

## What Seemed To Be Eden

At the accounting firm where Erin worked, people wondered about the changes in her. Normally cheerful and friendly, in the last months she had withdrawn from all socializing. Once perfectly groomed, she no longer seemed to care about her appearance; she had even put on weight. Some tried to draw her out, but she evaded all their attempts to get close. Marriage problems or illness were suspected, but no one knew exactly what was wrong in her life.

One day Joey — please, not Josephine, she'd tell people with a roll of her eyes — stopped by Erin's cubicle. A beautiful day for a lunchtime stroll, she said. She knew a place in the mall where they made great sandwiches; they could eat them at the Moonwalk. Erin looked up at Joey's smiling face — a long face, somewhat horsey, but pleasant — then shrugged her shoulders and said, "Okay."

That April day *was* beautiful, the very one that affirmed that another spring had come. The air was crisp — New Orleans was not yet under the heavy cloak of humidity. For Erin it felt good to take a vigorous walk. Joey's long legs, in their culottes, set a fast pace, forcing Erin out of her lethargy. And Joey didn't bother her with any questions. They sat in the sun on the Moonwalk, warming their legs and shoulders, looking at the Mississippi.

Lunch became a regular thing for them. Over the weeks Erin resumed some interest in the intrigues of a large office. Joey was adept at mimicking the pomposity of the manager of their department, and Erin found herself laughing again. On rainy or gloomy days they stayed in the mall, browsing in the shops, and Erin began to finger the material on clothes, to once more be aware of beautiful colors and patterns.

Erin commented on how their brisk walks made her feel better. She used to enjoy playing tennis, she said. Joey asked her why she had stopped. Well, she and her husband were separated; she had played with him in the evenings at the local courts, while the kids occupied themselves on the swings and slides nearby. Joey said that she had been on her college tennis team, had really liked the game. Now she got her exercise by running two miles nightly on the levee, but that was boring and lonely. Why, Joey offered, brightening at the thought, why didn't she drive over the Causeway to Erin's house after work? She could come maybe two or three times a week. It would be no problem, really, she lived just four blocks from the Causeway, and she liked the drive over the lake. She'd love to play tennis again.

So it was that Joey arrived at Eden Court. On her first day she got out of her car watched intently by two small children who were shy and silent in the presence of the tall blond lady in white shorts. But it wasn't many days before they were running to greet Miss Joey, who brought them presents.

They would drive in Erin's car to the courts; one evening, when they got back after playing, Erin invited Joey to stay for dinner. She first apologized for the condition of the house. Indeed, the place was in shambles, clothes and toys strewn about. On that night, and on the other nights when she stayed, it was Joey who commandeered most of the preparing of the meal, including the cleaning up afterward. Erin dutifully protested, but Joey airily proclaimed that she loved to cook — she was going to be a chef when she grew up — and was happy to have people to experiment on. Secretly, Erin was grateful. Joey's purposeful presence in their midst roused her into getting some chores done. But what was most important was how, when Joey was there,

the mood in the house lost its oppressiveness; Erin saw how the children's faces brightened when they heard Joey bustling about in the kitchen.

On a Friday Erin asked Joey if she could stay after the kids were in bed, for a glass of wine. "And to listen to me." She seemed nervous. "I need to talk to somebody."

"It's strange," she began, when they were seated on opposite ends of a sofa, "for this to have happened to me, when all I wanted was what my parents had — kids, a nice house, so on. And that's what I thought I had. When I was in college I fell in love with this boy — Martin, an architecture student — and he had the same goals. I remember, we'd take a streetcar to a Chinese restaurant, it was always half-empty, and we'd talk about what would be. . . ."

Erin took a drink of wine, then chased the memory away with an irritated wave of her hand.

"But I'll cut to the present. Twelve years after college. It seemed that our dreams had come true. Here at 117 Eden Court. Martin designed this house. We wanted a place with clean lines." Erin looked about the room, then her eyes returned to the glass in her hand.

"When Brian was old enough for day care, I went back to work. I was content, I was busy. If anyone had asked me, I'd have said that everything was just like Martin and I had imagined it would be.

"And then there came that evening, about four months ago. Martin gets back from a three day business trip to San Francisco. He seems preoccupied, quiet. He's sitting in his underwear on the side of the bed when suddenly I hear him sobbing. He has his face in his hands. It sent a chill through me, to hear him crying like that. I go to him, I have my arm around his shoulder when I hear the strangest words I'll ever hear in my life:

"'Those beautiful men,' he said. 'I danced and danced with those beautiful men.'"

