

4. OPPORTUNITY COMES CALLING

Since Estelle has opened herself to Dan, she expects something on his part to acknowledge how far she has come. For the time being, she settles with the fact that they spend so much time together. They take turns getting together at each other's place. They cook together. She helps him make pasta. He help her do more extravagant things. Cream sauces and interesting combinations of spices. They both have expanded their cooking repertoire.

She assumes that the time spent together speaks for how they truly feel about each other. They love each other's company. They joke and watch movies together. It seems to perfect. They only expect this to go on with out end.

"When we graduate, we need to get a place together."

He tries to be practical, "When we graduate, we need to get jobs. I'm going to have to pay for these student loans."

"I thought that your parents were giving you money."

Dan answers, "They still are. And I have a scholarship. But I also have loans to pay."

"They're not going to make you pay it all back when you graduate," Estelle tells him. For the time being, she is glad that she has been working almost full time. She is going to graduate and not owe a thing.

Dan asks her, "How did you manage with tuition?"

"I've been on a Hope scholarship. It pays for all my school. That means all I had to pay for was my apartment and food."

"Wow," he reacts. "It's tough coming here from out of state."

"It's my main payback for doing so well in high school. I've been committed to school all these years."

He wonders, "I don't know how you can do it after all these years."

"I manage." She smiles back at him. "You're not doing so badly yourself."

"But I am going to have to work. Would you ever move to the North. If I got a job up there, would you come with me?"

Her answer is ambiguous, "I'd have to find a job up there. And I'd have to make sure that I would really enjoy living up there."

He counters, "But I'd be up there."

"I don't even know if I'd like it."

At this point, she is not sure that she could even bear living up north even if it was better for the both of them. Sure, she probably could find a job, but that's not enough. For her it really is a question of lifestyle. She may not be able to adapt to the fast-paced Northern world.

Estelle feels like a bit of a baby. She has wrapped herself in a cocoon, and she wants to remain there. She realizes how difficult it was to warm up to Dan. Now she can't imagine being without him. But she doesn't want her love to force her to move up North. She imagine herself freezing to death in one of those ice storms. She's heard stories about cars covered in ten feet of snow, their occupants unable to escape their frozen imprisonments. They die after the gas gives out and they can no longer keep themselves warm.

Just thinking about her exile, Estelle feels a chill. As the nights get colder, she is already feeling an emptiness. She longs for the warmth of summer. Her only consolation is the heat of

his passionate love. She survives on his affectionate kisses. She only has to look at him and imagine that wave of attraction traveling across her body. When he finally touches she melts completely. He has become her everything.

Even their disagreement has only incited that same attraction that has become their staple. Like the hearty meals, their love has become necessary sustenance. They live in amorous embrace. When they are apart from each other, the fates draw them back together.

His kisses are long and sweet. She is calmed by their gentle invitation. She can already feel her union with him. And he lights up to her body. He uses his hands as a sculptor would to shape the forms. There is a delight in his craft. Whether he admires her with his eyes or enjoys her figure by touch, it is a perfection that only makes him more devoted to her. His kisses make their way from her shoulder to her breasts. Her dress is already half-open. They are sitting on the couch after their filling meal. Again, their loving is only made easier by their indulgence. The exotic tastes welcome them to the delicious flavors of the body.

Estelle has accustomed herself to his body. And he is again drunk on her perfume. More than any wine could do, its blend with her distinctive scent is the one thing that arouses his desire to such a fever pitch. Once the frenzy takes him over, nothing can distract him. He wants more and more of him. And she feels just as alive. They can't contain themselves. They seek that deeper connection that has been calling them all evening.

As they make their way to the bedroom, there is a total naturalness to every gesture. They are one body awaiting to be rejoined. When they finally lose themselves in sweet embrace, they can barely feel the caresses. They become spirits. Their minds merge. Together they travel to another space and time.

