

Into the Woods

It was Emma's idea. To get the Northern Line to the party 'cos we missed the bus. She said it would be quicker and even though I don't like the idea of being so far underground, I want to get to the party as much as she does. A train comes along in a couple of minutes. Emma waves at the driver. It brightens their day apparently. As far as I can work out all they do is stare ahead into the dark and check their iPhones, but she's got something going on Twitter with Central Simon.

The train stops and we search for a good seat. This guy cleaning his ear with the end of a key stares at us, so we sit further down the carriage and that's when I find the book. It's got a sticker on it saying 'Underground Books'. You read it and pass it on. Leave it on the seat for someone else. Like a free newspaper.

It's called 'Gone Girls' and on the cover are two girls walking into the woods wearing fur jackets. Cut out silhouettes. They've also got these wedge sandals on just like mine and Emma's.

"What happens?" Emma asks, checking her nails for chips.

I read the back to her: "Two girls, on the Tube, going to a party, get off at the wrong stop."

"Do they die in the end?" Emma asks.

Trust her to be morbid.

"Well," she says, "we're surrounded by plague pits. Right now. Behind those walls there's bodies riddled with Black Death."

I smile at a girl in stripy leg warmers curled over her knees. She's reading an Underground Book as well. Wuthering Heights. She smiles back as if to say I bet my heroine's worse than yours.

As we rise from the plague pits to overground, I relax. As though I've swum in far enough to feel my feet touch the bottom of the ocean. Outside, I think I spot a big blue MOT sign and the way the high street kicks out from under the railway bridge. I tell her Emma to get her arse in gear, it's our stop. The book I leave behind, it's too creepy.

The short platform and the white fence don't look right.

"No," Emma says, turning around quickly. "There. This is North End. It's the next one."

We run for the closing doors, nearly breaking our ankles in our wedges, and make it back on the train just in time.

Emma leans over the Wuthering Heights girl to squint at the Tube map, asking me if I've heard of North End.

But I'm not listening. I want to find that book now we're back. Emma's got me thinking, about how we got off at the wrong stop.

But I'm too late. A couple of girls in fur jackets beat me to it.

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