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July 2010

The heat is like another person to push past as I make my way along the platform. I board the train although I don't know whether I should, after all. It is tense among the commuters, moving with the carriage and the crowds from my old life into my new one. The train is cool and oddly vacant-feeling, despite the people, despite the sweltering of the day outside, and this emptiness calms me a little. No one knows my story here, I'm anonymous at last, just another young woman with a carryall. I feel adrift, like I'm not really here, but I am, I can tell, the seat is solid beneath me, the backs of houses are rushing past the window. I've done it.

It's funny how easy it is, when it really comes down to it, to get up from your life and begin a new one. All you need is enough money to start you off, and a resolve to not think about the people you're leaving behind. I tried to not look this morning, tried to just leave, but at the very last second I found myself drawn to his room and stood watching him sleeping—like a newborn really, not yet awake to the first day of the rest of his life. I couldn't risk even a peep into the room where Charlie slept, I knew it would wake him, stop me going, so I'd quietly turned the latch and left them both.

The woman next to me is struggling with her coffee. She's wearing a dark suit and looks businesslike, a bit like I used to. She's trying to get the plastic lid off her drink, but it sticks and she tussles with it until the lid comes off with a shudder and hot coffee spurts over us both. The woman apologizes noisily, but I just shake my head for her not to worry and look down into my lap, knowing I should be wiping the dark stains from my gray leather jacket—it will be ruined, it looks odd that I don't—but the eruption of coffee has upset me somehow and the hot tears mingle with the coffee ones and I pray that if I don't look up no one will notice.

I regret now that I didn't stop and buy a newspaper, but it felt inappropriate, on the day I was running away, to go to a newsstand and join a line of *normal* people. I sit here and miss having one, miss having those closely packed words to dive into, concentrate on, chase out the evil thoughts in my mind. I'm agitated with nothing to read, nothing to do except look out the window and wish people's stares away. I watch forlornly as Manchester fizzles out and realize I may never see it again, the city I once loved. The train rushes through sunburned fields and the odd unknown village and although we're going fast now the journey seems interminable, my body strains to get up and run, but to where? I'm already running.

I feel cold suddenly, the initially welcome cool of the air-conditioning has become a bone-withering chill, and I pull my jacket tighter. I shiver and look down and shut my leaking eyes. I'm good at crying silently, but the jacket continues to give me away—the teardrops land gently and spread generously across the fabric. *Why did I dress up, how ridiculous was that? I'm not on a day trip, I'm running away, leaving my life, surplus to requirements.* The sounds in my head and the rhythms of the train over the track fuse together. I keep my eyes shut until the panic drifts away like ghost dust, and then I stay like that anyway.

I get off the train at Crewe. I find my way to a newsstand, before the main concourse, and I buy papers, magazines, a paperback, I mustn't be caught out again. I hide for a while in the ladies', where I gaze in the mirror at my pale face and ruined jacket, and I loosen my long hair to cover up

the stains. I attempt a smile and it comes, twisted and fake maybe, but definitely a smile, and I hope the worst is over, at least for today. I'm hot, feverish even, so I splash water at my face and the water adds new marks to my jacket, it's beyond repair. I take it off and stuff it in my carryall. I look absently at myself, seeing a stranger. I notice I quite like my hair down, it makes me look younger, the kink left from the French braid renders it ratty, bohemian even. As I dry my hands I feel hot metal on my finger, and I realize I'm still wearing my wedding ring. I've never taken it off, not since the day Ben put it on me, on a terrace overlooking the sea. I remove it and hesitate, not sure what to do with it—it's Emily's ring, not mine anymore, my name is Catherine now. It's exquisite, the three tiny diamonds shine out from the platinum and make me sad. *He doesn't love me anymore.* So I leave it there, by the soap, in the public restroom next to Platform 2, and take the next train to Euston.