The transformation is so overwhelming, that the two of them have trouble accounting for what has happened. There is so much that they want to say to each other. But the love-making renders them silent. It is the passion screaming out in the room. As it blares its roaring tone, it drowns out in sound any contrary melody. This is the music of the universe and they have become part of it.

She lies on her bed looking up at him. A delicate smile traces itself on her face. They are only in the middle of their journey. She already feels so satisfied. She again gives herself to the dream. He kisses that smile and make a myriad of images come alive. They shine in a magnificent summer day. The sweat binds them together in the same primeval sea. He tastes the salty traces on her skin. The body become electric. She shakes. She tingles. She cries out for him.

They pull together. She slides her hands along her back and rests them on his firm butt. She squeezes tight to bring him closer. This only makes the sensation more intense. She gasps. She is breathless. He pushes her further with his kisses. Now she is that deafening sound. She cries out. The world cannot catch up with the drama. They are so involved in something full of meaning.

They writhe together. They ache and renew themselves in kisses and caresses. Their bodies are indivisible. They merge completely. There is no place where he is that she is not there as well. She tries to open her eyes, but the dream is too much to bear. She gives in. She floats on endlessly in the fulfillment.

They stare into each other's eyes and smile. It helps them sustain their excitement. They

both concentrate so that they don't lose their commitment to the moment. This is way more than physical. But already their bodies have shown an unbelievable endurance. Their muscles mold to their desires. They stretch themselves as in the most exerting workout. They live beyond themselves and are nourished in that enjoyment. Just as he is about to give out, he kisses her deeply to draw her energy to him. He is now renewed. And what they have saved for so long becomes spent in an even greater effort. He wraps his arms around her and draws her to him.

As they lie together, there is still that heavy warmth of the bodies that pervade the room. Everything reminds them of what has held them together in the dark reaches of the night. They are pioneers as they make their way into new territory. There is now a stillness as they dare not disturb the phantoms that they have awakened. Their bodies have transfigured. They almost glow in the dark from all the energy that they radiate.

He runs his hand along her arm until he is gripping her hand in his. She can see his satisfaction in the faint light. She smiles back at him.

The next day Estelle questions how easily he has dismissed her misgivings about their future. It is six months away. But she cannot leave it to destiny to give her an answer. Her life has been so completely turned upside down. For so long, she felt that her plans depended only on herself. Even when her parents moved to Florida, she was convinced that it was all for the best. It only gave her the independence that she wished for. But now she is depending on Dan to help create a future. This is not like her at all.

Estelle cannot imagine a moment that his presence doesn't touch her in some way. Even at work, she has these sudden blushes of feeling that sweep over her. She can sense the sparkle that he seems to bring to everything that she does. He doesn't have to call. He doesn't have to do anything. He is just there.

Sometimes she touches her necklace just to bring the magic to life. He almost appears by her command. His light is there to battle her darkness. She smiles when she thinks about the silliness of a supernatural influence. But he has become so much part of her that she hungers for him when they are apart.

Estelle values the time when she is alone. It helps to give her perspective on these new feelings. This is more than love. But she does not want to be crushed by its weight. It has become all the more important that he says something to her. At least, Estelle needs some kind of pledge from him. She has opened her heart to him. She has nowhere to go.

She wonders if she is ready for marriage. Aren't they living together most of the time. Wouldn't a proposal only make their lifestyle official? But she needs him to say that he is willing to sacrifice himself for her. At this point, he is only willing to embrace the pleasure. But can he ever share her pain. Even now, she is in need of something to assuage these doubts.

Love doesn't go away just because of her questions. That is what she is most afraid of. She cannot turn her emotions on and off. At the same time, her common sense is reminding her how exposed she is. All he has to do is return to the North without her, and her world will crumble around her.

