

# Tales of **MIGRATION**

ARRIVING ADJUSTING BELONGING

## Extras online: Reading questions

This book comes with free multiple choice questions to check your basic understanding of the text. You can answer the questions after each story or whenever you are ready. Click on an answer and you receive immediate feedback.

With the help of these questions you can be sure that you have understood the plot.

Here are two sample questions:

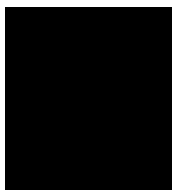
The narrator went to the National Portrait Gallery because

- she liked the art collection.
- she was cold.
- she wanted to meet a friend.

The girl she met in the lavatory had

- an unusual hair cut.
- friendly dark eyes.
- impressive eyebrows.

Scan this QR code to access the questions:



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## Abbreviations

adj.	adjective	p., pp.	page, pages
AE	American English	pl.	plural
BE	British English	sb.	somebody
derog	derogatory	sl.	slang
infml.	informal	sth.	something
n.	noun		

The annotations in this collection use British or American English in accordance with the setting of the story.

# Loose Change

Andrea Levy

I am not in the habit of making friends of strangers. I'm a Londoner. Not even little grey-haired old ladies passing comment on the weather can shame a response from me. I'm a Londoner – aloof sweats from my pores<sup>1</sup>. But I was in a bit of a predicament<sup>2</sup>; my  
5 period was two days early and I was caught unprepared.

I'd just gone into the National Portrait Gallery<sup>3</sup> to get out of the cold. It had begun to feel, as I'd walked through the bleak streets, like acid was being thrown at my exposed skin. My fingers were numb searching in my purse<sup>4</sup> for change for the tampon machine;  
10 I barely felt the pull of the zip. But I didn't have any coins.

I was forced to ask in a loud voice in this small lavatory<sup>5</sup>. 'Has anyone got three twenty-pence pieces?'

Everyone seemed to leave the place at once – all of them Londoners I was sure of it. Only she was left – fixing her hair in the  
15 mirror.

'Do you have change?'

She turned round slowly as I held out a ten pound note. She had the most spectacular eyebrows. I could see the lines of black hair, like magnetised iron filings<sup>6</sup>, tumbling across her eyes and  
20 almost joining above her nose. I must have been staring to recall<sup>7</sup> them so clearly. She had wide black eyes and a round face with such a solid jawline<sup>8</sup> that she looked to have taken a gentle whack from Tom and Jerry's cartoon frying pan. She dug into the pocket

1 aloof sweats from my pores: extremely reserved and unfriendly 2 predicament: dilemma 3 National Portrait Gallery: famous art gallery in London, see also p. 125 and QR code p. 134 4 purse: place where you keep your money 5 lavatory: toilet 6 iron filings: Eisenspäne 7 to recall: to remember 8 jawline: lower part of the face

of her jacket and pulled out a bulging<sup>1</sup> handful of money. It was coppers<sup>2</sup> mostly. Some of it tinkled on to the floor. But she had change: too much – I didn't want a bag full of the stuff myself.

'Have you a five pound note as well?' I asked.

She dropped the coins on it to the basin area<sup>3</sup>, spreading them 5 out into the soapy puddles of water that were lying there. Then she said, 'You look?' She had an accent but I couldn't tell then where it was from; I thought maybe Spain.

'Is this all you've got?' I asked. She nodded. 'Well look, let me just take this now ...' I picked three coins out of the pile. 'Then 10 I'll get some change in the shop and pay them back to you.' Her gaze was as keen as a cat with string<sup>4</sup>. 'Do you understand – only I don't want all those coins?'

'Yes,' she said softly.

I was grateful. I took the money. But when I emerged from the 15 cubicle<sup>5</sup> the girl and her handful of change were gone.

I found her again staring at the portrait of Darcey Bussell<sup>6</sup>. Her head was inclining<sup>7</sup> from one side to the other as if the painting were a dress she might soon try on for size.

I approached her about the money but she just said, 'This is 20 good picture.'

Was it my explanation left dangling or the fact that she liked the dreadful painting that caused my mouth to gape<sup>8</sup>?

'Really, you like it?' I said.

'She doesn't look real. It looks like ...' Her eyelids fluttered 25 sleepily as she searched for the right word, 'A dream.'

