

Penguin  Readers

PAULA
HAWKINS

THE
GIRL
ON THE
TRAIN

YOU DON'T KNOW HER.
BUT SHE KNOWS YOU.

Contents

Note about the story	8
Before-reading questions	8
Chapter One – Rachel	9
Chapter Two – Megan	14
Chapter Three – Rachel	19
Chapter Four – Megan	25
Chapter Five – Rachel	29
Chapter Six – Anna	38
Chapter Seven – Rachel	41
Chapter Eight – Megan	47
Chapter Nine – Rachel	50
Chapter Ten – Megan	57
Chapter Eleven – Rachel	60
Chapter Twelve – Anna	66
Chapter Thirteen – Rachel	67
Chapter Fourteen – Megan	70
Chapter Fifteen – Rachel	73
Chapter Sixteen – Anna	77
Chapter Seventeen – Rachel	80
Chapter Eighteen – Anna	86
Chapter Nineteen – Rachel	89
Chapter Twenty – Megan	94
Chapter Twenty-one – Rachel	99
During-reading questions	106
After-reading questions	111
Exercises	112
Project work	118
Essay questions	119
Glossary	120

Content warning: this book contains some content that may be distressing to readers, including domestic abuse, and violence.

CHAPTER ONE

Rachel

Friday, 5 July 2013

The train leaves London and moves slowly and noisily along the metal **track**. The train journey to Ashbury is supposed to take fifty-four minutes, but it hardly ever does; the track is old, and there are always problems with the **signal lights**.

I live in Ashbury. But I can't really say I'm going "home" to Ashbury because it doesn't feel like my home. It's just a small room in a shared flat. Cathy and I were friends at university, years ago. She's been letting me stay with her until I get back on my feet again. It was only supposed to be for a few months, but I've been making this journey for two years now.

I'm holding a cold can of **gin and tonic** in my hand. As I drink it, I'm reminded of that first holiday with Tom, in a Spanish fishing village in 2005. We spent our days laughing, and our evenings drinking gin and tonic near the beach. But a lot has happened since then.

Soon, the drink is finished, but I have three more cans in my bag. Fortunately, it's Friday evening, so I don't have to feel guilty about drinking on the train. The weekend has already started, hasn't it? It's going to be sunny, so I'm sure the other passengers must be looking forward to their weekend activities – day trips and parties, perhaps. I don't really have any plans myself.

Monday, 8 July 2013

It's early morning, and the weekend's over. I'm glad to be back on the train, gently moving from side to side and looking at the houses beside the track.

The train always stops at a red signal light about halfway through this journey. Sometimes it's for a few seconds, and other times it's for several minutes. From where I sit on the train, I have a perfect view into my favourite track-side house: number fifteen.



I look at this house every time I pass. I know that on warm summer evenings the people who live there, Jason and Jess, sit out on the **terrace** relaxing together. They're a perfect, happy **couple**. Jason is handsome, strong and kind, and has a great laugh. He's away a lot for his job. I'm pretty sure he's a doctor. Jess is blonde and has a short, fashionable haircut. She's bright, and she loves art. I think she works in the music business, or maybe she's a photographer.

While the train waits at the red signal, I look for them, but today they aren't there. I wonder if they're inside eating breakfast together. Or perhaps they have a day off and are still in bed, sleeping peacefully in each other's arms.

Of course, I don't really know whether Jason has a great laugh, or if he's a doctor. And I've no idea where Jess works. I don't know them. I first noticed them about a year ago, and slowly, as the months went past, they became important to me.

I don't know their names either, so I've made them up. I chose names that seemed to suit them: "Jason and Jess". They're a happy couple, I can see that. They're what I lost, and they're everything I want to be.

As the train begins to move forward, I look down. I don't want to see the house that used to be mine. It's only four houses away from Jess and Jason.

I lived at number twenty-three Blenheim Road for five years. To begin with, life there with Tom was wonderful, but then it all went terribly wrong. I always try not to look when the train goes

past. But sometimes I do look. I'll never forget the awful pain of the day when I saw that the curtains of the small bedroom had changed from grey to baby pink. And then the day I saw Anna watering the roses, with her T-shirt pulled tight over a huge, round stomach.

I close my eyes until I'm sure the house has passed. We soon roll into Witney station, where I used to get on to the train. Then we move on again.

Thursday, 11 July 2013

I'm on the morning train, and I feel terrible. Cathy was out when I got home last night, so I bought a couple of bottles of wine. I think I'd finished the first bottle before I even started cooking but I can't remember much after that. The next thing I knew it was dark, and Cathy was knocking on my bedroom door. I'd fallen asleep on my bed.

"Are you OK, Rachel? The kitchen's a complete **mess**, and your dinner's still on the table. Why didn't you eat it?"

After she'd gone to bed, I went down and cleaned up. I had some more wine. I think I felt lonely, or sad or something, I don't know. But I called Tom. The call history on my phone says I rang him four times. Looking at the length of one call, I think I left a message. Or maybe he answered, I don't know.

The train stops at the red signal, and I look up. Jess is sitting on her terrace, drinking coffee. I notice that she seems thoughtful and is looking down a lot. Is she sad? I'm deep in thought as the

train starts to move again, and, before I realize it, I'm looking at my old house. The double doors to the terrace are open, and I see a woman inside the house and maybe a baby in a high chair. Or am I imagining it?

I close my eyes and think about Anna. And Tom. And then I suddenly remember the call I made last night. I was crying. I told him I still loved him and I had to talk to him. No! Did I really say that? I have to accept it. There's no point in trying to push it away. I'm going to keep remembering it, and feeling awful, all day. But at least it's not the worst thing I've ever done, is it? I didn't fall over in the street, or shout angrily at someone at my husband's office party. I didn't try to hit my husband with a **golf club** during a fight. It's not as bad as walking into work drunk and Martin Miles, my manager, telling me that perhaps I should go home.

Half an hour later, my phone starts to ring. It's Tom. My stomach turns over.

"Rachel, it's me." His voice is heavy and serious. "Listen, you can't keep calling me all the time." My mouth is dry, and I can't speak. "Rachel? I know things aren't good for you, and I'm sorry. But I can't help you, and all these calls are upsetting Anna. Go and see a doctor, Rachel. Please. Go and get help today."

I put the phone back into my bag. We're in London, and the other passengers are getting off the train, but I just sit and stare out of the window.

CHAPTER TWO

Megan

One year earlier: Wednesday, 16 May 2012

I'm out on the terrace with my morning coffee. I like sitting with the sun on my face and my eyes closed, listening to the trains as they roll along the track. One early morning train always stops at the red signal, right near our house. I can't see the faces of the passengers, but I know they're all heading into London, to sit behind desks all day. But when I close my eyes, I could be back in Holkham, with seabirds flying above me and a ghost train passing on the old track on the other side of the field. I keep thinking about Holkham these days. I miss the beach, and I even miss that old cottage, although it was falling down.

It's evening now, and I'm having a glass of wine in the garden, waiting for Scott to come home. This afternoon, I was in the kitchen with the double doors open. I was reading about the fashion course I'm planning to do, but then I heard a woman scream. Then she started shouting; there was **panic** in her voice.

"What are you doing with her? Give her to me, give her to me!" I ran upstairs and looked out of the window. There were two women in a garden a few houses away. One of them was crying, and a baby was crying, too.

The woman holding the baby turned and ran into the house, and the other woman tried to follow, but fell over. She got up