said.

"Twenty two found so far," Thad said. "That's what the Explorers do. They go looking for more."

Eli looked at him. "Is that why you and Ramona are taking the Explorer course?"

Thad smiled and said nothing.

Which was answer enough.

The training center lived in the newest realm.

It didn't look like much from the outside — a low building on a quiet street, clean lines, nothing announcing itself. But inside it ran on the same principle as everything else on 321 Lumina. The rooms arranged themselves around what you needed to learn. The materials chose to be useful. The technology chose to be understood.

There were three courses. Everyone on 321 Lumina knew what they were. Every Traveler who had ever been rescued, every Explorer who had ever found a new safe world, every Hunter who had ever stopped a Spreader in his tracks — they had all come through one of these three doors.



The Rescuer Course trained pairs to go in after captured Travelers. The work Thad did. The work Pete and Julie did. Getting into places that didn't want you in them and getting people out who sometimes didn't know they needed to go.

The Hunter Course trained pairs to find and stop Spreader Keeper Police — the ones who traveled specifically to seed new Keeper colonies across new worlds. The most dangerous work of the three. The Hunters didn't talk about it much.

The Explorer Course trained pairs to find regenerative worlds. Twenty two had been found. Every one of them a victory. Every one of them a world that had chosen to be what it was and was waiting for someone to find it.

Eli and Jill reported to the Rescuer Course on the first morning.

Their instructor was a compact woman named Dara Osei who had been running Rescuer pairs for longer than either of them had been traveling. She looked them over once and said, "You already know the basics. We're going to make the basics automatic so you can think about something else when it matters."

On the third day she produced two small canisters.

"Spray on communicators and interpreters," she said. "Hold out your wrists."

Eli looked at the canister. "What does it do?"

"It chooses to stay," Dara said. "Once it's on it's permanent. No dials. No devices. No fumbling in the dark looking for a tool. You think and it interprets. You need to communicate and it communicates." She looked at him evenly. "The technology is made here. On this world. The particles choose to be what they are because they're happy to be useful."

Jill held out her wrist without hesitation.

Eli held out his.



The spray was cool and left no mark. Within a minute Eli heard Dara say something in a language he didn't recognize and understood every word of it perfectly.

He looked at Jill.

Jill looked at him.

"Better," Dara said, in three languages simultaneously.

Across the building in the Explorer Course, Thad and Ramona were learning something considerably stranger.

Their instructor was a tall quiet man named Joseph Adeyemi who spoke slowly and chose his words with the care of someone who understood that the wrong word in this particular class could send a student in entirely the wrong direction.

"A regenerative world is not a place," he said on the first day. "It is a being. It has awareness. It has preference. It responds." He looked around the room. "Your job as an Explorer is not to find these worlds. Any Traveler with good instincts can stumble onto one. Your job is to communicate with them. To introduce yourself. To let the world know what you are and what you stand for."

"How?" someone asked.

"The same way you communicate with anything that is alive and aware," Joseph said. "You show up honestly. You don't force. You don't demand. You simply make yourself available and you wait for the world to respond."

Ramona leaned slightly toward Thad.

"He sounds like you," she said quietly.

Thad said nothing but the corner of his mouth moved.



"When a regenerative world recognizes a Traveler," Joseph continued, "it responds with what we call an accommodation. The particles shift. The light changes. You will feel it before you see it. The pineal first. Then the thyroid. Then the hypothalamus." He paused. "You already know this feeling. You have felt it every time you found a portal. A regenerative world is simply a portal that encompasses everything."

The room was very quiet.

Ramona looked at Thad.

Thad looked at Ramona.

A portal that encompasses everything.

321 Lumina chose to celebrate.

That was the only way to describe it. Nobody organized the lights that appeared in the linden trees along Agnes's street. Nobody arranged the tables that found themselves on the wide plaza in the newest realm where all three courses had agreed to hold the ceremony together. The world simply knew what was happening and chose to make it beautiful.

Every Traveler on 321 Lumina came. The ones in their chosen times stepped out of their 1938s and their 1962s and their cobblestoned 1890s and walked to the newest realm together. A Japanese woman in a silk kimono stood next to a man in a 1970s leather jacket stood next to a couple in Victorian dress stood next to three people in clothing that had no century Eli could name. The spray-on interpreters handled everything without effort. Everyone understood everyone. Nobody found this remarkable because on 321 Lumina it was simply how things were.

The Hunter Course graduated first.

Dara Osei read the names.



Viktor Sokolov and Zainab Malik. Gabriel Santos and Chiara Russo. Hamid Karimi and Freya Nielsen. Jerome Baptiste and Yuna Park. Aleksei Morozov and Nkechi Obi. Sean Murphy and Layla Mansour. Hiroshi Tanaka and Valentina Cruz. Emmanuel Osei and Katja Bergström. Louis Marchand and Sunita Rao. Andile Dlamini and Rosa Delgado. Finn Eriksson and Amara Coulibaly. Jackson Mwangi and Petra Novotný.

Twenty four Hunters. Every one of them an empty nester. Every one of them someone who had raised a family and come out the other side and found they still had something left to give and knew exactly what to give it to. They stood together and the plaza stood with them and the happy thought particles in the warm air chose to feel like pride because that was the accurate thing to feel.