"God," said Joey.

"Yes. He went to a gay bar. I don't know if he did more than dance. That wasn't part of his confession. But he had a lot of other things to tell me that night. Some highlights: That he was finally casting aside a lifetime denial. That he had found what he had always lacked. That he realized how everything in his life was a sham. Me, the house. Not the children, but me, the house, this life we led."

Erin drank the last of the wine in her glass and then refilled it from the bottle. Joey waited, her expression troubled and intent.

"I had always known Martin to be a kind person. Well, he wasn't that night. After he dried his eyes he turned brutal. But then, I guess there's no other way to cast someone aside, except to be brutal. And, oh, he was determined. He said he had given enough of his life to a lie — he was thirty-six years old.

"You've heard people use the words 'living nightmare.' They aren't exaggerating. In the next days I'd wake up and be in the middle of a nightmare. My whole world was in disarray. I tried to set it straight again, but with this enemy there wasn't any solid footing. The ground our marriage was based on turned out to be sand. I pleaded with him, that we try to overcome the problem, for us to see a therapist, but he said that he *had* tried, his whole life, and was done trying. Then he asked me a question: 'Haven't you seen how miserable I've been?' Those words silenced me. A few days later he packed up, kissed the kids goodbye and left the house. Got an

apartment in the French Quarter. Inside a month he had a man living with him. My lover, he said over the phone. He actually used that word to me: Lover.”

Erin began to smooth the corded material on the cushion of the sofa.

“And me, here at Eden Court? I tried to care for the kids and the house, go to work — but I was moving around in a daze, like a creature that’s been clubbed.

“Nights were the worst. Once, very late, I was walking through the house and I stopped. There was an open door in front of me. I stood there, staring. Because the door seemed to be leaning at a wrong angle. An angle that was totally impossible. . . .”

Erin slapped the cushion and looked up, a tight-lipped smile on her face. “But I didn’t go crazy. I got myself out of that state. I became a changed person — too tough to go crazy. Too hard. I took a hard look at what had happened. And I vowed that never again would I let myself be deceived by anyone. Martin talked about living a lie. Well, the only lie was the one that he had involved me in — the one I had based my entire life on. And it was a lie — he had known all along what he was. Now he was getting on with his real life.

“I sat alone at night on this sofa and thought. It was mostly myself that I held up to scrutiny. In a merciless light. What sort of stupid cow would make the mistake I had? Was Martin such a good actor, such a good liar? Or was there something lacking in me? Would any other woman have known? In bed, I mean. I was inexperienced about sex. Dumb. ‘Haven’t you seen how miserable I’ve been?’ Well, I hadn’t. I had been replaced by a man — his name was Desmond, and he was a waiter. What a joke it all was; my life had become a comedy, something for the stage, for people to laugh at.

“I never told anyone anything, for all this time. I cut myself off from friends — *our* friends, really, all married couples. Since I considered myself a joke, I expected them to see me the same way. I wasn’t going to let any of them get an inside look at what was happening in my life. I imagined the phone lines above the subdivision smoking. Martin and Erin — the juiciest story they’d ever had.”

Erin drank the last of the wine and then looked at the empty bottle.

“Sorry. For going on like this. And, no, I haven’t turned to drink. Anyway, now I’ve finally told this juicy story to someone. My little secret. But it’s over — there’s no more to tell.” She shrugged, then looked up. “So, Joey, what do you think? Could they make a Broadway comedy out of it?”

Joey shook her head slowly. She did not smile back.

“No,” she said. “No comedy. I’m sorry for what you’re going through, Erin.”

At those words tears came to Erin’s eyes. She realized that her story wasn’t over. There was something more she had to tell this woman. She reached for Joey’s hand to say it.

“And then, Joey, you stopped by my desk one afternoon and asked me to go to lunch. You’ve done so much for me. And for the kids. Really. I’m so much better now, thanks to you.”

When Joey left that night the two women embraced at the door.

