

Raymond Carver Summary

“The Train” is a short story written by Raymond Carver and included in his compilation *Cathedral* from 1983. Carver is a celebrated writer whose writing finds greater truths in the seemingly mundane, often revealing new layers at the end of his stories. “The Train” opens abruptly on its central character, Miss Dent, wielding a gun and threatening a cowering man. She is obviously angry and the reader is given vague clues that he has wronged her in some way. Leaving the man alive, Miss Dent walks into the train station’s empty waiting room and is soon joined by an older man and woman who arrive together. The man is well dressed but has no shoes on, and the woman with him is clearly agitated by what has occurred this night. Neither character is ever named, nor is their relationship ever truly explained. Miss Dent attempts to stay out of their conversations but cannot help overhearing disjointed, often nonsensical sounding pieces of the newcomers’ evening. Eventually the train arrives, all three climb aboard, and the train leaves the station. Carver strictly controls what the reader understands throughout with his use of third person omniscient narration. This point of view mirrors those of the characters within as they move through one another’s lives without knowing or understanding anything of importance about the other.