Estelle cannot believe that she is telling herself this. From the moment that her parents moved to Florida, she promised to guard independence. Even when her parents questioned their move, Estelle gave them her blessing. They would feel better in the warmer climate. And Estelle was confident enough to live on her own. They told her that the door was always open if

she wanted to live with them. She welcomed the risk. And she has learned so much about herself by acquiring this independence.

While at work, she continues to think about her expectations for Dan. She is hardly a weak woman. Although she realizes that her love is so much part of her, she will not throw away the very thing that makes her who she is. She is convinced that she cannot wait idly by for him to make up his mind. She has to influence him.

Dan and Estelle have spent so much time together that she decides that she needs a night out with Lily. They have barely communicated in the last month. Lily has encouraged her in her relationship, but she has wanted Estelle to temper her love with moderation.

Lily tells her, "You know what happened last time that you broke up with a guy."

They meet at a restaurant on Courtland near downtown. It is a quaint place in a restored house.

Estelle admits, "I know what happened. But I was in love."

"Just be prepared. You know what love can do."

Estelle chew on her sea bass. "I know, I know. They say love is blind. But I have it under control."

Lily takes a sip of wine, "This is the time that you better figure it out. Not when you're married and living in the same house with two children."

Estelle reassures her, "That dear is a long way off."

Lily is firm, "It will be sooner than you think if you don't hurry up and make a plan."

Estelle looks a little dismayed, "I'm not the one who is against making a plan."

The restaurant is fairly crowded for a Tuesday night. It has become a very popular spot. Estelle looks around at the other people eating.

Lily wonders, "So the word proposal hasn't passed his lips?"

Estelle focuses the conversation, "He's the one who's thinking about moving up North. He says Boston or Philadelphia. His parents live in Boston."

Lily makes a face. "It is cold in Boston. Could you take it up there?"

"That's exactly what I've been saying. It might be fun to make a snowman now and then. But do you think that I want to be an icicle waiting until spring to thaw out?"

Lily states, "I can think of worse things. Like trudging through slush with your boots leaking. Or it being so cold that even your thick mitts won't protect your hands. You, dear, are a sun baby through and through. I don't see you making angels in the snow."

They both shiver just thinking about the weather. It's already cold enough for them on a late fall night. A Northern winter will only strain the love that Estelle has worked so hard to develop.

Estelle momentarily changes the subject, "The food is good here."

Lily adds, "We could call this a find. We have to come here more often."

Estelle suggests, "I could bring Dan."

"Let's call it our secret," Lily objects.

Estelle can't imagine keeping secrets. But this seems too frivolous to make a deal about. Maybe that's what she needs. A whole other life. That way she'd have a place to escape if things started to go badly with Dan.

As she sits drinking coffee with Lily, Estelle realizes how long it's been since she has

really been away from his side. Even when she brushes her finger along her necklace, she does not feel his presence. Perhaps, Lily is exercising some kind of counter spell.

The coffee has made Estelle jumpy. And the wine had already her excited. She can't imagine going home and going to bed.

Lily suggests, "Let's go that new place off that new place off Marietta Street called E-Merge."

Estelle get a big grin on her face, "I'm game."

As they drive over there, it almost seems like old times.

The music is pumping and the lights are blaring. The two women get lost in the haze. They come up for air and pull down a couple of drinks. Otherwise, they are lost in the sweating bodies that incessant rhythms. They both seem out of practice. The music is such a contrast to the calm to which Estelle has become accustomed. She looks at the other girls in the place. They all seem revved up for action. There is a hollow emptiness in the faces. They are all too eager for the quick satisfaction of the moment.

Estelle watches with a uneasiness as a couple make out on the leather couch in front of her. Glasses spill as they flail about in their desperate displays of affection. Everything is about the immediacy of the moment. Time lost is lives lost. They have all put themselves on the line for E-Merge. They are in sudden death and the final buzzers are about to sound.

One wandering soul tries to latch on to Estelle. She is looking for help. But she is on her own. Lily is nowhere to be seen.

