

# **A Late Night Connection**

**A short story by:**

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The bright red electronic clock changed to read 9:21 p.m. as Peter Smith descended the underground station steps and walked out onto the main concourse. It had been a long day and the train home was the only obstacle between Peter and an entire evening of lounging in front of the television. The deserted platform – devoid of anyone, or in fact anything – told him in no uncertain terms that the train had previously arrived, and had just recently departed. With unwavering optimism, Peter glanced at the graffiti-ridden arrivals screen several yards away, but this merely confirmed what he already knew.

Not exactly surprised by his poor timing, Peter dragged himself over towards a small seating area just in front of a gigantic Canary Wharf London Underground sign. He dropped his briefcase onto the floor and plunked himself down upon the stone seat. It felt cold and damp, an unpleasant feeling that passed with ease through his suit trousers and gave him the chills. Like anyone else at this time of night, he just wanted to be home. His home, his comfy sofa, his chilled beer and his large-screen television seemed just about lost forever.

It has been yet another day at work and yet another complete waste of time. Life was not something that Peter had been particularly enjoying these last few days. The beautiful Alice had rejected his proposition of a quiet dinner at the local Tandoori as she was going out with friends – her fourth such rejection with a different and unique reason each time. Alice was the executive assistant to the VP of finance, and she was also thoroughly scrumptious. Her fourth rejection probably meant that she didn't actually like Peter after all. He decided to count floor tiles in order to pass the time.

Peter had been single now for a long time; too long in fact, and there had been hints at desperation in his most recent attempts to get a date. And to add to everything else, in just three days he would be thirty years old. Running his fingers through his short curly hair, Peter sighed as he sat back against the cold stone seat. Thirty-eight tiles so far.

Breaking the silence that blanketed the station – and distracting Peter just long enough so that he lost count of the tile counting (which was up to seventy two by the way) – a middle-aged couple descended the last of the station steps while laughing and giggling. Peter’s mind was racing with judgmental and distracting thoughts about the couple. He was jealous, of that there was no doubt, but he wasn’t about to admit it, even if only to himself. He let his eyes follow the couple as they giggled some more and crossed the platform. They stopped just within Peter’s peripheral vision and kissed. Peter gave up trying to count tiles.

Peter had been working in the City for almost three years, a job he both loved (for the money) and despised (for the amount of work he had to do in order to make the money he so loved). The long commute hours and complete lack of social life – well for him anyway – had originally been easy to deal with, but now he was having second thoughts. Other people in the office seemed to love the various wine bars, clubs and pubs that were cascaded so liberally throughout the City. But then, they all had people and friends to go with.

“Next Train – two minutes,” read the sign above the platform.

Working in the City really had been an ambition fulfilled for Peter ever since he had moved to South Hampstead three years ago. His hometown of Slough was a

complete dump, and he couldn't have left it fast enough. Now he was a Senior Financial Analyst, which really just meant that he spent all day performing tedious and repetitive analysis of currency trades and helping other people make money. The burgeoning weight of his briefcase was proof that Peter was working more than he should. "That's all part of being an analyst," his boss had declared earlier in the day when Peter had objected to receiving yet another two hundred-page company prospectus to review and write-up. The question though, was what to do about it. He could hardly just quit; the money was too good, and he was too used to spending it.

The easily recognizable tapping sound of high-heeled shoes in the distance brought him out of his stupor. Just another thirty-something divorcee, or twenty-year-old bimbo, Peter concluded without even looking up. The shoe tapping meanwhile, had become more of a clomping sound as their owner became closer. Unable to resist his own curiosity, and being a natural people watcher person, Peter looked up.

A beautiful, dark haired young woman, probably in her mid twenties was carefully descending the steps towards the station concourse. She had long auburn hair, a slim, athletic figure and wore a long skirt with matching gray jacket and dark gray low heel shoes. She was paying very close attention to each step as it passed underneath her. He stared as the woman reached the bottom of the stairs and began walking towards the platform. As she passed by, she glanced at Peter and he unconsciously looked away like an adolescent teenage boy caught ogling at school.

