

## I Could, You Know, I Could

*See you later*

*See you at pick-up*

*Have a good day, yeah*

The children are through the gate. The small talk is over. Time to head off.

I could go straight home, make the day's second coffee, sit down at my desk and stay there for six hours, skipping lunch. Volley emails back and forth and back and forth until the alarm goes for school pick-up and I wonder why my back hurts and my soul aches.

Or I could cross the road, take a right down that little lane where the beech trees meet above, speed up into a run, fling my phone into the hedge and leave it all behind.

I could fling my clothes off too, stride naked and gigantic across the escarpment: the model for the future-famous Escaping Woman of the Cotswolds. Carved into the limestone beneath the turf, famous for her bonny calves and her wild eyes: two campfires kept burning by devotees.

I could leap over the quarries, shouting joyous sounds that echo tenfold from the rocks, startling the dogwalkers. Their hounds would run after me, yelping, forming a bushy tail of fur and noise as I flick drones out of the sky and guide gliders gently into rainbows.

I could cross the Severn with a single step, jog round Wales before lunchtime, cut the top off the Sugarloaf for my tea, and drink it leaning against the mountains, staring back at my old life, and laughing.

I could do all this. I could.