"That's a great dress."

Estelle thanks him but refuses to look in her eye.

"Hi, my name is Jason." He is slurring his words.

Estelle is frantically looking around for Lily. When she finally gets her attention, Jason tries to foist his friend David on Lily.

Lily turns to Estelle, "He's kind of cute."

When Estelle tries to signal Lily that it's time to go, she realizes that even Lily has succumbed to the body snatchers. Estelle is done for. She didn't drive here. And she has no intention to pay for a cab. David is starting to touch Lily, and she seems to be giving way to his lead.

Jason looks at his friend getting some action, and he tries to do the same with Estelle. She pushes him away. "I'm in a relationship."

Jason offers his take on things, "He's not here. Why not enjoy yourself while you can?"

Since she is in love with Dan, Jason looks all the more ridiculous. "I can show you things that your man never dreamed of."

Estelle has a come back, "Like puking on yourself."

As she tries to run away, another guy approaches her, "Hi, I'm Tom. I'm not like all the rest of the guys here."

Estelle laughs it off, "How should I know?"

He explains, "You could come over to my place, and I could show you."

"I can't wait. Why don't you run ahead now, and I catch up to you?"

He looks confused, "But I haven't told you where I live."

She answers him, "I'll just follow the smell of alcohol all the way back to your place."

Tom gives her a look as if it all makes sense.

Estelle rushes over to find Lily. "I think that we need to get out of here."

"David just went to get us all drinks."

Estelle advises, "David's a hardy guy. He can finish them on his own."

"I was sort of getting in with him. We made out while you were hiding."

Estelle tells her, "I wasn't hiding. I was trying to escape Jason, and I ran into another creep."

"Jason's not so bad. He gave me a backrub while David was in the bathroom."

Estelle feels that her head is spinning around with all the craziness. She just needs to get out of this place. She is wondering about Lily. Lily just seems to want something different out of life.

Estelle finally gets Lily in the car. Estelle wonders if Lily would have gone home with David if Estelle wasn't here to protect her. What has she been doing all this time that Estelle hasn't been around?

They don't say much as the drive home. It's not as if Lily has drunk too much. But she is a little spaced out. Estelle feels as if she has been put through the ringer. She feels secure that she is with Dan. And she has no second thoughts about missing this kind of life. Night life is not her kind of life.

Estelle fears what she would have to do if she was thrown back into the fish pond. She needs to swim further upstream if she's going to avoid the currents pulling her back in to the mess.

When she gets into bed, Estelle misses Dan's body against hers. She tries to imagine him close to her as she falls asleep. It just isn't the same.

By the time Christmas rolls around, Estelle has hopes to visit Dan's family in Boston. But problems at work require Estelle to cover some shifts of her co-workers. This means that she is unable to get away. There are also some accounts to get taken care of before the end of the year. It's not simply a matter of the holidays. There is simply not time to finish if Estelle takes off. Even her family misses her in Florida. This is the first holiday season that she has had to spend on her own. It is especially tough now that she is with Dan.

When they finally reunite, Estelle does everything that she can to blot out the past couple of weeks from her mind. And indeed they renew their commitment to each other. Just seeing him again makes her jump for joy. He has even brought her a special gift. In her heart, she almost expects him to propose. But it is a beautiful silk robe. She welcomes the gift and model it for him.

"I think it's a little cold," she says. "Maybe we could rush to bed and cuddle together." After the heat underneath the covers, she can barely remember their time apart.

With the beginning of their final semester in college, they realize how urgent it is to start their future plans. But they have only put off the inevitable discussion. She is looking at opportunities in Atlanta. He has his mind set on moving. But he wants to remain with her. So he isn't going to do anything to threaten their relationship. He just pretends that they can somehow work it out.

They are eating at a Thai restaurant on Peachtree Road. She feels that he wants to tell her something.

“I think that I’m going to be able to stay in Atlanta after graduation.”