Transfixed and at the same time hoping she would not look around and see him gawking at her, Peter – who was staring again – watched as this mysterious and incredibly attractive woman searched around in a small, but very expensive looking black

handbag. Just a moment later she found what she was looking for and Peter's heart sank as she dialed a number and placed the mobile phone up to her ear. Yeah well, she would be married – that would be just my luck Peter moaned to himself. No one could be that beautiful and not have a significant other.

“Yeah, hiya – it's me,” came her voice. It was beautiful and soft, sweet and alluring.

“I'm just at Canary Wharf,” she said with a classy English accent. “Yeah, probably about thirty minutes or so. Oh absolutely, Lasagna sounds lovely.”

Deep within him, Peter was aware that somewhere out there was the right person for him, and that one day he'd find her. The conscious part of Peter's mind, and in fact none of the rest of him was so sure at all. After all, it was pretty clear that in this particular instant, she was talking to her husband or boyfriend.

“Okay. It's pretty late though - you still want to watch it together? Okay, great. Yeah, me too. I'll let you know if it's going to be more than a half hour,” came the warm siren-like voice, friendly and spoken with affection.

Peter knew that the inevitable words were fast approaching, and his heart sank a little further.

“See you in a bit then. Hugs.”

Peter's eyes had been reflecting his hearts disappointment and were gazing at a nearby billboard for Jack Daniels whiskey, but they soon darted back as the woman placed the mobile phone back in her bag. A single word in particular was resonating inside his head: “Hugs?”

That didn't sound like the right sort of thing she would say to a boyfriend or husband. Maybe there was still a chance.

A gentle breeze picked up in the station, and a few loose pages of newspaper stirred near the concourse stairs. The train was finally here, and Peter had a very important decision to make.

Smalltalk with members of the opposite sex had always been difficult for Peter, and while others breezed through such trivial challenges, he was never even remotely so confident. In fact Peter found it all rather distracting when chatting about the days news with someone he desperately fancied, and would much rather jump straight into bed with. However, right now was no time to be weak – Peter had a mission and that was to find out more about this young woman. The first thing to do was to get close enough to perform a ring check. It was not necessarily definitive of course, or tasteful some would say, but nonetheless it was the most appropriate starting point.

The wind picked up as the train rumbled ever closer to the station. Peter's 'Tom and Jerry' tie caught a sudden gust and desperately tried to break out of the tiepin that was stubbornly holding it prisoner. After making sure that there was no chance of his tie escaping, Peter glanced around to see who else might be joining the train. There was no one else but him and the mysterious woman who, with the wind now vigorously blowing through the station, was using one hand to clasp her hair and create a makeshift ponytail. Peter instinctively moved forward towards the platform edge, while his eyes searched her fingers for a possible engagement or marriage ring. He realized just after scanning each

finger that it was actually her right hand holding her improvised ponytail. No luck there then, he thought.

“This train terminates at Stanmore,” came the announcer’s voice through the station speakers. It was deep, grossly distorted, and probably unintelligible to most.

The shrill screeching of brakes blasted into Peter’s ears moments later like a screaming Banshee, as the dilapidated London Underground train announced its presence and pulled into the station. The driver looked like he was asleep at the wheel as the first carriage trundled by, shortly followed by several more. With only a handful of seated passengers in some of the carriages, the train ground to a halt and the glass doors at the platform edge that protected people from falling or jumping onto the tracks slowly opened. The actual train doors were supposed to do likewise, but they instead remained stubbornly closed.

Peter was now standing just a few feet away from the woman he hoped would be his first ever dream date. Not wanting to get too close as that might be considered rude, he shuffled a little so that he was to the left of the train doors and she was standing just a little to the right. The doors themselves however, remained obstinately closed.

