

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

SYNOPSIS

The story is a first-person narrative told from the point of view of three women: Rachel, Anna and Megan.

Rachel Watson is a 32-year-old alcoholic reeling from the dissolution of her marriage to Tom, who left her for another woman, Anna Watson. Rachel's drinking has caused her to lose her job. While drunk, she often harasses Tom by phone and sometimes even in person, though she has little or no memory of these events when sober. Tom is now married to Anna and has a daughter with her, Evie – a situation that fuels Rachel's self-destructive tendencies, as it was her inability to conceive a child that began her spiral into alcoholism. Concealing her unemployment from her flatmate, Rachel follows her old routine of taking the train to London every day; her train slowly passes her old house, which is now occupied by Tom, Anna, and Evie. She also begins watching from the train an attractive couple who live a few houses away from Tom, fantasizing about their perfect life together. Rachel has never met them and has no idea that their life is far from perfect, or that the woman, Megan Hipwell, helps care for Evie.

Megan outwardly seems perfect to Rachel — beautiful, apparently happy, and married to a handsome, devoted man. However, Megan has a troubled past that she conceals from everyone she knows, giving her severe insomnia. She secretly finds her life boring and shallow, and escapes from her troubles by taking a series of lovers. She has sought help by seeing a therapist, Dr. Kamal Abdic, whom she would like to seduce. Eventually, she reveals to him a dark secret she has never confided to anyone before. The secret being the fact she accidentally drowned her baby, Libby, in the bathtub while she was a teenager, after which her boyfriend Mac left her. She was also devastated when she lost her brother - Ben as a teenager.

Anna is young, beautiful, very much in love with Tom, and happy as a stay-at-home mother to the young Evie. While at first she enjoyed the idea of parading her conquest of Tom in front of Rachel, as a way to show that he picked her over Rachel, she eventually becomes furious at Rachel's harassment of her and her family, and wants to move from Rachel's former house and report Rachel's stalking to the police. Anna views Rachel as a threat to her family and home, and particularly dreads Rachel's presence because Rachel entered their home, picked up Evie, and walked outside with her one day.

One day, Rachel is stunned to see Megan kissing a man other than her husband. The next day, after a night of heavy drinking, Rachel awakens to find herself bloody and injured, with no memories of the night before but certain that she has done something she will regret. Soon, she learns that one of the top stories of the day is that Megan is

missing. Rachel is questioned by the police after Anna reports having seen her staggering around drunk in the area the night of Megan's disappearance. Rachel starts to become interested in the missing persons case. She contacts the police to tell them she thinks Megan was having an affair, because she was watching her every morning and evening from the train, and then she contacts Megan's husband, Scott. Rachel lies and tells Scott she and Megan were friends, and she tells him her thoughts about the affair. Rachel learns that the man she saw kissing Megan the day she disappeared was Kamal.

Rachel contacts Kamal, lying about her true identity and background, in order to learn more about him. She makes a therapy appointment with him, ostensibly to see if he can help her recall the events the events from the night of the disappearance. While Kamal suspects nothing, Rachel begins to gain insights into her life by speaking with him, inadvertently benefiting from her therapy. Her connections to Scott and Kamal, though built on lies, make her feel more important. She ends up not drinking for several days at a time but always relapses. Meanwhile, she continues to call, visit, and harass Tom and his new family. Then Megan's body is found; she is revealed to have been pregnant, and her unborn child was fathered by neither Scott nor Kamal. As Scott discovers Rachel's lies and lashes out at her, her memories of the night of the incident become clearer. Rachel remembers seeing Megan get into Tom's car. At the same time, Anna discovers that Tom and Megan were having an affair.

These associations enable Rachel to trust her own memories more, and she realizes that many of the crazy things Tom told her she did while drunk, never really happened. He had been gaslighting her for years, which made her question her sanity. Armed with this sad realization, and the knowledge that he must have been the one who killed Megan, Rachel warns Anna. When Anna confronts him, Tom confesses to murdering Megan after she threatened to reveal that he had impregnated her. Although Tom tries to beat and intimidate Rachel into keeping silent, she defies him and fights back. Knowing he is about to kill her, Rachel stabs Tom in the neck with a corkscrew. Anna helps Rachel make sure that he dies from the wound. When the police arrive, former adversaries Rachel and Anna coordinate their stories to support their actions having been in self-defense.

ALTERNATE ENDING

MEGAN

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SUNDAY, JULY 13, 2014

MORNING

It's been a year now. My so called death anniversary. I can't describe the feeling. I try so hard to let it go but I can't.

They call me Meg Williams now. My mom's maiden name. Megan died that day in the woods, but that was the day I was born. A new life, new identity, a new beginning lay before me.

Outside my balcony I watch the hustle and bustle of New York City. I can never forget the serene atmosphere at Blenheim Road and the soothing sound of the trains chugging past nearby.