“Maybe we could look for a place.”

He is cautious, “I still want to get everything in stone before I do anything rash.”

Rash? Estelle feels a little insulted by his description. She is trying to hold her tongue. She has given him too much already to let a little disagreement spoil things. She doesn’t want to do anything to jeopardize all their work up to this point. If she doesn’t pressure him, she feels that he will eventually come around to her point of view.

For the time being, if Estelle can just drop little hints. He just seems to be doing all that he can to deflect her hints.

Things start to get more intense after Dan does some interviewing in March. It really seems as if he might commit to one job in Detroit. There is also an offer in Chicago. But he still is holding out for something in Atlanta. Estelle begins to appreciate the effort that he is making to accede to her wishes.

Even though things are up in the air, changes in Estelle’s life seem to cast the die in her favor. She gets a phone call from Stephanie Hamer.

“You were supposed to call me”

“What?”

“I heard what happened to you. It didn’t surprise me.”

Estelle continues to play dumb. “I’m not sure what you mean at all.”

“Everyone in the office seems to know,” Stephanie informs her. “We had a little problem. It seems Phil was taking advantage of the women being interviewed here. We’re a very professional firm. We can’t have that kind of nonsense going on.”

Estelle still isn’t sure what to say. She doesn’t want to feel like a victim here. The opportunity that she had dreamed about is now being handed to her once more.

“I did have some problems with him. But I caught on quite early.”

Stephanie wonders, “Why didn’t you contact me? The reputation of the firm depends on us hearing about such things.”

Estelle explains her actions, “He was the one who got me the interview.”

Stephanie details the situation, “It doesn’t matter where we found you. You were great for what we need. I guess you assumed that he had more influence over me. I gave him credit for referring you to me. But it wasn’t as if he was the most valuable worker here. I had no hesitation in letting him go.”

Estelle feels a sense of power as she hears Stephanie describe the final result. It took a lot for Estelle to have gotten up the nerve not to see Phil again. It had been difficult for her to recognize what was actually going on. At that point, she was impressionable and starved for love.

Stephanie wants Estelle to come in and see her. “I want to get you ready for everything. It’ll only be a few months before the internship starts. I want you to be clear about everything.

It turns out that the internship is only the beginning. Stephanie feels guilty about Phil’s deception. She is doing everything that she can and more to make up for the mistake. Admittedly, the internship was not originally intended as a bridge to full-time employment. Now, Stephanie wants to insure that end. That is also why she makes Estelle come in again. If it was only an internship, she could have handled everything else just before Estelle started. Since

Stephanie is considering Estelle for a permanent job, she wants to make sure that her judgement is correct. Even if Phil had taken advantage of her, Estelle may not have been the perfect candidate for the position. Stephanie wants to confirm her initial outlook about Estelle. She doesn't want to make it seem as if she is simply pitying Estelle.

Suddenly, there has been a real change in Estelle's life. She is now committed to staying in Atlanta. She has not even hesitated to accept the offer. And she really has fallen in love with the idea that the job may be permanent. She considers that this may hardly seem fair to Dan. Her, she has asked him to weigh all the options. When she gets an offer that finalizes her plans, she doesn't give it a second thought. But this has been part of their plan all along. Over time, there was always a possibility that they might leave. But Estelle didn't want to uproot her life in Atlanta.

Estelle is helping Dan make dinner when she shares the news with him. He is unsure what to say. He realizes that she has made her decision. He hates the fact that he hasn't been consulted. On the other hand, he realizes that she hasn't changed their original plan.

"I'll do what I can to find a job here. I just don't have the options that you do. I don't have another job at this point. I have to start working as soon as I graduate."

She can sense that he is digging at her ever so slightly. All that bit about the other job. He is making himself seem like poor little Dan. Estelle hardly feels apologetic. She has wanted this job before she even met him. Now she feels that he might need to retaliate for her demonstration of independence. This is something that she is not really used to.