“Always having door trouble,” he said. It was a Peter Smith desperate attempt to strike a lighter note and show how naturally relaxed and cool he was. She looked over at him and quickly forced a smile – the sort of smile where one goes through the motions but makes no attempt to actually make eye contact. It had been pure courtesy, but nothing more. Peter smiled back, paying far more attention to her than she had done to him. It was those deep blue eyes of hers, he thought as he prayed for the train doors to open and thereby grant a reprieve from what was potentially shaping up to be a difficult social

situation. After what seemed like hours, Peter received an answer to his prayers and the doors opened with a wheezing hydraulic sound, before the familiar “Mind the Gap,” voice blasted over the antique loudspeaker right above him.

Peter thanked whoever was watching over him right now – even if it was only the station security personnel and almost took a step forward to be first onto the train.

Remembering his manners at the last second, Peter offered out a hand and invited the young woman to board first. She momentarily looked at him and smiled before boarding the train. This time though, it had been a genuine smile and Peter felt a sudden warmth spread all over him. So, chivalry was not dead after all. Score one point for me, he said to himself and boarded the train. The carriage was empty, and the mystery woman had already found a seat closest to the carriage doors. Peter did some quick calculations and worked out the most appropriate seat to sit in where he wouldn’t obviously be intruding or spying, but could get a good view. He selected a seat opposite and one down from hers and then, with no shame at all, glanced over and checked for an engagement or marriage ring. There were a couple but it was hard to tell exactly what ring was on which finger as she had her hands clasped together. He didn’t see any diamonds or other precious gemstones, which was probably a good sign but it was still inconclusive. He’d have to think of a better plan.

It would be well after ten o’clock by the time he got back home Peter thought as he glanced at his watch. In response, his stomach rumbled with hunger – which was understandable considering lunch had consisted only of a hastily eaten sandwich, followed two hours later by a Snickers bar and a diet Pepsi. Great diet Peter, he said to himself. Very healthy.

The doors closed and a few seconds later the familiar whining and screeching noise of the train almost deafened him as it pulled out of the station.

“The next station is Canada Water. Change here for East London Line.” came a recorded, female voice through the train speaker.

Wow that was fast, Peter wondered - maybe he had dozed off or something. He looked over to make sure his dream date was still staying on the train – which she was. No one ever changed onto the East London line anyway and he hoped she would stay a lot longer, while he worked out how to introduce himself. “Hi, I’m Peter. And what is your name?” he said to himself. No, that was dreadful. It made him sound like a tax inspector or something. “Hi, I haven’t seen you here before.” No, that was just plain corny. “Hey, you are amazingly gorgeous. Would you like to go out on a date with me?” Now at least that one was honest, but he could hardly use that for an opening line.

He could hear the voices of office workers in his head; Paralysis Pete they had sometimes called him, always stuck in analysis paralysis.

The train pulled into the Canada Water station, stopped, waited, and then waited some more, while the platform remained completely empty. No one got on, and it seemed that no one was intending to leave either. Peter looked out of the window and gazed onto the platform. There had to be a way of introducing himself that wouldn’t make him appear – falsely he might add – like a complete moron. He had yet to find one.

The familiar beeping sound rang out once again, and soon the train was moving once more, still rattling, screeching and periodically rocking from side to side. Peter steadied himself as a violent jolt knocked the carriage and everyone inside it.

Maybe he should get off early – perhaps at London Bridge. Then he could write his mobile number on a business card, smile, say “Call me,” and hand it to her. Yeah, that would surely work, he thought. Then if she called him, she must feel the same way about him. And if she didn’t? Well, she must be married then. He pulled his briefcase onto his lap and opened it up. Scrabbling around he found an unused business card, grabbed a pen, then closed the case, and started writing his phone number down on the back.

Peter never quite finished writing his phone number down – he had only penned the first three digits when a gigantic, and very brutal jolt sent him and everything else around him flying onto the floor. The sudden screeching sound was almost unbearable, and the carriage lunged forward while the emergency brakes desperately tried to stop the train.