Erin’s return to the world of the living was clear for all to see. She began taking care of her appearance — hair, clothes. She slimmed down dramatically. The tennis matches with Joey turned into hard-fought affairs that lasted for an hour or more. In the beginning Erin had consistently lost, but as the months passed the pendulum began to swing; Erin’s competitive spirit surfaced — an eagerness, almost predatory, to win. Joey was as determined as she was, and

sometimes the struggle over a point would leave both women exhausted. They would stand bent over on their opposite sides of the court, gasping for breath; then they'd straighten up and look at each other, admiringly, boldly, hair sticking in ringlets to their sweating foreheads and necks, their chests still heaving.

In the car going home one afternoon, Joey asked if Erin had played sports in school. Yes, Erin said, basketball; she had been a guard on a team that had made it all the way to the state semifinals. "I have a newspaper clipping I'll show you. I look a sight."

The photographer had caught Erin sliding on the parquet floor, in the act of wrenching the ball out of another girl's hands. Her hair was all over her face.

Joey looked at the picture, smiling. "Yes, that's you. Same Erin."

It was true. Through the summer and into the fall it often seemed to Erin that she had reverted to her teen years, a time she had filled with friends and sports; it had been recreated with Joey.

In one of their evening talks Joey said that she was an oddball in high school. It was when she was in college that she found her niche. There was tennis, but most important was the Drama Club. That's where she made friends. Later, when she graduated and was living in Baltimore, she joined a playhouse. A professional level one. Some of the actors there went on to careers in film, stage and TV. No big stars, but working actors who made a living.

"There was this sense of comradeship. Even if I didn't have a part in a play — when they didn't need a wise-cracking Eve Arden type or a menacing servant — I'd come, to help out one way or another, just to be around the people. I still keep in touch with three of them, one from college and two from Baltimore. If they're in town, we meet to have dinner. How often does that happen, to keep up a long distance-friendship over all these years?"

"What about joining a theater group around here?" said Erin.

"When I tried to do both, in Baltimore, I found it was too time-consuming. I'd come to work exhausted. In college I majored in the most practical profession I could think of. I had to make a choice: a pastime I loved or my job."

"I think you should do what you love. And I get the impression that you don't love accounting."

"What I've found is that we don't get our druthers in this life. I'm salting away my money. Maybe, when I go into early retirement, I'll get involved in a community playhouse. Who knows what the future holds?"

"Do you have many friends around here?"

"I'm friendly with a lot of people, but I have only one real friend."

"The same is true with me. One real friend."

For Erin their friendship provided a refuge where she could heal, a safe nest apart from the demands of the real world. But after a half year the real world began beckoning to her; she grew restless to fly from the nest. She wanted, for herself and her children, to again capture the life she had lost. Tentatively, she began to date men at the office. When she went out Joey insisted that it wasn't necessary for Erin to hire a babysitter, that she would love to spend time with the kids. So Erin returned from her dates to Joey. They would sit and have a nightcap, and Erin would give a post-mortem on her evening; they were invariably humorous. Sometimes the

dates, or their talks, would end at a very late hour. Joey began to stay overnight in the guest room, keeping some of her clothes at Erin's house.

One evening Erin went out with a man who came in occasionally from the firm's London office. Ian. He had a reputation, where they worked, as a charmer who liked a fling when he was in the Big Easy.

The night of their date the children weren't home; they were spending the weekend with Martin. But Erin asked Joey to stay over anyway. For protection, she said, laughing, just in case I'm tempted. Tempted? said Joey, and there was a sharpness in her tone. He could tempt you? Someone you don't even know? A womanizer like that? Erin didn't reply, just gazed back at Joey. It was the first time that she had looked at her in such an appraising way.

When Erin got home, after two, there was no discussion of the date, even though Joey was waiting with a drink in hand, obviously tipsy. Instead Erin said she was tired and wanted to go right to bed. An hour later she awoke and, as was her habit, went to the kitchen for a glass of water. The mood in the house had changed, as it always did without the sleeping children. It was late October, and there was a crispness in the air. The air conditioner was off, its drone replaced by the stirring of nature coming through the open windows. A breeze lifted the white curtains. As Erin walked down the hall in her nightgown, still in a dreamlike state, she saw the light of the moon on the floor in front of the guest room. The door, which had always been closed before, was open this night. Erin went to that rectangle of light, looked in the room. Joey lay on top of the sheets, nude. She was on her back, the moonlight floating over her body. Her eyes were closed; but somehow there was a sense of wakeful expectancy about that figure on the bed. Erin looked at her for some moments. A serpent has slipped into my house, she thought. She stepped into the room, reached for the knob of the door, and pulled it shut behind her as she left. There was a decisive click as it closed.