Estelle tries to let things blow over. At dinner, she doesn't talk about the job. She knows that he will continue to be looking. And she doesn't want to interfere. She recognizes that she needs to be supportive no matter what the outcome.

Things get a little tense when Dan has to leave Atlanta for three days to go to Philadelphia. Now, it seems like he has a firm offer. His time away reminds her of the fragility of their love. She doesn't want to lose him. She wonders what she will do if he comes back with a job in hand. It seems as if she is holding her breath all the time that he is gone.

She used to be able to retreat into herself. Now she has given so much of that emotional space to Dan. There is nowhere to recharge herself.

Even if his job paid well, she can't imagine quitting work to follow him. It seems as if both of them are digging in to protect the individual choice. There is hardly any room in the middle for them to negotiate. He is exaggerating his helplessness in trying to find a job in Atlanta. And Estelle already has her sights set on the job at Stephanie's firm.

When Dan returns from Philadelphia, Estelle seems relieved at the news. She picks him up at the airport in a sign of good faith. The traffic is a little heavy and she has trouble negotiating a parking place. But he weaves his way through the crowd to find her. It seems like a symbolic first step.

"It was crazy with the weather up there. There was this terrible rain storm. And it was really cold for late April."

He gives her a kiss. He can feel the warmth of the Georgia spring pass through his body. It makes him even more excited to see Estelle again.

"It's great to have you home. How did it go?" Estelle is almost reluctant to ask about the job. She knows that he will bring it up on his own. She waits for him to talk about it. For a few

minutes there is an awkward silence.

“Traffic’s not too bad,” he remarks. He also is waiting for the right moment to talk about the job.

“It was a little heavy coming in here. But it’s quieted down.”

She is concentrating on the road as she drives along I-85. There are still a fair number of cars around. She has to make her way around a couple of SUV’s that are taking up two lanes.

Estelle comments, “Some of those drivers think that the whole highway is theirs.”

“They are pretty crazy,” Dan adds.

She looks over at him. He has his eyes closed.

“You look exhausted.”

Dan admits, “I’m just glad to be home. I just need to sleep.”

He sounds as if he wants to be alone.

“I can just drop you off,” she suggests.

“No I want you to stay.”

When they finally arrive at his apartment, he is totally dead to the world. He is hardly going to be good company for the evening. She helps him with his things.

“I better go,” she says. “Otherwise, you’re going to fall asleep on my shoulder.”

He hasn’t realized how tired he is. She does what she can to prop him up. Then he gives her a kiss. He tries to muster up some passion. She feels as if she is kissing a baby just waking up to the world.

Dan tries to make up to her, “I owe you one. “Tomorrow, I’ll cook dinner.”

As she drives home, she wonders how he got away without saying anything about Philadelphia. It doesn’t seem like a good sign.

To make up for his abruptness of the night before, Dan takes Estelle out to dinner. He plans to share all the news from his trip

“I’m really sorry that I didn’t say anything last night. I think that I feel a little desperate now. I don’t think that they were even going to offer me the job. They wanted someone with more experience. They hinted that maybe I’d be more of an asset after a couple of years experience.”

“That’s too bad.” She tries to be sympathetic.

“They did tell me that there were some great opportunities overseas. They even have offices abroad. They told me that they might be able to hook me up. If it worked out, there would be a job there in a year or two.

She can hardly imagine moving. For the time being, she consoles herself with the thought that he won’t be going to Philadelphia.

That back at his apartment, he reminds her why they are together. His kisses are deep and satisfying. She drives deep into his soul for the comfort that she needs. Even the few days away have been too much. She welcomes him home with open arms and a passionate soul.

The spring hurries along. Things are getting a little scary as the end of the semester approaches. Estelle has kept up with her classes. But for the last few years, school has given her an identity. Now that anchor is being cut loose. She feels like everything is flying off in different directions. She is still unclear where she stands with Dan he has barely resolved any of his employment questions. He can’t imagine moving back to Boston to live with his parents.

