



Painting by Edward Hopper

“Well that's that.” She gripped the wooden arms of her chair, frightened by the emptiness of the office after their purge, by the distance between her and him and by the not knowing what to do about it.

“Sure is, great job, like we had never been here.” He felt that there was something satisfying in leaving the place tidy, ordered; especially as he guessed he was moving on to a place of chaos and uncertainty, where he would have little control over the actions of his life.

“Sad, isn't it?” She stared across the chasm between them.

“What?”

“The whole thing, the end of things.”

“Yes, it's sad.”

In a panic she jumped up and strode towards the cabinet, with no real plan in mind. She pulled the second drawer open, as if to check one last location of ordered filing. At least the gap had been crossed if not wholly closed.

“Where do you have to report?”, leaning on the drawer to steady herself.

He lifted the letter and stared at it, under the lighted pool of the desk lamp; as if he were looking at it for the first time. Maybe each time he looked at it the words would be different.

“Not allowed to say. That's the start of it, secrets I mean. Well maybe not. Fucking Japanese.”

“Well can you at least tell me when you leave?”

“Tomorrow morning, 8:35 from Central. What about you?” turning from the letter towards her. “What are you going to do?”

“I'm off to the glories of the typing pool.” Now she was facing him. Now they were facing each other.

“Don't see that holding your interest for long.”

“No but it will do until I find something better.”

“Have you thought what _ _ _ _ _”

Suddenly a blast of air and noise filled the room from the downtown L train thundering past the window, flicking the blind up, the pull string and ring oscillating back and forward.

He could see the breeze push the blue silk dress against her thighs, the small mound of her stomach.

She watched the piece of paper from his desk waft upwards and oscillate down, left, right, left, right, left, right onto the carpet.

She knew – the distance could be closed now. Stepping forward she bent over and lifted the paper. He stared at the back of her neck, the curve of her back and the stretched silk around the width of her bottom.

He stood up and the distance finally closed. They held each other for a long time, not knowing what to do, where to go from here. Finally separating she looked at him.

“Were we right or were we wrong?”

“Probably yes, on both counts.”

“I suppose so.”

Silence and emptiness.

She turned slowly away, walked over to her desk, picked up her purse and cardigan and slowly moved towards the door.

“Will we keep in touch?” she asked.

“I don't know.” He stood still there for a long time. “Joe's a good man. Those girls of yours are

lovely kids.”

“Yes Joe's a good man. Yes the girls are lovely.”

He stood up from the edge of the desk. “Maybe these are times when no-one can make decisions, when everything is in other hands.”

She looked at him for a long time. “Come back safe. Don't forget to close the window and turn out the lights. ”

There were no goodbyes.