

Lost and Found

Rachel Crowther

A YEAR AGO TODAY I lost my favourite handbag and found my husband. It seemed a fair exchange at the time, though not what I was expecting.

I'd left the handbag on a train. It didn't have much in it: my purse, my keys and my little leather diary were all in the pockets of my coat, because I didn't want to wear out the clasp on the bag by opening and closing it too often. But this made me more annoyed about losing it. I felt I hadn't made the best of it while I still had it.

I went to the lost property desk at the station the next evening without much hope of success. I'm the sort of person who can't leave stones unturned, however, and you could say that was lucky, because it turned out the man in front of me in the queue, hoping to find his umbrella, was my husband.

Not a new husband, you understand: it wasn't a case of love at first sight over the Network Southeast claim forms. No, it was my old husband. Michael. The husband I'd always had, at least until the day five years ago when he'd walked out—for good, I'd assumed—with no warning and no forwarding address.

It was an odd place to meet again, but it reminded me that we had things in common. Neither of us would dream of letting a lost umbrella go without at least filling in a form to record our regret at mislaying it. But then neither of us usually lost things. We were not careless people: rather the opposite, in fact. That made it all the more surprising that we managed to lose each other.

I knew as soon as I saw him that he would come back. I recognised his shoulders first, as he stood there patiently in the queue, and I thought, that's it: I might as well get used to that sight again. It could have been romantic, but it wasn't. We didn't bother with preliminaries, let alone a