

PART 1

Who was the mysterious girl waiting for the underground train on a suburban station platform, one winter's evening, and what was she doing there?

Listen



The clock in the living room has just struck two, but I'm still awake. Wide awake. Usually I'm a good sleeper, but not tonight. I can't stop thinking about that girl. I've got to write down what happened.

It was this evening around seven thirty, as I was on my way home from college. I was waiting for the connection at Willesden Junction.

As usual at that time of night, there was only one train to Watford every twenty minutes, and the platform was crowded. Most of the people looked pretty familiar, the kind of people who stand on the same platform at the same time every day; ordinary people going about their ordinary life.

Then, just near me, I noticed this girl. I reckon she was a bit younger than me, seventeen or eighteen maybe. She had on a thick denim jacket, and was carrying a bag which looked as if it contained books. She wasn't talking to anyone, just standing alone. There was nothing unusual about that, mind you; most of the people on the platform were standing alone, stabbing their phones or pads, staring at their feet, or looking anxiously down the railway track, as if by doing so they would make the next train come sooner. But the girl — she didn't seem to be looking at anything.

She was pretty, I thought. Very pretty, in fact. Shoulder-length brown hair, and a kind-looking face. From where I was standing, and under the poor light of the station platform, I couldn't make out the colour of her eyes.

Now I don't usually stare at girls on station platforms, but somehow I couldn't keep my eyes off the girl in the denim jacket. Perhaps she realized I was looking at her, for suddenly she turned in my direction and looked straight at me; straight in the eyes. Normally that would have been enough to make me turn away and look in the other direction, and pretend I hadn't been looking at her, but this time I couldn't turn away. There was something in the way she looked that stopped me turning.

I imagined she would look away from me, or even move further down the platform to avoid me, but she didn't. To my surprise, a smile came to her lips, almost the sort of smile that you give when you meet an old friend again after a long absence — though I'm certain I had never seen her before.

At that moment, there was a rumbling behind my back, and an underground train rolled into the station. The mass of people waiting on the platform surged forward, to compete for standing room and something to hang on to in the already-crowded train.

Though the girl and I got into the same carriage, I lost sight of her in the crush inside. I was hedged in between two enormous fat businessmen, who were talking their heads off about banks and investment. She was somewhere in front of me.

However, from one station to the next the carriage slowly emptied, and when we got past Wembley, there was almost room for everyone to sit down. She was still standing though, about twenty feet from me, and looking in my direction. Between us, I noticed two empty seats. Tired of standing, I moved over and sat down in one of them; hardly had I done so however than, to my surprise and secret pleasure, the girl moved up and sat down in the other.

For some reason I felt embarrassed. I managed to bring out a half-hearted "hello again", and smiled at her. As she smiled back at me, I could see that she was indeed very pretty. There was a shine in her soft dark eyes, but at the same time she looked worried; strangely worried.

WORD GUIDE

- go about: follow
- reckon: think
- mind you: in actual fact
- stare: look intensely
- avoid: move away from
- standing room: only room for people to stand
- crush: the compact crowd of people
- hedged in: boxed in, surrounded
- talking their heads off : talking loudly and intensely
- half-hearted: timid, shy

TRUE OR FALSE - COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS.

Which of these statements are true.

1. The writer had never taken the train at Willesden junction before.
2. There were a lot of people waiting for the train.
3. The person telling the story is 17 or 18 years old.
4. The story takes place in summer time.
5. The person telling the story felt strangely attracted by the girl.
6. She smiled at him, as if she recognised him.
7. The writer and the girl were separated in the carriage by two businessmen
8. Quite a lot of people had got out of the train by Wembley.
9. The writer sat down beside the girl.
10. The writer spoke to the girl before she spoke to him.

This story contains a lot of phrasal verbs: list A contains 8 examples, list B contains 8 synonyms.

Match the verbs correctly with their synonyms.

LIST A	LIST B
1. was on my way	a. come towards me
2. had on	b. turn my head
3. make out	c. clearly see
4. keep my eyes off	d. was going
5. turn away	e. say
6. lost sight of	f. stop looking at

7. move up 8. bring out	g. was wearing h. could not see
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Part 2

The narrator is strangely intrigued and fascinated one evening by a girl travelling on the same suburban train as him out of London.