That particular picture always reminded me of the doodles<sup>9</sup> girls drew in their rough books at school.

'You don't like?' she asked.

I shrugged.

'You show me one you like,' she said. 30

1 bulging: prall 2 coppers (here): Kleingeld 3 basin area: the place where you wash your hands 4 (to be) keen as a cat with string: (to be) very eager or enthusiastic 5 cubicle: Toilettenzelle 6 Darcey Bussell: English ballet dancer (\*1969) 7 to incline: to bend 8 to gape: to stay open 9 doodles: Gekritzelt

As I mentioned before, I'm not in the habit of making friends of strangers, but there was something about this girl. Her eyes were encircled with dark shadows so that even when she smiled – introducing herself cheerfully as Laylor – they remained as mournful<sup>1</sup> as a glum<sup>2</sup> kid at a party. I took this fraternization<sup>3</sup> as defeat<sup>4</sup> but I had to introduce her to a better portrait.

Alan Bennett<sup>5</sup> with his mysterious little brown bag didn't impress her at all. She preferred the photograph of Beckham<sup>6</sup>. Germaine Greer<sup>7</sup> made her top lip curl and as for A. S. Byatt<sup>8</sup>, she laughed out loud, 'This is child make this?'

We were almost making a scene. Laylor couldn't keep her voice down and people were beginning to watch us. I wanted to be released<sup>9</sup> from my obligation<sup>10</sup>.

'Look let me buy us both a cup of tea,' I said. 'Then I can give you back your money.'

She brought out her handful of change again as we sat down at a table – eagerly passing it across to me to take some for the tea.

'No, I'll get this,' I said.

Her money jangled like a win on a slot machine<sup>11</sup> as she tipped it back into her pocket. When I got back with the teas, I pushed over the twenty-pences I owed<sup>12</sup> her. She began playing with them on the tabletop – pushing one around the other two in a figure of eight. Suddenly she leant towards me as if there were a conspiracy<sup>13</sup> between us and said, 'I like art.' With that announcement a light briefly came on in those dull eyes to reveal that she was no more than eighteen. A student perhaps.

'Where are you from?' I asked.

'Uzbekistan<sup>14</sup>,' she said.

1 mournful: very sad 2 glum: unhappy 3 fraternization: friendly behaviour  
 4 defeat: Niederlage 5 Alan Bennett: English actor and author (\*1934) 6 David Beckham: London-born football player (\*1975) 7 Germaine Greer: Australian author and well-known feminist (\*1939) 8 Antonia S. Byatt: English critic and writer (\*1936)  
 9 released: freed 10 obligation: sth. you have to do 11 slot machine: Spielautomat  
 12 to owe sb. sth. [əʊ]: jdm. etwas schulden 13 conspiracy [kən'spɪrəsi]: Verschwörung  
 14 Uzbekistan: country in central Asia, see also p. 125 and QR code p. 134

# Background Information

## Loose Change

### National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery or NPG is an art gallery in London, just next to Trafalgar Square. It focuses on portraits of famous British people, including many kings and queens, but also politicians and military heroes, writers (such as William Shakespeare), actors, singers and dancers, sports personalities and much more. ► Scan the QR Code on p. 134. You can find the paintings mentioned in this story by searching the NPG collections using the name of the person as your keyword.

### Uzbekistan (capital: Tashkent)

Uzbekistan is a country in Central Asia, north of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. It is a former member of the Soviet Union and gained its independence in 1991. Uzbekistan has a population of about 36 million people. The main language is Uzbek, but Russian is widely spoken. The main religion is Islam. Uzbekistan is a presidential republic with authoritarian tendencies. Its government has been accused of various human rights violations. ► Scan the QR Code on p. 134 for a map of Uzbekistan and the surrounding countries.

### Immigration from the Caribbean

After the Second World War and the end of the British Empire, large numbers of immigrants came to Britain from the Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad, St Kitts, Barbados, and other states). Since they had been born in what were then British colonies, they were considered 'citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies'. They are known as the **Windrush generation** after the name of one of the ships that brought them to England. Many of these immigrants have been economically successful, with higher rates of university attendance and employment than other minority groups. The majority of them live in or near London.