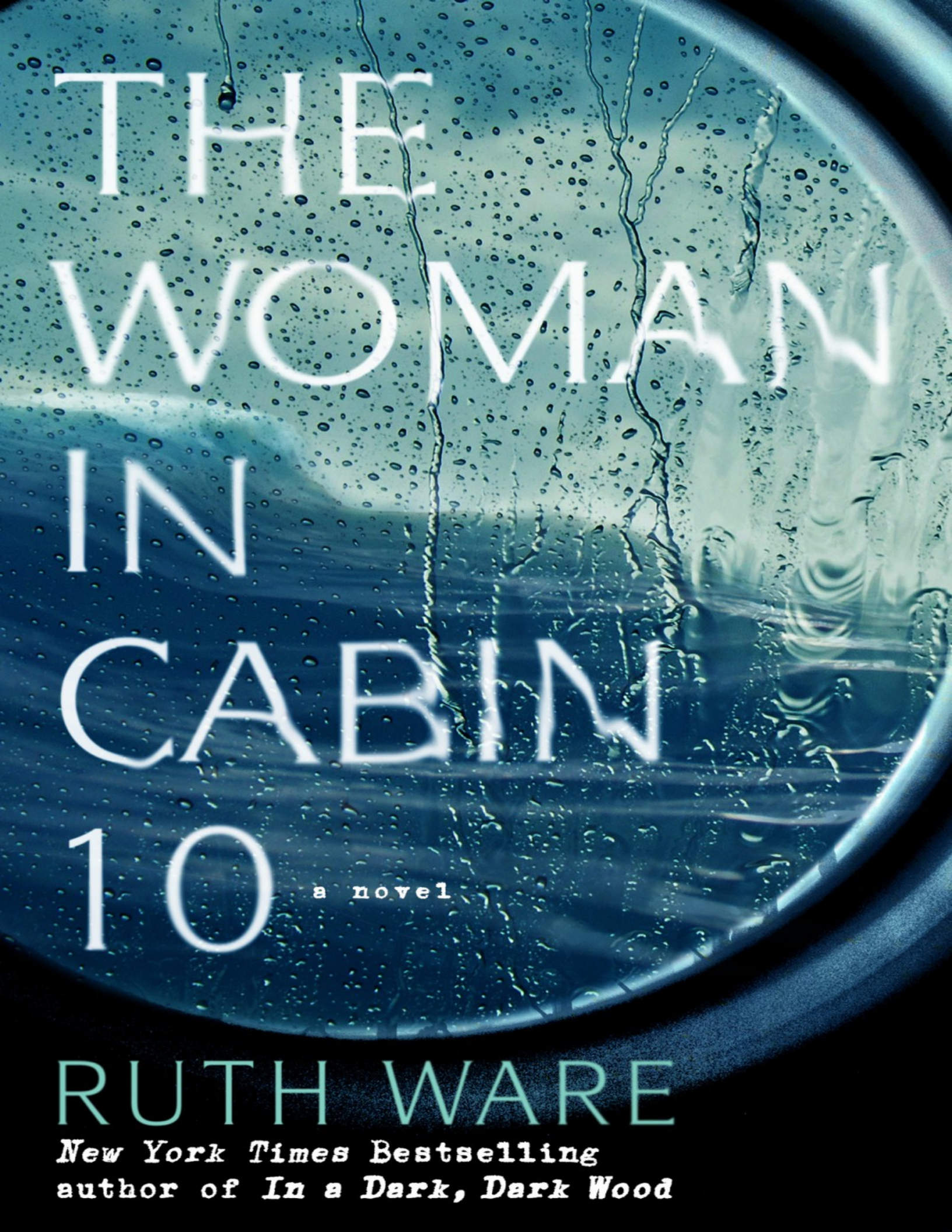


The background of the cover is a circular porthole view of a stormy sea. The water is dark and turbulent, with white foam from the waves visible. The porthole glass is covered in numerous small water droplets and streaks of rain, creating a sense of being inside a ship during a storm. The title text is overlaid on this image.

THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10

a novel

RUTH WARE

New York Times Bestselling
author of *In a Dark, Dark Wood*

PRAISE FOR RUTH WARE'S
INSTANT *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

in a dark, dark wood

An NPR Best Book of the Year • An *Entertainment Weekly* Top Ten Summer Read • A *BuzzFeed* “31 Perfect Books to Get Excited About This - Summer” Pick • A *Publishers Weekly* “Top Ten Mysteries and Thrillers” Pick • A *Bookreporter* Summer Reading Pick • A *New York Post* “Best Novels to Read This Summer” Pick • A *Shelf Awareness* “Book Expo America 2015 Buzz Book” Pick

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—*Entertainment Weekly*

“A sinister mood lurks in [*In a Dark, Dark Wood*].”

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“Ware writes with verve and energy, building up the suspense and keeping the pages flying.”

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“Haunting.”

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“WARNING: This book is hot. Do not pick it up late at night or if you are in a dark, dark wood . . . Ruth Ware has a gift. This British author’s first foray into fiction is a hit . . . it delivers a punch and keeps you guessing—an ideal August psychodrama that reminds us why mysteries remain such fun—except at night.”

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“So gripping. So glad my hen days are behind me. It’s going to be huge.”

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“If the premise might be the sort that Agatha Christie would have toyed with had she been a twenty-first-century graduate, Ware’s analysis of the power games some women revel in—and the toxicity in the undertow of some female friendships—is more reminiscent of Sophie Hannah, Christobel Kent, or even Gillian Flynn and Harriet Lane.”

—*Independent*

“The best thing about *In A Dark, Dark Wood* is the eerie atmosphere it creates for this ill-fated weekend, never overwrought, just ominous enough, the glass house

where the guests are trapped ‘dark and silent, blending into the trees, almost invisible.”

—USAToday.com

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THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10

RUTH WARE



SCOUT PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

To Eleanor, with love

In my dream, the girl was drifting, far, far below the crashing waves and the cries of the gulls in the cold, sunless depths of the North Sea. Her laughing eyes were white and bloated with salt water; her pale skin was wrinkled; her clothes ripped by jagged rocks and disintegrating into rags.

Only her long black hair remained, floating through the water like fronds of dark seaweed, tangling in shells and fishing nets, washing up on the shore in hanks like frayed rope, where it lay, limp, the roar of the crashing waves against the shingle filling my ears.

I woke, heavy with dread. It took me a while to remember where I was, and still longer to realize that the roar in my ears was not part of the dream but real.

The room was dark, with the same damp mist I'd felt in my dream, and as I pulled myself to sitting I felt a cool breeze on my cheek. It sounded like the noise was coming from the bathroom.

I climbed off the bed, shivering slightly. The door was shut, but as I walked across to it, I could hear the roar building, the pitch of my heart rising alongside. Taking my courage in both hands, I flung open the door. The noise of the shower filled the small room as I groped for the switch. Light flooded the bathroom—and that's when I saw it.

Written across the steamy mirror, in letters maybe six inches high, were the words STOP DIGGING.



PART ONE

- CHAPTER 1 -

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

The first inkling that something was wrong was waking in darkness to find the cat pawing at my face. I must have forgotten to shut the kitchen door last night. Punishment for coming home drunk.

“Go away,” I groaned. Delilah mewed and butted me with her head. I tried to bury my face in the pillow but she continued rubbing herself against my ear, and eventually I rolled over and heartlessly pushed her off the bed.

She thumped to the floor with an indignant little *meep* and I pulled the duvet over my head, but even through the covers I could hear her scratching at the bottom of the door, rattling it in its frame.

The door was closed.

I sat up, my heart suddenly thumping, and Delilah leaped onto my bed with a glad little chirrup, but I snatched her to my chest, stilling her movements, listening.

I might well have forgotten to shut the kitchen door, or I could even have knocked it to without closing it properly. But my bedroom door opened outward—a quirk of the weird layout of my flat. There was no way Delilah could have shut herself inside. *Someone* must have closed it.

I sat, frozen, holding Delilah’s warm, panting body against my chest and trying to listen.

Nothing.

And then, with a gush of relief, it occurred to me—she'd probably been hiding under my bed and I'd shut her inside with me when I came home. I didn't remember closing my bedroom door, but I might have swung it absently shut behind me when I came in. To be honest, everything from the tube station onwards was a bit of a blur. The headache had started to set in on the journey home, and now that my panic was wearing off, I could feel it starting up again in the base of my skull. I *really* needed to stop drinking midweek. It had been okay in my twenties, but I just couldn't shake off the hangovers like I used to.

Delilah began squirming uneasily in my arms, digging her claws into my forearm, and I let her go while I reached for my dressing gown and belted it around myself. Then I scooped her up, ready to sling her out into the kitchen.

