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## People who travel are always fugitives

by Marion Umney

“People who travel are always fugitives”

“What makes you say that?” asked Katherine

“Experience my dear. People say they’re looking for a different life, a better life, excitement, opportunity, whatever it may be. That seems like moving towards a goal, but when you know their stories it’s normally that they are moving away from something – poverty, misery, a broken heart”.

Katherine turned her head away. It was as if the woman sitting opposite her knew her better than she knew herself. Poverty, misery, a broken heart – yes, she was a fugitive from all of those.

“Excuse me asking my dear, but what brings you to London?” The woman broke into her reverie.

“Work mainly. There is little for me in Wiltshire” she replied

“it sounds like you are a fugitive from hopelessness” Again, it was as if the woman could see her soul. Katherine hadn’t realised she was so transparent.

“and what, may I ask do you think London will have to offer you?”

This was hard to answer. Katherine had great hopes and dreams, but to articulate them seemed somehow to open them to criticism and ridicule.

“Opportunity” she replied tentatively. “I hope, to find my own way, to make something of myself” This was said with more conviction.

“I see”. The woman opposite was quiet for a while, as she gazed through the window at the dirty crowded skyline, through which the train was now travelling.

She turned to Katherine with a piercing look

“Tell me, the costume you are wearing, did you make it?”

Katherine felt herself flush with humiliation.

“I’m sorry my dear, I didn’t mean to embarrass you” The woman had seen her discomfort and accurately divined its cause.

“If it was you who designed and made it, then I have to congratulate you. It’s quite stylish and shows not a little skill”

Katherine felt her blush deepen. Then, lifted her head and looked the woman straight in the eye.

“Yes, it is my design and my making. I now it’s nothing compared to London, but Wiltshire does offer the odd occasion for style” Katherine could have bitten her tongue off as she saw the woman bridle at her retort, and, seeking to make amends added “Forgive me, I worked in a drapers shop and had the good fortune to learn about fabric. It has stood me in good stead with my wardrobe”.

Wardrobe! Did three dresses count as a wardrobe? Well it did now.

“You have a good eye.” The woman, somewhat mollified hesitated for a moment, then appeared to make up her mind on whatever it was caused the hesitation. “I may be able to use you, if you would be willing”.

The train was drawing into the station as she reached for her bag.

“Here is my card. Come to this address at 8.30 am sharp on Monday”

With that she left the train, without a backward glance.