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Panel 1

Wide, exterior shot of a passenger train travelling through the West German countryside.

CAPTION

West Germany, 1982

Panel 2

Interior shot of one of the train. We're looking down the aisle of a crowded open-seating passenger car. Bored West Germans stare out the window or smoke to pass the time. At the far end of the aisle, we see Phil, a 20-something backpacker. He making his way towards us, stopping to talk to each row of passengers in turn.

PHIL (distant)

Do you speak English?

PASSENGER (annoyed)

Ich verstehe nicht.

Panel 3

Similar framing to the last panel, but shifted a bit so that we can see a middle-aged American couple sitting in their seats, facing us. Phil is closer, having covered half the length of the car. He's had no luck finding someone to talk to.

PHIL

I'm sorry, can you help me?

MIDDLE AGED MAN (pointing out window)

Look at the iron trestles on that rail bridge! It must be at least 100 years old!

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN (looking bored as hell)

Um hmmm.

Panel 4

Mid shot as Phil reaches the couple.

MAM

I wonder if it's standard gauge track. Maybe it's an old section of broad gauge that survived the war!

PHIL

You're speaking English!

MAW

Why, of course we are! What can we do for you, hon?

Panel 5

Close up of Phil and the MAW. He looks very relieved. MAW is relieved to have something other than trains to talk about.

PHIL

I'm so relieved. I think you're the only English speakers on this whole train.

MAW (gesturing to the empty seat in front of the couple)

Is everything OK? Why don'tcha sit down a spell?

Panel 6 (inset)

Close up of Phil's face as he sits down.

PHIL

Thanks. My name's Phil. Actually, I'm in a bit of trouble. It's. . .well. It's about a girl.

Page 2

Panel 1

Close up of Phil. He looks sheepish.

PHIL

I'm bumming about this summer before going back to school. Seeing the sites, you know? Learning the history that you can't find in books. I made it to Paris, and I met Collette.

PHIL (new bubble)

She's amazing – not like the girls back home. She knows so much more about life.

Panel 2

Slightly wider shot, showing the couple watching Phil. Phil casts his eyes down, looking dejected. The couple is entranced by his horribly cliched story. He reminds them of their own son, who's just a few years older.

PHIL

But, I messed it all up. I said the wrong thing, and now she won't talk to me. She snuck off at the last stop.

MAW (putting a hand on Phil's knee)

Oh, you poor dear.

PHIL

She took my rail pass! Now I'm hiding from the ticket collector, because I don't know how to tell him what happened.

Panel 3

Phil looks up at the couple, almost tearing up. They look back at him compassionately.

PHIL

So I need someone who can translate. I'm sure he'd let me stay on the train if he knew what happened. I only need to get as far as Munich.

MAW

I'm sorry, hon, but we don't speak any more German than you do.

Panel 4

Phil gets up to leave, his hopes dashed.

PHIL

Oh. That's OK. Thanks for listening. I guess I'll have to keep looking.

MAM

Wait, son, how much is a ticket to Munich?

Panel 5

Phil raises his hands defensively, while the MAM shuffles through the unfamiliar European bills in his wallet

PHIL

Oh I couldn't ask you to-

MAM (winking)

Nonsense! It's the least we can do. Wasn't so long ago I was in a spot just like yours.

Panel 6

Phil takes the money, nodding graciously. The couple looks very happy to have helped him.

PHIL

Thank you! Thank you so much!

MAW

You just make sure to find that girl and make it up to her!

MAM

Now go find the ticket collector!

Panel 7

Wide shot, showing Phil walking off, waving to the couple as he leaves the train car.

PHIL

I will! And I won't forget this!

MAW (to MAM)

What a nice young man!

Page 3

Panel 1

Phil has walked to the next car, which is made of closed compartments. He's counting the money that the couple gave him and frowning.

PHIL (to self)
20 Deutschmarks? Cheap-ass rubes.

Panel 2

Glancing about, Phil ditches the backpack that he had 'borrowed' in a luggage rack.

PHIL (to self)
Oh well.

Panel 3

In a further car, Phil gives a very specific knock on the door of passenger compartment

PHIL
Frank, it's me. Let me in.

Panel 4

Inside the compartment, Phil meets up with Frank, his travelling/graft partner. Frank has been listening to cassettes on his walkman, which he is now putting away.

FRANK
How did you do?

PHIL
Awful. I tried 'the lovesick backpacker' on those Americans that got on at Frankfurt. They bought it, but only coughed up 15 Deutschmarks.

Panel 5

Close up of Frank. Phil is looking through a bag in the FG.

FRANK
How generous. Well, at least its something. I was trying to pull a fast exchange up in first class, but the rubes got suspicious. I gotta lay low until the next stop.

PHIL
Hey did you eat the last sandwich?

Panel 6

Phil gets up to leave. Frank shrugs and gives him a shit-eating grin

FRANK
I was nervous! You know I eat when I get nervous!

PHIL (sighing)
Stay here. I'll go get more from the dining car.