But when I opened the bedroom door, there was a man standing there.

There's no point in wondering what he looked like, because, believe me, I went over it about twenty-five times with the police. "Not even a bit of skin around his wrists?" they kept saying. No, no, and no. He had a hoodie on, and a bandanna around his nose and mouth, and everything else was in shadow. Except for his hands.

On these he was wearing latex gloves. It was that detail that scared the shit out of me. Those gloves said, "I know what I'm doing." They said, "I've come prepared." They said, "I might be after more than your money."

We stood there for a long second, facing each other, his shining eyes locked on to mine.

About a thousand thoughts raced through my mind: Where the hell is my phone? Why did I drink so much last night? I would have heard him come in if I'd been sober. Oh Christ, I wish Judah was here.

And most of all—those gloves. Oh my God, those gloves. They were so professional. So *clinical*.

I didn't speak. I didn't move. I just stood there, my ratty dressing gown gaping, and I shook. Delilah wriggled out of my unresisting hands and shot away up the hallway to the kitchen, and I just stood there, shaking.

Please, I thought. Please don't hurt me.

Oh God, where was my phone?

Then I saw something in the man's hands. My handbag—my new Burberry handbag, although that detail seemed monumentally unimportant. There was only one thing that mattered about that bag. My mobile was inside.

His eyes crinkled in a way that made me think he might be smiling beneath the bandanna, and I felt the blood drain from my head and my fingers, pooling in the core of my body, ready to fight or flee, whichever it had to be.

He took a step forwards.

"No . . ." I said. I wanted it to sound like a command, but it came out like a plea—my voice small and squeaky and quavering pathetically with fear. "N—"

But I didn't even get to finish. He slammed the bedroom door in my face, hitting my cheek.

For a long moment I stood, frozen, holding my hand to my face, speechless with the shock and pain. My fingers felt ice-cold, but there was something warm and wet on my face, and it took a moment for me to realize it was blood, that the molding on the door had cut my cheek.

I wanted to run back to bed, to shove my head under the pillows and cry and cry. But a small, ugly voice in my skull kept saying, *He's still out there. What if he comes back? What if he comes back for you?*

There was a sound from out in the hall, something falling, and I felt a rush of fear that should have galvanized me but instead paralyzed me. *Don't come back. Don't come back.* I realized I was holding my breath, and I made myself exhale, long and shuddering, and then slowly, slowly, I forced my hand out towards the door.

There was another crash in the hallway outside, breaking glass, and with a rush I grabbed the knob and braced myself, my bare toes dug into the old, gappy floorboards, ready to hold the door closed as long as I could. I crouched there, against the door, hunched over with my knees to my chest, and I tried to muffle

my sobs with my dressing gown while I listened to him ransacking the flat and hoped to God that Delilah had run out into the garden, out of harm's way.

At last, after a long time, I heard the front door open and shut, and I sat there, crying into my knees and unable to believe he'd really gone. That he wasn't coming back to hurt me. My hands felt numb and painfully stiff, but I didn't dare let go of the handle.

I saw again those strong hands in the pale latex gloves.

I don't know what would have happened next. Maybe I would have stayed there all night, unable to move. But then I heard Delilah outside, mewing and scratching at the other side of the door.

"Delilah," I said hoarsely. My voice was trembling so much I hardly sounded like myself. "Oh, Delilah."

Through the door I heard her purr, the familiar, deep, chainsaw rasp, and it was like a spell had been broken.

I let my cramped fingers loosen from the doorknob, flexing them painfully, and then stood up, trying to steady my trembling legs, and turned the door handle.

It turned. In fact it turned too easily, twisting without resistance under my hand, without moving the latch an inch. He'd removed the spindle from the other side.

Fuck.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I was trapped.

- CHAPTER 2 -

It took me two hours to prize my way out of my bedroom. I didn't have a landline, so I had no way of calling for help, and the window was covered by security bars. I broke my best nail file, hammering away at the latch, but at last I got the door open and I ventured out into the narrow hallway. There are only four rooms in my flat—kitchen, living room, bedroom, and tiny bathroom—and you can pretty much see the full extent of it from outside my bedroom, but I couldn't stop myself from peering into each doorway, even checking the cupboard in the hallway where I keep my hoover. Making sure he was really gone.

