

I am telling you because you are far away





There's a woman in here with me now waiting for the same train - fiftyish, she's wearing a bobble-hat and brown boots and thick stripy tights - looks a bit funny, really, but I like her, I think - we smile at each other a lot. In the black glass over her shoulder I keep catching sight of my face - and I can see a light on the next platform, I think - it's moving in the wind.

Oh God - why's it so cold? Why's it have to be so cold?

There's a half-bottle of vodka in my bag - we're going back to her parents' after, that's the plan, to sit in her room and get drunk and talk about things - I bought it in town this afternoon after she phoned. I still do everything she tells me. I don't care, I really don't. I use the cap as a measure. The woman smiles, offers me a cigarette. "You look cold," she says. I say, "I wish I had your hat."

Eighty minutes. Eighty fucking minutes late and no-one tells us a fucking thing.

And then when it does come I almost don't notice - but suddenly the woman's saying goodbye and opening the door to the platform and I realise there's lights and people moving outside - but now I can't move, I'm shaking, sick-feeling... so I wait, all hunched up in my corner - and suddenly she comes through the door, her green coat all speckled with snow -

- her face glowing -

And I - I've wanted all day just to talk - to tell her about everything that had happened, about the Christmas tree by the town-hall nearly blowing down on Pete's van and about Jenny and Mike splitting-up again and about the new hotel on the ring-road where I'd been for a job interview and the boss had tried to get me to go in his car after and I'd actually had to kick him to get him to leave me alone - and now here she is beside me looking at me and smiling and suddenly all I can say is: your eyes are my favourite thing -

And my voice sounding like I'm at the bottom of a swimming pool -

And she looks at me sitting there, clutching my bag tight, and she ruffles my hair like I'm a little kid and suddenly I start crying and I don't know why. "Come on," she says, "let's go somewhere warm. I can't face mum just yet."

There's a pub just outside the station, The - Greyhound? I think. We sit in a corner and I say: "But I wasn't there alone, there was this woman with me."

And she smiles and fingers her glass; she's got a broken nail, first-finger-left-hand, and her hair's like a fabulous soft blonde cloud against my face - my head swims, I think: I'm losing this. So I start to talk and talk and talk with my face all flushed and puffy, and I knock her drink skidding across the table, and the glass smashes on the imitation flagstone