The next morning Erin had little to say to Joey. Except, in words that seemed to have a pointedness to them, that she had enjoyed last night's date a lot. There was much more to Ian than all those stories. Anyway, she had decided that celibacy was for the birds. She looked Joey in the eyes and the look was hard, from the hard Erin who had told herself that she would never let herself be deceived again. "I won't need you here next time," she said.

In the following weeks Erin shut down on Joey. No more lunches together — in fact, it was Ian that Erin went to lunch with. When Joey stopped by her cubicle, Erin met Joey's attempts to talk to her with a breezy indifference.

One day Erin found an envelope propped against the screen of her computer. Inside was a note from Joey.

"I don't understand. I still want to be your friend. I want to see Brian and Gail. Please tell me what I did wrong."

That afternoon Joey returned to her desk to find an envelope with her name on it, lying as if tossed there.

"I realized something about you. You've been as dishonest with me as Martin was, and in the same kind of way. You insinuated yourself into my life under false pretenses."

The next morning Joey's note awaited Erin.

“Are you saying what I think? If you are, you’re very much mistaken. I see you as a friend, nothing more. And I still want you as a friend. I have not in any way been dishonest with you.”

Erin made no reply. As the weeks went by the people at the office began to murmur about the changes in Joey. She had become a silent figure, staying at her desk all day, even working through lunch. She didn’t look well, had dark circles under her eyes.

Then, after about a month, another change in Joey occurred. Suddenly she was cheery, all smiles; she could be heard humming softly to herself. Word came down from the office manager’s secretary that she had asked for, and received, a week’s vacation, beginning on the Monday after next.

The morning following this news, the little cards with the hand-written invitations appeared on everyone’s desks. They were from Joey, invitations to have drinks and sandwiches on Friday, right after work. When asked about it, she said that she wanted them to meet someone. A man named Charles Somerhalder. Someone very, very special to her.

The next morning Erin approached Joey. She wondered, her eyes cast down at the papers on the desk, if they could have lunch.

It was, Joey explained to Erin as they sat on the Moonwalk that chilly, overcast day, her secret — a long-term affair with a married man, something that she hadn’t been proud of and so never talked about. He lived in Atlanta, where he had a business, and she had only seen him when that business took him to New Orleans. But she was in love and committed to him, so most of the time she had been alone, and lonely. He told her that he would leave his wife, but there were children involved, and as the years went by she had come to accept the fact that he couldn’t. But children grow up, and the last time they met, just weeks ago, he had told her the news; and it was not that he would someday get a divorce, but that he was doing it, now, and they could be together freely.

For Joey this was a matter of the utmost importance. It had seemed that her life was constrained, even made illicit by her feelings for this man. Now she had a sense of liberation. To celebrate she and Charles were going to leave for Cape Cod on the Saturday following the party. Once, years ago, they had managed to spend a week at a bed and breakfast there; it had been an old whaling captain’s house; it had been in November, and, bundled up against the cold, they had walked the windy dunes . . .

But before they left Joey had arranged for the party. Charles had balked at the idea, but Joey felt that she had to do it. Something as hidden as this relationship had to be aired out in the light. Joey wanted the people she knew to meet this man, such a part of her life for — how long? Seven years. She took a photograph out of her shirt pocket; it showed a younger Joey, laughing, the arm of a burly man around her. He was dark-haired, his features heavy, and he seemed to be calling to someone. Erin stared at the image.

Marriage? Maybe, but not right away. No, she’d stay on at her job for the foreseeable future. And his business would keep Charles in Atlanta. They’d see each other more, but actually her life wouldn’t change so much. At least not on the surface.

Before they left to go back to work Erin had some things she needed to say. She was ashamed of how she had acted toward a friend. She realized that what had happened with Martin had affected her ability to trust; she tended to misperceive certain situations and then behave

irrationally. She asked if Joey had ever done something that she looked back on later and saw as being crazy. And would Joey forgive her for how she had acted?

The next evening Joey was in the kitchen at Erin's house. They chatted, Erin cross-legged on the floor with Brian, helping him put together a science project, and Joey sitting at the kitchen table with Gail, the two of them snapping the green beans.