Almost immediately, Peter was plunged into total darkness as the seat he was clinging onto jolted again, and he almost fell to the floor. The train shuddered and leaned to one side, but Peter couldn’t see anything anymore to know what had happened. Had the train derailed? Had a bomb gone off in the tunnel?

There may have been a shout or maybe it was a scream, but with all the screeching noises from the brakes, he couldn’t really tell, and certainly could not call out in response to help. Within seconds, the train had come to a violent and abrupt stop while still in the tunnel. It was pitch black all around and Peter had no idea what had happened; the raging and deafening noise had vanished, replaced only by a very empty silence. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before.

The hellish screeching noise was soon replaced by a dead, eerie silence, but it was the pitch-black darkness though that was more frightening for Peter, who was afraid to even move a muscle. He just waited with only his short labored breathing, and the thumping of his frantic heart for company. He knew that he was no longer in his seat, but he didn't know where he was in the carriage. Maybe there would be a violent explosion or something that would immolate him and everything and everyone else all around. Things like that always happened in the movies. He'd just wait. That would be best.

The emergency lights tripped and a sterile fluorescent light bathed the interior of the carriage. Peter sighed, still unwilling to move an inch. But what of the girl? Was she okay? He soon looked around and found that the young woman that had been sat opposite him was now half on the seat, and half on the floor, and she was trembling slightly while desperately clutching the handrail with both hands an intensely worried expression on her face.

“Hey, are you okay?” he said, his voice slightly uneven. She wasn't the only one trembling.

“Yeah, I think so,” came the reply, as she stared at him seeking any reassurance he could offer. “What happened?”

“I think it was the emergency brake, or something. Perhaps we derailed. I dunno really.”

They both looked around the carriage and then at each other. Peter relaxed his grip on the seat rail, and made an effort to get up and tidy himself. His briefcase had gone flying and was now lying in a heap, contents strewn everywhere halfway down the carriage. Lying nearby, just a little further down by the carriage door was the woman's

handbag. The emergency lights flickered and hesitated, while in the distance Peter could hear the quiet rumble of what he presumed was another train. It passed quickly, and the silence soon returned.

“I’ll get your bag,” said Peter. There was no reply, but Peter hadn’t waited for one. The floor seemed lopsided and so he had to use the seats and handles for support. Some of the contents had spilled out and he carefully picked up her purse, mobile phone, a stick of lipstick, a business card with three numbers written on it and also his briefcase. Just as cautiously, he returned to the woman’s seat and handed over her belongings.

“Thanks,” she said quietly.

Peter smiled but he could see that she was quite clearly upset. He wanted to sit next to her, but shyness got the better of him and he instead sat back down in his original seat and they both waited together but alone. He should say something, but he had no idea what to say.

Peter thought about what may have happened and whether the train really had derailed. If it had, then that would mean they’d have to walk through the tunnels to the next station and that could take hours. Unnerved by the thought, Peter stood up once again and tried to peer into the other carriages. It was hard to see, but it seemed like they were both empty. Glancing over at his only companion, he noticed that she had shuffled over to the window and was now looking out. In his heart, he knew that she wanted comforting and although his workmates often teased him for being so timid, he would not let her down again.

“Hey. Err... Do you mind if I sit here?” he said. She looked up before nodding, and smiling. She was still stunningly beautiful, and Peter quietly sat down in the opposite seat next to her.

“My names Peter,” he said. “Peter Smith.”

He reached out his left hand; it didn't seem like much, but it was the best he could come up with under the circumstances.

“Naomi,” she replied and her hand reached out to meet his. They shook briefly.

Her hand was warm, soft, and tender; and despite his inner counselor telling him not to do it, Peter couldn't resist and he checked: there was no ring.

“I'm not sure what we do now. I guess we wait, and see if anyone comes through on the speaker.”

“Yeah, I suppose so.”

“Hey, it'll be fine. I've had this happen once before,” he lied. She looked up and her eyes met his.