I try to shake myself out of the memory. I still have nightmares about that horrific night. All I wanted was for Tom to be supportive. I didn't want him to leave his wife. I just wanted him to be there for me and my baby, our baby. I couldn't go back to Scott. Not after he nearly choked me to death. I was lonely.

His words still haunt me. "Abort it" he had said. His lack of feelings made me furious. So I pushed him. I would make him pay for this. He slapped me hard. I screamed and begged him not to hurt me. But he hit me with a rock once and walked off, convinced that I was dead.

I straighten up and dry my tears, feeling grateful about the new life I have now. How blessed am I.

Andy was just a passerby that day. He saw Tom beating Rachel up and leaving her there to bleed. In her inebriated state, she asked him to get lost. He then noticed Tom and I get into the car and leave. He had a hunch that something bad was going to happen. Thank God for that hunch.

Andy saved me.

Andy told me about Rachel, Tom's ex-wife. He used to watch her in the train every day.

Two people have been instrumental in giving me my new life. Andy and Detective Gaskill. I contacted Gaskill to tell him that I needed help and that I feared for my life. Gaskill offered all the help I needed, he was my late beloved brother - Ben's best friend back in the day.

Gaskill managed to arrange a body in the woods. The body was of an orphan girl who had committed suicide. I don't know what strings he pulled. "The less you know the better" he had said. The most difficult part was keeping Detective Riley off his scent. He let her feel like she was in charge.

I read the newspapers every day, religiously, to find out what was happening after my "death". I wanted to know if Rachel, Anna and Evie were ok. Gaskill told me about how Rachel confronted Tom and how he got the end he deserved. I'm proud of Rachel. She faced Tom, head on. She got justice for me and tried to save the woman who stole her husband. I wonder where Rachel is now. I hope she has come past all of this and found the happiness she deserves.

My chain of thoughts is suddenly interrupted by the sound of crying.

Beth's awake. I rush to hold her. She's what I live for. She's my hope.

EVENING

I pour myself a glass of wine and quickly check on Beth. It'll be a while till she wakes up from her nap. She's the most beautiful baby I have ever seen. After I lost Libby I couldn't stand babies, but Beth changed everything. I love her so much.

Suddenly the doorbell rings. I set my glass on the table and open the door.

"Hope I'm not disturbing.", he says smiling. I invite Kamal in with a hug.

He was the only family I had. I called him last October and told him everything, about how I survived and where I was. He was the only person I could trust. My only friend. I wouldn't have survived without him. Beth would always giggle when he'd hold her.

After chatting for a while Kamal leaves. He had come to New York for the weekend to visit his fiancé, Jessica. She's a lovely person. She doesn't know about my past. We intend to keep it that way.

I have an early day tomorrow. I have to reach the gallery. It's my first exhibition. Kamal had suggested that I engage myself in some hobby to get my mind off things. I found painting relaxing.

ANNA

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MONDAY, JULY 14, 2014

AFTERNOON

"Bye Ms. Boyd" all the kids say in unison as their mothers pick them up after work.

My babysitting business is going well. The maid didn't show up today and the place is a mess. Evie is upset all her friends have gone home. She's getting restless. It's time for her nap anyway. I'll clean up after I put her down to sleep. Sigh.

While cleaning up, my mind starts to wonder about how my life has changed. Tom's death changed me. I have decided to stay away from men for a while and concentrate on raising Evie. I will not allow anyone to lie to me again.

I wonder how Rachel's getting on with her life. She must be out drunk somewhere.

RACHEL

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MONDAY, JULY 14, 2014

MORNING

It's a beautiful morning. Actually it's just like any other morning but today's special. I'm celebrating 300 days of sobriety.

I feel truly proud of what I've achieved.

I got a new public relations job offer at an Art Gallery in New York. Today's my first day. Another reason why today is special.

For the past six months I was working for Cathy's company. She was incredibly sweet to give me my room back in her house. Last October, after Cathy got married and moved in with Damien, I got the house to myself.

I shifted to New York just last week and surprisingly, don't miss London at all. My one bedroom apartment in New York is perfect. It's my home. I've earned it.

I put on my best clothes and take the subway train. How I miss the excitement of the 8.04 train. My imagination going wild. The subway doesn't have views but that doesn't stop my imagination about what the lives of my fellow passengers would be like.

I don't allow myself to get obsessed with anyone's perfect lives anymore. I have learnt to love myself. Imagining the lives of people on the trains just keeps me entertained. Maybe I should write a book one day.

I reach the gallery and take a look around. The paintings by an artist called Meg Williams catch my eye. The simplicity and colors make me wonder about the possible hidden meanings.

The receptionist points me in the direction of Meg Williams. I felt my mouth drop. No way. That's impossible! I blink hard. Could that be... Megan Hipwell?

I slowly walk up to her. "Megan Hipwell?" I ask. I notice a slight change in her expression as I introduced myself. She replies matter-of-factly "Hi Rachel, I think you've mistaken me for someone else. My name is Meg Williams."

She walks away.

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