The Rescuer Course graduated second.

Felix Wagner and Adaeze Eze. Tariq Hassan and Mei Lin. Carlos Vega and Asha Nair. Ivan Petrov and Yewande Adeyemi. Patrick O'Brien and Hana Suzuki. Kofi Mensah and Elena Vasquez. Antoine Dubois and Nadia Okonkwo. Rajan Sharma and Astrid Holm. Ben Kimani and Lucia Fernandez. Matteo Romano and Keiko Yamamoto. Oscar Lindqvist and Amina Traoré.

And then Dara Osei looked up from her list and said two more names.

Eli Follansbee and Jill Chen.

Eli stood very straight. Jill stood beside him. They were the youngest pair in the room by twenty years and neither of them looked away.

Pete and Julie were in the fourth row. Pete watched Eli cross the plaza and thought about a young man sitting alone by a fountain on World 5839 with four Keeper Police closing in and a paper cup crinkled in his grip. He said nothing about this to Julie. She already knew.

The Explorer Course graduated last.

Joseph Adeyemi read the names slowly, the way he did everything.



James Okafor and Selin Yıldız. Rafael Montoya and Ingrid Solberg. Kwame Asante and Mira Patel. Thomas Brennan and Yuki Tanaka. Diego Reyes and Fatima Al-Rashid. Nikolai Volkov and Amara Diallo. Chen Wei and Brigitte Moreau. Samuel Abebe and Priya Krishnan. Omar Khalil and Sofia Andersen. Henrik Larsen and Zara Osei. Marco Ferretti and Lena Novak. David Nakamura and Grace Mwangi.

And then he said two final names.

Thaddeus Templeton and Ramona Clark.

The plaza responded the way 321 Lumina responded to things it approved of — the light shifted, the warm air moved, the particles chose a configuration that felt like joy because joy was the accurate thing.

Marcus Clark was on his feet before anyone else.

321 Lumina chose to outdo itself.

The street in front of Agnes's house was the same street it had always been — linden trees, stone steps, warm light coming from everywhere at once. But the world had added something. The particles had conferred among themselves and decided that this particular occasion called for flowers. Not planted flowers. Not arranged flowers. Flowers that simply chose to be there, growing out of every crack in every stone, climbing every wall, appearing in colors that had no names in any language the interpreters knew.

Agnes noticed them first thing in the morning and said nothing. She went inside and made tea.

The ceremony was held in the garden behind the house where Marcus had sat every afternoon under the linden tree finding his way back to himself. He was himself now. Fully, completely, unhurriedly himself. He stood next to Pete in the garden and Pete handed him a cup of tea and they stood together the way brothers stand when they have been through something that doesn't need to be named.



Julie and Agnes sat in the front row. Julie was wearing something from her chosen 1962 that was exactly right for the occasion. Agnes was wearing something from her chosen 1938 that was equally right. Neither of them had coordinated this. 321 Lumina had simply made both choices feel correct.

The seventy two graduates filled the garden and spilled out onto the street and the world accommodated all of them without effort, expanding the space the way it expanded anything that needed expanding, because it was happy to.

Eli and Jill stood together near the linden tree.

Thaddeus Templeton stood at the front of the garden.

Ramona Clark came through the back door of Agnes's house on her father's arm.

Pete walked his daughter across the garden the way a man walks when he is trying to hold two things at once — the pride of the moment and the knowledge of what it means. Ramona walked beside him the way she walked everywhere — like a woman who knew exactly where she was going and had already checked for portals along the way.

She reached Thad and Pete put her hand in his and stepped back.

Thad looked at Ramona.

Ramona looked at Thad.

Twenty-six months and forty worlds and more close calls than either of them cared to count had come down to this garden on this world on this afternoon. The particles paid attention. The flowers chose to be a little brighter. The light that came from everywhere at once chose to come from this particular spot most of all.

The ceremony was simple. No speeches longer than necessary. No decoration for its own sake. Just two people who had been almost saying something for a very long time finally saying it in front of everyone they loved.



When it was done Marcus Clark made a sound that was half laugh and half something else entirely and Agnes put her hand on his arm and the garden full of Travelers from every world and every time responded the way 321 Lumina responded to things it found true and good and worth celebrating.

Pete caught Thad's eye from across the garden.

"Took you long enough," he said.

Thad laughed. The first real unguarded laugh Ramona had ever heard from him. She filed it away alongside the other things she had collected over eleven months — the way he reached for the watch-compass before he reached for anything else, the way he said approximately everything, the way he stepped to his right without looking back.

She would have a forever to collect more.



About the Time Keepers Universe

A multiverse of countless worlds. Portals between them, small and rare and often hidden. Most people walk past portals without ever knowing they were there. A few find them.

Thaddeus Templeton is a Traveler. Ramona Clark is a Finder. Eli is learning. The Clarks have been doing this work for generations.

The Keeper Police would prefer they didn't.

Each Episode of The Last Fast Train to the Past is a stop along the way. Some are quick. Some are rescues. All of them are real.

Welcome to 321 Lumina. Welcome aboard.

Coming Next

Episode 5

Find more at 321lumina.com