

# 1 Friday, 5 July 2013

## 2 Morning

3 There is a pile of clothing on the side of the train tracks. Light-blue cloth – a shirt, perhaps – jumbled up  
4 with something dirty white. It's probably rubbish, part of a load fly-tipped into the scrubby little wood up  
5 the bank. It could have been left behind by the engineers who work this part of the track, they're here  
6 often enough. Or it could be something else.

7 My mother used to tell me that I had an overactive imagination; Tom said that too. I can't help it, I catch  
8 sight of these discarded scraps, a dirty T-shirt or a lonesome shoe, and all I can think of is the other shoe,  
9 and the feet that fitted into them.

10 The train jolts and scrapes and screeches back into motion, the little pile of clothes disappears from view  
11 and we trundle on towards London, moving at a brisk jogger's pace. Someone in the seat behind me gives  
12 a sigh of helpless irritation; the 8.04 slow train from Ashbury to Euston can test the patience of the most  
13 seasoned commuter. The journey is supposed to take 54 minutes, but it rarely does: this section of the  
14 track is ancient, decrepit, beset with signalling problems and never-ending engineering works.

15 The train crawls along; it judders past warehouses and water towers, bridges and sheds, past modest  
16 Victorian houses, their backs turned squarely to the track.

17 My head leaning against the carriage window, I watch these houses roll past me like a tracking shot in a  
18 film. I see them as others do not; even their owners probably don't see them from this perspective. Twice  
19 a day, I am offered a view into other lives, just for a moment. There's something comforting about the  
20 sight of strangers safe at home.

21 Someone's phone is ringing, an incongruously joyful and upbeat song. They're slow to answer, it jingles on  
22 and on around me. I can feel my fellow commuters shift in their seats, rustle their newspapers, tap at their  
23 computers.

24 The train lurches and sways around the bend, slowing as it approaches a red signal. I try not to look up, I  
25 try to read the free newspaper I was handed on my way into the station, but the words blur in front of my  
26 eyes, nothing holds my interest. In my head I can still see that little pile of clothes lying at the edge of the  
27 track, abandoned.

## 28 Evening

29 The pre-mixed gin and tonic fizzes up over the lip of the can as I bring it to my mouth and sip. Tangy and  
30 cold, the taste of my first ever holiday with Tom, a fishing village on the Basque coast in 2005. In the  
31 mornings we'd swim the half-mile to the little island in the bay, make love on secret hidden beaches; in the  
32 afternoons we'd sit at a bar drinking strong, bitter gin and tonics, watching swarms of beach footballers  
33 playing chaotic 25-a-side games on the low-tide sands.

34 I take another sip, and another; the can's already half empty but it's OK, I have three more in the plastic  
35 bag at my feet. It's Friday, so I don't have to feel guilty about drinking on the train. TGIF. The fun starts  
36 here.

37 It's going to be a lovely weekend, that's what they're telling us. Beautiful sunshine, cloudless skies. In the  
38 old days we might have driven to Corly Wood with a picnic and the papers, spent all afternoon lying on a  
39 blanket in dappled sunlight, drinking wine. We might have barbecued out back with friends, or gone to The

## **The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins**

40 Rose and sat in the beer garden, faces flushing with sun and alcohol as the afternoon went on, weaving  
41 home, arm in arm, falling asleep on the sofa.

42 Beautiful sunshine, cloudless skies, no one to play with, nothing to do. Living like this, the way I'm living at  
43 the moment, is harder in the summer when there is so much daylight, so little cover of darkness, when  
44 everyone is out and about, being flagrantly, aggressively happy. It's exhausting, and it makes you feel bad if  
45 you're not joining in.

46 The weekend stretches out ahead of me, 48 empty hours to fill. I lift the can to my mouth again, but  
47 there's not a drop left.