“Yeah, it's the emergency brake. Probably some old drunk in the front carriage pulled the lever thinking it was a beer tap or something.”

Naomi smiled. Peter smiled back. And then it happened. Her deep blue eyes met his and for just a brief moment in time they searched and then found each other's soul. Peter saw the future but in an instant it was gone, and he could remember nothing of what he had seen.

“So, you've had this happen before then?” she said, regaining some of her composure. The only give away was her still trembling hands.

“Oh Yeah. I mean it was a while ago and all that,” said Peter, still lying. “But you know, once it’s happened you don’t forget it.”

Naomi stared at him and Peter couldn’t quite tell if she was trying to work out whether he was lying, or if she was genuinely just listening to him. Most women just politely looked the other way when Peter started talking to them and he fidgeted and adjusted his tie again as he continued to speak.

“It was several years ago though, but they should come on the speaker soon and tell us what’s happening. Probably be going again in a few minutes.”

“Do you think?”

“Sure. We’d know about it by now if there was a real emergency.”

Even Peter had a hard time buying that line as he said it. It certainly wasn’t unique to the underground, but most transport services were not particularly upfront when it came to telling their passengers exactly what was going on – especially in emergencies like now. Having given the subject far too much thought, Peter decided it would be best to talk about something benign and neutral.

“So, how far do you go then?” he said. Then, as he himself absorbed the words, he realized it might be a good idea to immediately clarify the question.

“I mean, err, where do you live? Err... I mean, not exactly where, I just meant sort of general area, like London or something.”

Peter faltered. The world was collapsing all around him.

“You know, not specific or anything. I’m not a stalker, mugger or axe murderer you know. Nothing like that.”

Inside, screams of torment were ringing out. He was done for. She'd never talk to him again.

"S'okay, I know what you meant," she said, half giggling. Naomi smiled. And she was smiling at Peter.

The embarrassment meter was already off the scales, and he could just feel his cheeks turning a bright crimson red. She must know that I fancy her, Peter thought. Please God, bury me now.

"I'm going to see my sister actually. She lives in Notting Hill," said Naomi. "Really close to the station in fact."

"That's quite a trek," he said. "And I thought my route was bad."

"Yeah, I know. I don't normally go this way. So where do you go to then?"

"Oh, Swiss Cottage. I have an apartment in South Hampstead."

"Great. I live in Greenwich."

There was a pause. An uncomfortable pause. On that last sentence, the fledgling conversation seemed to have come to a rather sudden and premature end. Naomi looked away, and Peter did the same. He played back the conversation in his mind, or what he could remember of it. Anything he could find, something he could use to start the conversation again; so that he still had a chance. He needed that extra chance. It was then that Peter suddenly came to a realization.

"Sister!" he said, more out loud than he would have liked. A lot more.

"What?"

"Oh, err nothing. Sorry, talking to myself."

Peter's eyes darted around, they searched the carriage for something he could use, but there was nothing. In the distance he could hear voices. It sounded like there might be a guard coming through the train, but the lighting was far too dim for Peter to see anything in the next carriage.

Naomi reached into her bag and retrieved her mobile phone. She impatiently pressed several buttons, putting the phone to her ear, and then pressing more buttons.

“No signal I would imagine,” said Peter without thinking.

Naomi shot him a glare that could have immediately silenced a room full of children. The evil eye.

“Hey, sorry I spoke,” he said holding up his hands up. “I didn't mean anything by it. Hold off on the daggers.”

Naomi was impossible to read and Peter wasn't sure if she was going to yell at him, burst into tears, or something else entirely. Then that smile returned, that gorgeous smile, and he let out a sigh of relief. Even during an emergency when everyone was stressing out, she was very cute. More cute than before. Much more. Peter had never met anyone quite like her and he just hoped that she might feel the same way.

“It's my sister's birthday tomorrow,” said Peter. It wasn't. He knew it wasn't but that was only way he could think of to restart the conversation.

“Oh, sweet. How old is she?”