And so things went on as before, until the day of the party arrived.

It was held at Frattiani's, a big wood frame Italian restaurant that had known better years and was now surviving on the banquet trade. The place could not fully hide an encroaching seediness, a sense of disrepair and discouragement that lurked in the shadows. When Erin came in after work on that Friday evening — it was a moonless, misty evening — the cavernous room was lit up so that a fluorescent brightness shown on two long tables, with their platters of cheeses and sandwich wedges and desserts, and bottles of wine cooling in ice buckets; but the outer reaches of the room were in darkness, and gave the impression of having tables stored there, stacked chairs, with all the spaces underneath and around them a rustling labyrinth.

As Erin stood at the entrance to the room, Joey saw her and disengaged herself from a group; she rushed over to Erin, arms wide. She wore a dress — Joey in a dress, a silk dress with blue and white checks — and she looked lovely in it, once the shock subsided. She wore makeup, too, eyeshadow and lipstick, another little shock that registered in Erin's mind, just before Joey's embrace.

In the next minute Erin realized that Joey was on the verge of being drunk. And the crescents of eyeshadow imparted a wild look to her eyes. She seemed to be impelled by a careening energy. Erin wondered about this man who could inspire Joey to such heights. She put her arm around her friend's silken waist. "You look beautiful, Joey. Really lovely." Then, in a low voice, "Come on, lead me to your beau."

With her arm still around Joey's waist, they joined a group milling about the two tables. The people there were all known to Erin, all from the office. The only new person was the man they approached.

He was holding forth to a group of listeners, a big man, over six feet tall, in a tweed sports coat. Even from twenty feet away he exuded confidence. Apparently he ended a funny story, for everyone suddenly laughed, unforced laughter, as if what he had said had indeed been amusing. He popped a piece of cake into his mouth, a pleased look on his face, and then turned toward Joey and Erin. "Darling," he said dramatically, claiming Joey with one arm, like in the photograph, and smiling on Erin as Joey introduced them.

In the first seconds Erin registered her impressions: he had thick brown hair, probably treated, for the lined, jowly face was surely nearing fifty, but the hair had no trace of gray in it. It might even be a very good toupee. His black eyes, peering intently at her, were set close together. On his glossy mustache, also without gray, were a few crumbs from the cake he had just eaten.

Was she disappointed in the man her friend had chosen to love? If his appearance may not have been impressive, Erin was to learn, in the next ten minutes, that there was much more to Charles than appearances. It began when he took her hand in both of his big warm ones and, with an "Excuse us, darling" to Joey, he moved her gently away from all the others, saying how much he had heard about her, how good it was to finally meet her. There was also warmth in his eyes, a

twinkle of humorous affection. It was as if Erin were in the presence of a radiating warmth. The man did have a power to him, she felt herself melting to his soft, intimate words.

“. . . thank you for being Joey’s friend . . . been lonely for her . . . you mustn’t, I insist on this, beat her at tennis anymore. You see, I hear about it, and Joey is truly bitter . . . so cold, but then you come inside and settle by the fire and have what they call a coddled rum . . .”

Charles ranged from sincerity to waggish kidding, somehow immediately intimate. He was overwhelming, and when he left to return to Joey, after kissing Erin on the cheek, she stood alone for a few minutes with a vague smile on her face, as if ruminating on a pleasant memory.

In the hour remaining Erin ate, drank wine, and chatted. Sometimes the arc of Joey and Charles would stop by her, warming her again. As people began to leave, Erin found her friend and they embraced. “Have a wonderful trip,” she whispered in Joey’s ear. The two women held each other close.

Minutes later, before she dashed out into the wet night, she turned back and saw Joey and Charles standing at the door to the banquet room, arms around each other’s waists, waving and smiling. Behind their smiles, behind the brightness of the tables, was that outlying darkness.

The next afternoon a friend from the office, who directed plays at a community theater, called Erin, excited. Surely she’d heard about those four luminaries of the British stage who were in New Orleans? They were giving just three performances of Noel Coward’s *Private Lives*, that intimate comedy of coincidences and deception. Everyone interested in the theater, even those from far and wide, were in town to see this show. And he had, by some wonderful chance, lucked onto two tickets. Would she like to go with him?