Listen

She put her bag on her knees, and began to open it. It contained books, and I just had time to read the title of the top one, something about learning English.

Maybe she was a foreign student, or an au-pair girl, I thought. I wondered what country she was from. I couldn't bring myself to say anything to her though, and she didn't say anything to me.

As the train approached Harrow, most of the remaining people in the carriage got up to leave. The girl and I, however, stayed sitting in our seats. Why hadn't I begun to talk to her, I wondered? Maybe she too was going back to Watford. I decided I'd say something after the station.

With a squeal of brakes, the train shuddered to a stop. The doors slid open, and most of the people got out, leaving the carriage almost empty. Just five people remained in their seats, two men, an old lady, me and the girl in the denim jacket. I looked at the ceiling, waiting for the doors to shut.

However, the train did not move, and the doors did not roll shut. That was strange; there wasn't usually any delay at Harrow. Why weren't we moving? The seconds seemed like minutes, as I willed the train to start again. What was up?

Finally I decided to wait no longer. "I wonder what's holding us up?", I said in a matter-of-fact way.

"Yes, it is long," she answered in broken English.

I continued more boldly.

"You're not local are you? Where do you come from?"

At that moment, two men and a woman entered the carriage noisily, and stood at the door, looking round.

"There she is," shouted the woman. "Come on."

At that, the three of them moved swiftly over to where we were sitting, and the woman flashed a card under the girl's nose.

"Police!" she said sharply. "Come on now! Don't try and do anything silly, we've got you now. "

"You'd better just come along with us quietly," said the man behind, who looked like an inspector.

"What? What do you mean? What is this?" said the girl, looking frightened and surprised. She grabbed my arm.

"What's up?" I blurted out angrily. "What's going on? Leave her alone!"

"You just mind your own business, young man," said the inspector gruffly, "Or we'll be running you in too."

They took the girl by the arms, and began to march her towards the door. For a moment she struggled, and one arm came free. In the disturbance, a bracelet fell to the floor. No-one paid any attention to it.

They hustled her out of the carriage and onto the platform. I heard one of them shout O.K.; I turned round to watch as they pulled the girl, struggling fiercely, towards the station exit. For an instant, she looked back at me; I could see she was crying. Then the doors shut, and the train began to move.

Station lights passed slowly in front of my eyes, then faster; then all was dark.

As I sat there, trying to understand what had happened, my eyes fell on the bracelet. I bent down and picked it up. It was an identity bracelet. I turned it over to look at the name. There was no name.

WORD GUIDE

squeal: *sharp noise*

- **brakes:** *mechanism that makes a vehicle stop*
- **shudder:** *vibrate*
- **to will:** *to encourage, to try to make something happen*
- **matter-of-fact:** *nonchalant, ordinary*
- **swiftly:** *fast*
- **blurt out:** *speak rapidly*
- **gruffly:** *in a rough voice*
- **hustled:** *pushed*
- **struggle:** *resist*

SELECT THE BEST EQUIVALENT FOR THE FOLLOWING EXPRESSIONS APPEARING IN THE TEXT:

- 1 bring myself: (a) tell myself, (b) allow myself, (c) manage to
- 2 holding us up: (a) helping us, (b) making us go slowly, (c) stopping us.
- 3 What's up?: (a) What's finished? (b) Shut up! (c) What's happening?
- 4 Running you in: (a) arresting you, (b) taking you for a run, (c) sending you away.

SENTENCE BUILDING:

For the purpose of this exercise, we have chosen to call the narrator "John". This exercise covers the whole story, parts 1 and 2.

Complete these sentences in your own words, to produce a synopsis of the story.

- 1 John walked onto the platform which
- 2 While most of the people looked very ordinary,
- 3 The train arrived and
- 4 There was no room to sit down until.....
- 5 After John sat down in a spare seat,....
- 6 When the train stopped at Harrow,
- 7 Three people entered the carriage, saying....
- 8 As they tried to arrest the girl....
- 9 After hustling her out of the carriage,
- 10 Before she disappeared, John.....
- 11 As the train moved on, John....

Adapted from <<https://linguapress.com/intermediate/girl-denim-jacket1.htm>>