“Err,” he said, while trying to work out exactly how old his sister actually was.

“Twenty two I think.”

“You don't know?”

“Well, I’m not very good with numbers,” he retorted while scolding himself inside.

Not good with numbers, yeah that’s a good one he thought – especially since you work for a financial institution.

“Oh, well let’s hope we get out of here before then,” said Naomi while still fiddling with her mobile phone, and shaking it when the call wouldn’t connect. “Don’t you hate these things?”

She put the phone back in her handbag, her hands still shaking ever so slightly and then sat back in the seat. Peter stared again and this time, he felt like she gave him permission to do so. He felt something inside. It pulled at him and he wanted to ignore it, but he couldn’t. There was no control. He had fallen in love.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yeah, I think so. Thanks for asking, and for caring,” she said. There was no smile, but Peter knew the sentiments were genuine. Once again, they both sat in silence for what seemed like it was going to be an eternity.

Just as Peter was about to try a new conversational blockbuster, a faint light beam from a flashlight shone into the carriage, and moments later the end door opened. A tall man with long locks of blonde hair down to below his shoulders and a very scarred face entered the carriage. He wore a bright orange London Underground jacket, dirty looking denim jeans, and a pair of dark brown shoes that desperately needed replacing.

Immediately noticing the two of them in the carriage, he grinned a wide grin and winked at Peter. Or Peter thought he had winked, but he wasn’t quite sure.

“Man, I thought this train was empty. Are you two okay?”

“Yes, thanks,” came Naomi’s voice. She had turned to see what the noise was, and was now beaming a huge smile at the man.

“Yeah. We’re okay,” said Peter matter-of-factly. “Are you the Ticket Collector?”

“Nah mate, I’m the driver,” came the offended reply from the driver.

“Oh. Sorry.”

“It’s okay mate. I’ve heard a lot worse,” he smiled. “Look are you both sure you’re alright? The emergency brake hit by accident. A line failure or something like that. It was quite a jolt. We’re just getting everything sorted out now.”

“How long?” said Naomi.

“Should only be a few now. You two are pretty much the only people on the train. Just a handful of others up front,” said the Driver as he walked past them before shining the flashlight into the last carriage, which was empty.

“Yeah, hang in there. We’ll have everything running, and you both on your way in no time.”

Peter watched as the Driver exited the carriage, winked at Peter once more and then closed the door behind him. Once again, they were both alone in the carriage with only the emergency lights blinking away periodically to keep them both company.

“He seemed nice,” said Naomi. “I guess everything is okay now.”

She sounded relieved, and inside, so was Peter.

Within a few minutes, the main lights came back on and the main fluorescent lights returned, brightly illuminating everything in the carriage.

Peter and Naomi sat together in silence. Naomi was looking out of the window again, apparently gazing into nothing while Peter was not exactly quite sure what to do.

He wondered if he should ask her out to dinner. He wondered if he should ask if she had a boyfriend. He didn't really want to know the real answer to either question.

"We're just moving again," said Peter as the train lurched forward with a sharp jolt. "Normal stuff really."

They were moving again.

"Next stop, Bermondsey," came the recorded voice through the train speaker, oblivious to anything that had just occurred.

Now that the initial adrenaline rush of almost crashing on the underground had passed and his body was glad to be safe again, Peter felt very tired. He looked up at Naomi, but she was still gazing out of the window into nothingness. It had felt good to take care of someone else - even though he hadn't really done much. Peter wanted to take care of her more, to see her again, maybe even one day wake up next to her, and share his life with someone he truly loved. That feeling was there again. Stronger than ever. He stared some more, and she apparently let him.

The train doors opened and two people boarded the train, but Peter didn't really notice. They both sat at the opposite end of the carriage to Peter and Naomi. The train left the station following the same routine it always did and Peter watched the platform pass by as a second wave of tiredness fall over him. His eyes were closing by themselves, and he couldn't stop them. He was just glad to be safe. He was happy.

"Hey, wake up," came the soft voice. "This is my stop."

