

Dear “Woman on the train”,

My name is Andy Davies, I am an art teacher and I am the man who sat next to you on the Birmingham train last March 1st. You might remember me as the man who embarrassed you by buying you a cup of coffee.

This letter is a confession. As I mentioned, I am an artist. What you have never known is that as soon as you left the train I drew a picture of you. You see, your appearance was so extraordinary; not just your clothes, but your whole demeanour. I had to capture you on paper. You sat stiffly next to me trying not to let our arms touch. Your body was tightly bound; legs squeezed together, arms jammed against your body. One red sore hand was clutching a horrible fake leather handbag and you were gnawing the thumb of the other. Your face was make-up-less, tiny, and lost behind old fashioned tortoiseshell glasses. Most notable was the large plain headscarf which covered most of your head; only a fringe of black hair dared peeked out underneath. You were so fragile and thin. I drew you wearing that extraordinary silver locket I’d seen you take from an envelope. It was very unusual, quite heavy, in the shape of a wheel, decorated with continuous Celtic knots that wrapped all around its circumference. You wore no other jewellery and I was aware that you struggled putting it on but instinctively knew you’d have hated me helping.

It was a good drawing, special even. I had caught you at a very vulnerable moment in your life. Now the thing is, most people love having their picture drawn or painted. However, even as I was drawing I felt guilty because I am sure you are not one of those people. In my head I promised that when I got back to the studio I would destroy the picture.

Now for my real confession. You see, I didn’t destroy the picture straight away. I took it back to the studio and worked on

it. It was good, really good; everyone who came into the studio seemed to be drawn to it.

Well, last week I finished the picture and I was asked to exhibit it. Now this sounds crazy, but I sat on my own with your portrait and asked you what I should do. Something terrible happened. You didn't speak but you just cried. You didn't tell me how, but I am sure you have been badly abused in some way. I have no right to exploit that.

This letter, with the picture, is about to be burnt. I do hope from the bottom of my heart that one day you heal, find love and then you will be happy for an artist to paint the beautiful, lovely woman you are.

Yours sincerely,

Andy