

The Train to Baltimore  
Noreen Channels

The man and woman coming my way, toward the gate to the Baltimore Train, were obviously experienced at it. They knew where they were going, and had enough time to get there. Not like me, who hardly ever comes to the city and doesn't really know the ins and outs of Grand Central Station. So much noise – the echoes! Too many people! I'm rattled, I admit it! I check my ticket... the board... my watch, and again ...my ticket... the board... my watch. And, all this, even though I know I have well over an hour to wait!

This confident pair looks to be in their mid-forties, about the age of our adult children, maybe a little younger. The woman is dressed like a New Yorker, but not over the top. She has on high boots, almost up to her knees, black tights, and a short -- but still respectable -- skirt. Her jacket is nice, but her top must be a little tight or something. She keeps nervously fiddling with it and pulling it down in back. I certainly understand that problem!

She looks confident enough to carry off a pretty good job. I'd trust her as maybe a bank teller, a secretary, or even as an assistant in a doctor's office.

I wouldn't call her pretty. (In fact, I wouldn't have even noticed her if they hadn't stopped right in front of me and plunked down her suitcase.)

But even though her face isn't much, she does have a whole lot of springy curls, pulled up in one of those messy bunches they all go for these days. That's her best feature, in my opinion. When she isn't tugging on her top, she's fussing with her hair, as if trying to get it just right. I can see that the man likes it all. He just enjoys being with her and watching her.

He isn't what I would call hot, but he looks like a nice, happy guy. A little nerdy, maybe. He's tall and when he loops his scarf around her neck and pulls her in, he has to bend down to kiss her and she has to stretch up. It's a pretty involved kiss, although no one but me seems to notice. The things they do these days!

Then they're discussing a party or some other event and she digs her phone out to show him a picture. She turns her back on him, checks her messages, and drops the phone back in her bag.

She dives into her purse again and brings out a health bar, rips it open and gives him some; shares some water.

And then it's clearly time. She gives him a hug, loads herself up with her purse and suitcase, and boards the train. He turns back the way they came, and disappears to my left.

I check my own schedule once again and open my book. But, glancing up, I see the woman! -- off the train and walking my way, carrying her purse and suitcase. She is moving with purpose, fast and focused. Without even a look around, she turns and heads for the exit on my right.