My head was pounding and my hands were shaking as I made my way outside and up the steps to my neighbor's front door, and I found myself looking over my shoulder into the dark street as I waited for her to answer. It was around four a.m., I guessed, and it took a long time and a lot of banging to wake her up. I heard grumbling, over the sound of Mrs. Johnson's feet clumping down her stairs, and her face when she cracked open the door was a mixture of bleary confusion and fright, but when she saw me huddled on the doorstep in my dressing gown, with blood on my face and on my hands, her expression changed in an instant and she took off the chain.

"Oh my days! Whatever's happened?"

"I got burgled." It was hard to talk. I don't know if it was the chilly autumn air, or the shock, but I had started shivering convulsively and my teeth chattered so hard I had a momentary horrible image of them shattering in my head. I pushed the thought away.

“You’re bleedin’!” Her face was full of distress. “Oh, bless my soul, come in, come in!”

She led the way into the paisley-carpeted entrance to her maisonette, which was small and dark and grimly overheated, but right now felt like a sanctuary.

“Sit down, sit down.” She pointed to a red plush sofa and then went creakily to her knees and began to fiddle with the gas fire. The gas popped and flared, and I felt the heat rise a degree as she got painfully to her feet again. “I’ll make you some hot tea.”

“I’m fine, honestly, Mrs. Johnson. Do you think—”

But she was shaking her head sternly.

“There’s nothin’ to beat hot sweet tea when you’ve had a shock.”

So I sat, my shaky hands clasped around my knees, while she rattled around in the tiny kitchen and then came back with two mugs on a tray. I reached out for the closest and took a sip, wincing at the heat against the cut on my hand. It was so sweet I could barely taste the dissolving blood in my mouth, which I supposed was a blessing.

Mrs. Johnson didn’t drink but just watched me, her forehead wrinkled in distress.

“Did he . . .” Her voice faltered. “Did he *hurt* you?”

I knew what she meant. I shook my head, but I took another scalding sip before I could trust myself to speak.

“No. He didn’t touch me. He slammed a door in my face—that’s the cut on my cheek. And then I cut my hand trying to get out of the bedroom. He’d locked me in.”

I had a jolting flash of myself battering at the lock with a nail file and a pair of scissors. Judah was always teasing about using the proper tools for the job—you know, not undoing a screw with the tip of a dinner knife, or prizing off a bike tire using a garden trowel. Only last weekend he’d laughed at my attempt to fix my showerhead with duct tape, and spent a whole afternoon painstakingly mending

it with epoxy resin. He was away in Ukraine and I couldn't think about him right now. If I did, I'd cry, and if I cried now, I might never stop.

"Oh, you poor love."

I swallowed.

"Mrs. Johnson, thank you for the tea—but I really came to ask, can I use your phone? He took my mobile, so I've got no way of calling the police."

"Of course, of course. Drink your tea, and then it's over there." She indicated a doily-covered side table, with what was probably the last turn-dial phone in London outside an Islington vintage-retro boutique. Obediently I finished my tea and then I picked up the phone. For a moment my finger hovered over the nine, but then I sighed. He was gone. What could they reasonably do now? It was no longer an emergency, after all.

Instead, I dialed 101 for nonemergency response and waited to be put through.

And I sat and thought about the insurance I didn't have, and the reinforced lock I hadn't installed, and the mess tonight had become.

I was still thinking about that, hours later, as I watched the emergency locksmith replace the crappy bolt-on latch of my front door with a proper deadlock, and listened to his lecture on home security and the joke that was my back door.

"That panel's nuffing but MDF, love. It'd take one kick to bash it in. Want me to show you?"

"No," I said hastily. "No, thanks. I'll get it fixed. You don't do doors, do you?"

"Nah, but I got a mate who does. I'll give you his number before I go. Meantime, you get your hubby to whack a good piece of eighteen-mil plywood over that panel. You don't want a repeat of last night."

"No," I agreed. Understatement of the century.

"Mate in the police says a quarter of all burglaries are repeats. Same guys come back for more."

“Great,” I said thinly. Just what I needed to hear.

“Eighteen-mil. Want me to write it down for your husband?”

“No, thanks. I’m not married.” And even in spite of my ovaries, I *can* remember a simple two-digit number.

“Aaaah, right, gotcha. Well, there you go, then,” he said, as if that proved something. “This doorframe ain’t nothing to write home about, neither. You want one of them London bars to reinforce it. Otherwise you can have the best lock in the business, but if they kick it out the frame you’re back in the same place as before. I got one in the van that might fit. Do you know them things I’m talking about?”