Dan has done so well in his engineering program. And there had been all these great prospects. He realizes that he has been a little ambitious. Whatever opportunity comes his way will have to be his. He does hear about a job in Atlanta. But the pay is hardly sufficient to pay for all his expenses. After he graduates, he can no longer depend on help from his parents. He had thought that they might bless him with a sizeable graduation gift. But he is not holding out for that. He has to make something happen on his own.

Just as he nears graduation from Georgia Tech, he land the opportunity that he has been waiting for. He has just been hired by a firm that wants to use his skills to maintain a damn in Egypt. He will be gone at least six months.

When she hears the news, Estelle is mortified, "You're not going to take the job in Egypt."

"Take it, I'm already there.

There is little Estelle can say. She thought that he would at least discuss things with her. If that's what their love mean, then let him just go to Egypt. She can pine away all summer long waiting for his return.

It's not as if she can follow him. She's been raised on silly stories of young blondes being kidnaped for the sex slave trade. Even if these rumors are totally unsubstantiated, they're enough to freak her out.

"My family would hate me if I moved away."

"They don't even live here anymore. You're twenty three. If you don't start living your own life now, you're going to be a spoiled child all your life."

"I'm from the South. You're a Yankee boy. You don't understand. Down here we're all about family."

She knows that there's more to it than that. If she moves to Cairo, then she'll only have him. She's not ready to marry him, much less move in together. If she has to give up those honey kisses so be it. That's the price of growing up.

Everything is moving too fast. She can't consider a proposal at this point. His timing is all off. He is only trying to make her feel better about the Egypt trip. If marriage had been in the wings earlier, then it would not seem as forced. Now it seems artificial.

Dan questions her, "I thought that you wanted to travel to Egypt."

"I admit that I thought about it," she tells him. "But it was just one of those exotic dreams. You know those things that you talk about but never follow through."

Estelle is starting to feel the same thing about her relationship. She has given so much of herself to him. But this thing was never thought through. She didn't consider what would happen when they graduated. That was why she was so hesitant to be with him in the beginning. In the heat of their passion, she had almost forgot about all those nights agonizing if he was right. She is dealing with the suspicion that all of this must have been a colossal mistake

Dan feels that he must do everything in his power to persuade her to come with him. If he heads off on his own, that could spell trouble for their time together. He may only be gone for six months. But the opportunities could extend themselves while he is there. If he succeeds at first, this will only encourage him to do more to get other projects there. He could be gone for a year or more.

While they are together, Dan still talks of the shorter stay. But he holds up the possibility

of a more permanent situation as the inducement for her to come around to his viewpoint.

“This will be nothing like you have ever experienced,” he tells her.

She has visions of fever and dysentery. She imagines herself crouched over the toilet throwing up.

“I can’t make myself do it. I want to.”

“If I brought you, they’ll give me extra money for my wife.”

She is tempted, but the circumstances don’t seem right. She has no intentions of breaking up with him. She just can’t figure out what she has to do. Egypt doesn’t strike her as in the cards.

Estelle can feel the storm rage all around her. It is May showers, not April. She is wearing a short skirt and boots. The wind is blowing her hair. She has on a windbreaker. The rain is coming down hard. She is trying to keep her hair dry. She has come to say good by. But she doesn’t want to see him off. She wishes that he was not going away.

When he leaves, she is not sure how to take it. She has made promises. But Egypt is so far away. With each successive month, it will become more likely that he is not going to come back.

As she kisses him, she tries not to think about it. She wants the kiss to last.

“You could come in with me.”

She says, “I can’t. I have to stay out here.”

The rain drops drip off her jacket. There are tears in her eyes but they mix with the rain. She closes her eyes so she doesn’t have to see him go. When she opens her eyes, he has vanished.