So that evening Erin sat on an aisle seat and looked over the crowd as they came in. She loved this moment in the theater, before the play started — loved to see what the women wore, to look at the couples and try to figure out their relationships. She liked the expectantly drawn curtain, the people turning in their seats and waving with their playbills, the greetings of friends, the cascade of voices.

Then her eyes fell on someone and, with a nagging persistence, returned to him. He sat one seat from the aisle, across from Erin and two rows down. He was with another, younger man, who was seated on the aisle seat; they chatted with each other, so his head was turned toward her in profile as he looked at his companion. When the play began and her eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, she continued to observe him. He was middle-aged, his heavy jowls smooth-shaven, thinning hair slicked straight back. During the play his shoulder touched that of his companion; obviously they were a couple. Erin watched them with fascination, ignoring the events on the stage, which were punctuated by the sound of laughter.

When intermission came she jumped up from her seat and hurried to where he sat.

“Remember me?” she asked.

He turned his eyes up to her and a neatly suppressed flinch passed over his features. But in a moment he recovered, and his tone was genial.

“Oh, yes; how nice to see you.”

“Where did you see me before?” she asked, as pleasant as he.

He paused. “In some play we did together?” The big man offered this possibility gallantly, spreading his hands in a gesture of apology. “I’m afraid, lovely lady, that you’ll have to help me out a bit.”

“Yes, it *was* in a play we did. I played the stooge.”

“Ah, Shakespeare, it must be — ”

“No, hardly. This was a modern domestic comedy. You wore a wig and a mustache. It was a great performance.”

At this the man stopped smiling and abruptly looked down at his playbill. When he spoke again his tone was bored and dismissive. “My dear lady, I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Erin still stood above him. When she spoke there was a finality in her tone. “Tell Joey that we met, Charles.” The man still did not reply, did not look up again, with his stricken eyes, until she was gone and the theater was again dark.

On Monday morning everyone at the office was talking about the weekend sighting of Charles Somerhalder, without his disguise and with his boyfriend.

Then, that next afternoon, a postcard arrived in the mail room; it was from Cape Cod, postmarked Saturday. It was passed from one desk to another, finally arriving in Erin’s hands. The photograph on the card showed a lonely stretch of rolling dunes, birds rising into a darkening sky. On the back Joey had scrawled the usual sentiments to her co-workers — that she and Charles were having a wonderful time — and then she closed with love.

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One evening, on a persistent whim, Erin typed “Joey Olafson” into the Search on her computer. She hadn’t heard anything about her for decades; when Joey had returned to the office she had immediately given notice. In her last two weeks she had been silent and stoical, and had left without saying goodbye to anyone.

To Erin’s surprise she found an entry that could, possibly, be the woman she had known. This Joey was co-owner of a resort in the foothills of the Ozarks called Deer Creek Cabins; it catered to hikers and bird watchers. An address was given; Erin sent for a brochure, using only the initial of her first name and her new surname (she had remarried, then divorced). Also, she was living in a condo in New Orleans, not on Eden Court. Joey could not know it was her.

The brochure that arrived had a photograph showing Joey and her business partner, a heavyset woman. They stood in front of a redwood cabin; they had their arms around the other’s shoulders, and they were smiling.

So, thought Erin.

Not that she wished ill of others.

Martin had found his soul mate, a professor at a community college, and they had been “married” in a ceremony that had strolling flute players. Or so Erin had been told. They owned a home. Erin’s children, after rocky and rebellious teens, had settled into good jobs, and were married. They didn’t have much to do with their mother, believing that they had suffered a dysfunctional childhood, for which she, not Martin, was to blame.

Erin stared at the photograph. Joey looked the same — she was one of those people whose appearance doesn’t change much after thirty. Like cactuses, Erin thought. She, on the other hand — with the end of her romantic aspirations — had let herself go. She was twenty pounds overweight. Her fate was more like that of a flower, blowsy and faded at fifty-four.

She put the brochure on the bedside table and wound the clock, an old-fashioned kind — she liked the ticking sound. The alarm was set for 6:30. She turned out the light. She heard the light thump of her cat as he jumped off the bed. He always spent the night elsewhere; perhaps she moved around too much in her sleep to suit him.

She forced herself to think about the project she'd be working on tomorrow. As the years went by her job had become more and more a place of security. She came to work every day and for eight hours was absorbed in numbers. Numbers which could be relied on; they offered no surprises, no emotions, no deceit.