“I know what they are,” I said wearily. “A piece of metal that goes over the lock, right?” I suspected he was milking me for all the business he could get, but I didn’t care at this point.

“Tell you what”—he stood up, shoving his chisel in his back pocket—“I’ll do the London bar, and I’ll chuck in a piece of ply over the back door for free. I got a bit in the van about the right size. Chin up, love. He ain’t getting back in *this* way, at any rate.”

For some reason the words weren’t reassuring.

After he’d gone, I made myself a tea and paced the flat. I felt like Delilah after a tomcat broke in through the cat flap and pissed in the hallway—she had prowled every room for hours, rubbing herself up against bits of furniture, peeing into corners, reclaiming her space.

I didn’t go as far as peeing on the bed, but I felt the same sense of space invaded, a need to reclaim what had been violated. *Violated?* said a sarcastic little voice in my head. *Puh-lease, you drama queen.*

But I did feel violated. My little flat felt ruined—soiled and unsafe. Even describing it to the police had felt like an ordeal—yes, I saw the intruder; no, I can’t describe him. What was in the bag? Oh, just, you know, my life: money,

mobile phone, driver's license, medication, pretty much everything of use from my mascara right through to my travel card.

The brisk impersonal tone of the police operator's voice still echoed in my head.

"What kind of phone?"

"Nothing valuable," I said wearily. "Just an old iPhone. I can't remember the model, but I can find out."

"Thanks. Anything you can remember in terms of the exact make and serial number might help. And you mentioned medication—what kind, if you don't mind me asking?"

I was instantly on the defensive.

"What's my medical history got to do with this?"

"Nothing." The operator was patient, irritatingly so. "It's just some pills have got a street value."

I knew the anger that flooded through me at his questions was unreasonable—he was only doing his job. But the burglar was the person who'd committed the crime. So why did I feel like I was the one being interrogated?

I was halfway to the living room with my tea when there was a banging at the door—so loud in the silent, echoing flat that I tripped and then froze, half standing, half crouching in the doorway.

I had a horrible jarring flash of a hooded face, of hands in latex gloves.

It was only when the door thudded again that I looked down and realized that my cup of tea was now lying smashed on the hallway tiles and that my feet were soaked in rapidly cooling liquid.

The door banged again.

"Just a minute!" I yelled, suddenly furious and close to tears. "I'm coming! Will you stop banging the bloody door!"

"Sorry, miss," the policeman said when I finally opened the door. "Wasn't sure if you'd heard." And then, seeing the puddle of tea and the smashed shards of my cup: "Crikey, what's been going on here then? Another break-in? Ha-ha!"

It was the afternoon by the time the policeman finished taking his report, and when he left, I opened up my laptop. It had been in the bedroom with me, and it was the only bit of tech the burglar hadn't taken. Aside from my work, which was mostly not backed up, it had all my passwords on it, including—and I cringed as I thought about it—a file helpfully named “Banking stuff.” I didn't actually have my pin numbers listed. But pretty much everything else was there.

As the usual deluge of e-mails dropped into my in-box, I caught sight of one headed “Planning on showing up today ;)?” and I realized with a jolt that I'd completely forgotten to contact *Velocity*.

I thought about e-mailing, but in the end, I fetched out the twenty-pound note I kept in the tea caddy for emergency cab money and walked to the dodgy phone shop at the tube station. It took some haggling, but eventually the guy sold me a cheap pay-as-you-go plus SIM card for fifteen pounds and I sat in the café opposite and phoned the assistant features editor, Jenn, who has the desk opposite mine.

I told her what happened, making it sound funnier and more farcical than it really had been. I dwelled heavily on the image of me chipping away at the lock with a nail file and didn't tell her about the gloves, or the general sense of powerless terror, or the horribly vivid flashbacks that kept ambushing me just as I was rummaging for change, or stirring tea, or thinking of something else completely.

“Shit.” Her voice at the end of the crackly line was full of horror. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, more or less. But I won't be in today, I've got to clear up the flat.” Although, in actual fact, it wasn't that bad. He'd been commendably neat. For, you know, a criminal.

“God, Lo, you poor thing. Listen, do you want me to get someone else to cover you on this northern lights thing?”

For a minute I had no idea what she was talking about—then I remembered. The *Aurora*. A boutique super-luxury cruise liner traveling around the