There was a prod in his shoulder and Peter opened his eyes. Had he fallen asleep on the train? That had never happened before. He felt like pinching himself to ensure the whole thing hadn't been some sort of crazy fantasy, but instead he did something far more normal and checked his watch. It was 10:14 p.m., and that meant he had been asleep for ages.

“Next stop Bond Street. Change here for the Central Line.”

Naomi was standing in front of him, and smiling. Still gorgeous.

“You drifted off,” she said. “I wasn't going to wake you, but I wanted to say thank-you.”

“Oh hey, no problem,” said Peter. He scrambled to look awake and alert, almost bumping his head on the rail in the process. The station platform started to appear, and the tube train came to a gradual stop.

Peter wanted to ask her out so much, but his self-confidence was not coming through to save him. She had brushed her hair and reapplied her make-up while he had been asleep. She could probably have any guy she wanted, Peter thought as he stared out of the train window. She was stunning. The business card he had picked up off the floor earlier was still lying upside down under his thumb with three numbers written on it: A number four and a hastily written number two. The third number was half written but instead, a long jagged line ran across the card and off the edge.

For the eleventh time that night, Peter heard the doors open, which of course meant that the train had arrived at the next station and Naomi's destination. He looked around and watched as she started to leave the carriage. She stopped for a second and

turned to face Peter. She was giving him a chance, but he was unable to act. Paralysis  
Pete.

“See you around sometime, and thanks again.”

“Yeah, see you,” Peter replied smiling as best he could, but feeling more like a wilted flower. He turned back and gazed down at the business card that was now resting on his briefcase. Good one Peter he said to himself. Nicely done mate, you’re a real winner. That feeling inside was hurting.

Outside on the platform, Naomi stopped for a moment. She turned and looked back into the carriage where she could see Peter gazing down at that business card she’d watched him try to write his phone number on earlier. So many men had tried to date her, or get her into bed that she was truly tired of all the trashy chat-up lines and nightclub one-liners. Even now she could see a stranger eyeing her up on the other end of the platform, but somehow this guy on the train had been different – he had genuinely cared for her. He hadn’t tried to throw himself on her, and there had been no idiotic pick-up lines. So he had made up a couple of white lies about his sister, she had spotted them. In fact, they had really been quite and he was pretty cute as well – which always helped.

Naomi smiled and put one finger to her lips while she pondered for a moment on what to do. She had a feeling. She wasn’t sure what exactly, but it was a strong one. Realizing that soon the train would leave, she reached into her jacket pocket to look for something to write on and then into her handbag.

Peter was wondering why the beeps hadn't sounded yet; the doors were still open, but he didn't want to look around and check. What was that driver doing? Had he fallen asleep? What was he waiting for? Peter just wanted to get home. He sighed, straightened his brief case that had almost fallen over again, and sat back on the seat. As he wondered what exactly he'd say to explain this latest failure to his friends, a long arm with a gray colored sleeve peeked around in front of him. A business card was in-between two recently manicured fore and index fingers complete with beautiful red nail polish, and just a second later the card gently found its way into Peter's hand without him even moving an inch.

"Call me, okay?" came a soft whisper in his ear.

He turned around but she was already leaving the train.

"No, wait," he called out, just as the beeping sound had begun and the doors started to close.

Out on the platform, Naomi turned and smiled a super model like smile. She waved gently as the train pulled away, while Peter could only wave back, mouth wide open in amazement.

"I'll call you," he shouted. The two other people in the carriage stopped talking about the world cup, and glared at Peter.

"Sorry," he said, while watching the woman he fancied something wild fade away into the distance.

Looking down at the small card in his hand, he stared at the carefully written phone number and the hastily drawn heart sign just below. He flipped it over to see who

his dream worked for and laughed when it was the same as his. So, it had turned out to be a good day after all, and Peter smiled at that. He was happy again.

“Next stop – Swiss Cottage,” came the distorted voice over the loudspeaker.

THE END