Panel 7
Outside the compartment, Phil rolls his eyes.

PHIL
Amateur.

Page 4

Panel 1
Long shot of Phil entering another compartment car. He looks very put-upon.

Panel 2
Side view of Phil passing an empty compartment. The ticket slot above the door says that it is reserved. The previous compartment door is just visible behind him, and is is similarly bought yet empty.

PHIL (rubbing chin)
Hmmm. That's odd.

Panel 3
Medium shot of a shabbily-dressed business man exiting his compartment in front of Phil. The man appears to be in a rush. He has an over-engineered metal briefcase under his arm, which he is gripping a little too tightly. Phil tries to look casual, but is keenly interested in what he sees.

Panel 4 (small inset)
Extreme close up of the case

Panel 5
Long shot through the door at the end of the car as the business man leaves through it. Phil is visible over his shoulder, far in the distance.

Panel 6
Close up of Phil's face. He's smiling, like he's just figured something out.

Panel 7
Phil rushes back through the door he just came through.

Page 5

Panel 1
Back inside their compartment, Frank is listening to his walkman again and singing along and air drumming to "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor. He's really into it.

FRANK

Eye of the tiger! It's the thrill of the fight !

Panel 2

Phil bursts through the door, startling (and thoroughly embarrassing) Frank

FRANK

Jesus, man! Knock first!

PHIL

Listen! I've found a mark!

Panel 3

Frank takes off his headphones as Phil explains the situation.

PHIL

Two cars up, all of the compartments are bought up. But they're all empty – save for one.

Panel 4

Close up of Phil, talking excitedly.

PHIL

There's a single business guy in there. He's dressed all shabby, but you can tell that it's just for show. The metal briefcase that he just took with him to the dining car gives him away.

Panel 5

Medium shot showing both Phil and Frank

FRANK

Metal briefcase? He must be smuggling something.

PHIL

Exactly. Could be diamonds, drugs, dirty cash... why else would he be so paranoid?

Panel 6

Close up of Frank, nodding and grinning.

FRANK

So what's the plan?

Page 6

Panel 1 (Narrow shot along the length of the car)

Phil and Frank are in the hallway of the businessman's car. Frank, who is carrying a small bag, is in front, cautiously tapping on the businessman's door.

FRANK

No-one's home. He's still at dinner.

Panel 2 (Similar camera angle)

Frank is in the foreground, watching the end of the car. Phil has moved to the neighbouring compartment and is futzing with the lock.

PHIL

Good. Keep a lookout, will you?

Panel 3

Medium shot of Frank following Phil into now open the compartment. Phil is kneeling down on the ground, reaching out for Frank to pass him something. Frank is reaching into his bag.

FRANK

You're going to have to teach me how you do that thing with locks.

PHIL

Give me the saw.

Panel 4 (inside the compartment)

Phil is reaching under the seat, sawing a hole in the thin panels between the compartments. It's making quite a lot of noise. Frank has the door open a crack, watching for the businessman's return.

FRANK

Hurry up – I think someone's coming.

Panel 5

Cutaway view showing the hallway and the compartment. Frank has closed the door, and is drawing the curtain shut over the window. Phil is still sawing, off panel, and making a lot of noise. The man is walking down the hall.

FRANK (stage whispering)

He just came through the door! Hurry up!

PHIL

Just a bit more...

Panel 6

Same framing, the man is at his door, finding his keys. Frank is panicking, and searching through the backpack again.

PHIL

The tape! Gimme the tape!

FRANK

Ah jeez!

Panel 7

Close up of Frank and Phil on the ground, looking at Phil's handiwork. He's cut a hole in the wall large enough to crawl through, and then hinged the panel back in place with duct tape. Frank looks relieved, and Phil is giving him a smug smile.

FRANK (whispering)
Damn it, that was close!

PHIL
You get first watch.

Page 7

Panel 1
Extreme close up of Frank's calculator watch. It's 3am.

Panel 2
Medium shot of the Phil and Frank in the empty compartment. Frank is waking up Phil.

FRANK (quiet)
Hey...

Panel 3
Close up of Phil and Frank listening at the sawed-out panel. Phil gives a thumbs up after they hear snoring noises.

Panel 4
Frank holds the flap of the sawed-out panel open as Phil crawls through. Small inset panels arranged near the characters show their hands playing rock-paper-scissors a moment prior to decide who has to go through.

Panel 5
Same framing, showing Frank worrying that Phil is taking too long.

FRANK (very quiet)
Phil?

Panel 6
Phil pushes the case through the hole. Frank gestures wildly for him to hurry up.

Panel 7
Exterior long shot of the hallway. Phil and Frank hurry out of the car, carrying the case.

Page 8

Panel 1

Phil and Frank have arrived back in their compartment. Frank closes the door as Phil puts the case down on the table and looks at the lock.

FRANK

Do you think you woke him?

PHIL

No, he was still asleep when I got out.

PHIL (new bubble)

Shit – this is a weird lock.

