

# Traveling Lightheaded

*by* Kristin Fouquet

He lit my cigarette even though he didn't want me to smoke. Buying me drinks all night, he didn't complain, but he thought I drank too much. It had been four months since we had stopped dating. He still looked good, but he didn't seem happy. I smiled, but it was a lie. I wondered why it didn't work out between us.

"So do you miss New Orleans," I asked.

He shook his head. "I like Memphis. I think you'd like Memphis."

I loved New Orleans. I couldn't imagine ever moving away. "Yeah? Well, I'd like to visit sometime."

Drinks after midnight in a crowded smoky bar tend to make half-baked ideas seem like exciting endeavors.

"We could drive there tonight and you could take the train back tomorrow," he suggested.

"Really?" It sounded like an adventure and I was bored.

Leaving The Abbey, I waved to a friend leaning against a lamppost. "Where y'all going?"

"Memphis," I declared with a small laugh.

It was dark as we headed out of New Orleans.

Waking up in a car is disconcerting. The morning sun viciously shone on me. I squinted at the white vinyl upholstery.

"We're almost there," he said.

My head pounded. I tried to swallow, but my mouth was dry.

The Victorian house wore its charm despite needing repair. An upright piano stood on the front porch.

Once inside, my anxiety intensified. I had to go to work the next day.

"What time's the train to New Orleans?"

His tone was casual. "Oh, I forgot, there isn't one on Sunday."

I felt like trapped prey. Eyeing the exits, I contemplated escape. How well did I really know him? How could I have been a willing party to my own kidnapping? Is this how serial killers got their victims?

Responding to my apparently freaked out state, he brought me a Valium and a glass of water.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'll drive you back in a little while, after I take a nap."

I searched his eyes, hoping for traces of sincerity among his irises. "Really?"

He nodded. Pointing to a closet, he said, "There are some dresses in there that might fit you." Leaving the room, he scratched his head and mumbled, "I need to go to bed."

On an empty stomach, the Valium kicked in quickly. Alone, I decided to peek in the closet. There were a few floral cotton dresses, but something else caught my attention. I took out an antique wedding

dress; the old lace had browned with age. It was beautiful, tempting me to try it on.

Standing in front of a full length mirror, I stared at myself in the dress. His voice startled me.

"I'm so glad it fits."