Panel 2

Frank hits the lock with a hammer and a screwdriver, busting it wide open. Phil looks on, surprised by his partner's rare flash of competence.

FRANK

Ta-da.

Panel 3

Close up of Frank and Phil as they look in the case. The lid is blocking our view.

PHIL

Papers?

FRANK

Is this Russian!

Panel 4

Close up of Phil, as he holds up a silenced pistol that he found in the case. He stares at it knowingly. Frank is in the background with the papers. His mouth is agape at the sight of the gun. A faint beeping sound is coming from the hallway.

Panel 5

Medium shot, showing Phil and Frank on opposite sides of the case, with the door in the background. There is an electronic device in the case that has started to flash a tiny LED. Frank and Phil look at each other. The beeping sound has gotten louder.

FRANK

What is that sound?

PHIL

We need to get out of here.

Panel 6 (same framing)

The door flies open as the businessman (spy) kicks it in. He's holding a hokey 1970's tracking device (the source of the beeping). Phil, Frank, and the case are gone.

Panel 7

Exterior medium shot from just outside the compartment's window. A tiny bit of Phil and Frank can be seen heading off panel, up onto the train's roof. The spy has rushed to the window and is looking up at them.

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Panel 1

High aerial shot looking down at the train. Phil and Frank are two small dots heading toward the rear, followed about a car's length behind by the spy.

Panel 2

Side view of Frank and Phil as they run along the roof.

FRANK

Did he follow us? I think he followed us!

PHIL

Just shut up and run!

Panel 3

Side view of the pair jumping between cars

FRANK

What the hell have you gotten us into?

PHIL

Shut up!

Panel 4

Phil and Frank have reached the last car. Frank is looking for a way back down into the train. Phil still has the case with him. The train stretches out into the background, and the spy is just barely visible. Phil has put the case down and is opening it again.

FRANK

Have we lost him? If we double back, maybe we can hide in-

Panel 5

Same framing, but more zoomed in. The spy is about half a car away, with his hands up. Phil is pointing the gun at him. Frank looks on, horrified.

FRANK

Jesus! Phil!

Page 10

Panel 1

Phil and the spy stare at each other. The spy is expressionless, and Phil is determined. Frank grabs the case from under Phil's feet.

FRANK

Wait! Don't shoot! We'll just give it back.

Panel 2

Close up of Frank holding the case out toward the spy, who still has his hands up. Phil hasn't moved.

FRANK

Here! Take it! We didn't know!

Panel 3

Medium shot showing the standoff. Frank has slid the case across the roof over to the spy, who stops it with his foot (inset panel?)

FRANK

There! Now we're going to walk away. Right, Phil?

Panel 4

The spy has taken the case and is slowly backing up with it. Phil still has the gun drawn. Frank is pleading with him not to do anything rash. A small inset panel shows Phil's finger tightening on the trigger. Another inset panel shows the spy's feet as he is about to trip over a short railing.

FRANK

Phil? He's leaving. What are you doing? Phil?!

Panel 5

Wide shot of the spy tripping and falling. Phil looks relieved, but doesn't lower the gun yet. Frank is wide-eyed with horror. Use small inset panels to fill in details to sell the tripping motion, and the case opening and flying up.

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Panel 1

Narrow shot looking past Phil and Frank at the rails behind the train. The body of the spy is tumbling back along the tracks and papers are blowing back in the wind. Phil has finally lowered the gun.

FRANK

Holy shit!

Panel 2

Narrow shot of the train speeding away. Phil throws the gun over the side, and it tumbles toward the camera. Frank has started to climb back into the train.

Panel 3

Interior medium shot of Frank and Phil back in their cabin.

FRANK

What the hell just happened? You were going to kill him!

PHIL

I was scared. I- I'm sorry!

Panel 4

Frank glares at Phil distrustfully.

PHIL

We need to keep quiet about this. And we need to get as far away from here as possible.

FRANK

Yeah. We'll change trains in the morning. Maybe head down to Italy for a while.

PHIL

I wasn't really going to shoot him. You know that, right?

Panel 5

Frank and Phil are settling into their cots to try to sleep. Frank is staring at the ceiling, clearly troubled.

FRANK

Yeah. Right. Let's just get some shut-eye.

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Panel 1

Time passes, and Frank is asleep. Phil sits up, and looks at him.

PHIL

You awake, Frank? (quietly)

Panel 2

Exterior, in the hall. Phil closes the door softly

Panel 3

Phil, having walked to the end of the car, opens up the WC door.

Panel 4

Inside the WC, Phil produces some of the papers from his pocket, and puts them in the sink.

Panel 5

Phil takes out a lighter, and small radio from his pocket. He pulls out the radio's antenna.

Panel 6

Phil lights the papers on fire as he talks into the radio.

PHIL

Station 1-3-1, this is Little Fish. The leak has been neutralized. Will resume cover and await further orders.

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Stories for this book have to have an odd number of pages. Until I find a way to cut or add a page to the story proper, let's go with a full page panel of the train headed off into the distance.