

6. SKYLAR

She is looking over at the beach. He gliding out of the water. The water drips from his body. His wet body glistens in the sun. It accentuates his tight muscles. She imagines rubbing her hand along his skin. She can feel him react to her touch.

His tight swim suit hugs his butt. She can see every contour. He pulls it up so that it is fitting more loosely. She feel as if he knows that she is watching him. He is doing this for her benefit. He looks her way and smiles. She is just imagining the smile. She is shrieking to herself. She wants more. She wants the hot guy to come over to her.

She tries to sit up on her towel. She wants to notice her. She hasn't built herself up just to be ignored. She looks at her suit. It reveals enough. It tells him that she is available. She feels a little embarrassed. She is self-consciousness. Maybe there's another girl on this beach who looks in better shape. She wonders if her muscles look toned.

Her tan makes her look healthy. It gives definition to her gentle curves and toned legs and arms. She realizes that her pose looks unnatural. She has tried to highlight her assets, but she may only look uncomfortable. He just wants her to notice him. She wants him to approach her.

She feels as if she is yelling for him to come to her. She feels stupid. She doesn't want to appear desperate. That will only make him want someone else.

For her, there is nothing that turns her on like seeing a hot guy. She wants to rush over to where he standing and just do a little dance for him. She knows that she has it. And she wants to strut her stuff for him.

She wants romance. She wants more than the sense that she is just a sex object for some guy. But for the moment, that is a beginning. Once she shows him some real loving, anything else will just be a side-show. He will think about her all the time. Once she fills his thoughts, all the romance will follow.

She already tastes his kisses. They are sweet. They lull her and warm her insides. She lets this sensation wash over her. She feels overcome. The feeling is getting more and more intense. She now is even hotter in the summer sun. She wants to peel off her suit here and now. She wants him to shower her with all his caresses. She has not more control.

He stands on the warm and pats himself with a towel. The sun burns down. It makes her crazy watching him. She wraps her body around his.

As his suit starts to dry, it hugs his butt even tighter. Again he tries to prevent it from bunching up and riding up his leg.

She pulls on the strap of her swimsuit top. She runs her hand along the waist of her swim suit bottom. Her gestures are almost a sign to him. She cries out for his attention.

He goes back to his sun-bathing. She continues to admire the contours of his body. She is not simply watching. She is learning to believe. It only makes her want him more.

She thinks about what it might mean to have him touch her. This is an embrace that might last forever. She is willing to gamble everything just so that they can be together.

The sun soaks its heat deep into her skin. This cleansing power only brings her closer to his passion. She wants him to take her on the beach. She pulls on the strap of her suit. She imagines him doing the same. He buries his face in her body.

She want to have all the fun that she can while she is still young. If she has any doubts about herself, she lets them vanish when she looks at his body. She is ready. When he gets up from his towel, she wants him to race over to her.

She watches him lying there. He's good enough to eat.

I show up at a book signing and confront Skylar Green, "You transport your female character to these exotic locales because they're frustrated with their own sexuality. Then some mysterious power takes them over and drives them into the arms of their beloved. It's grotesque. You have no respect for the characters' free will. They are completely at the mercy of money and power."

Skylar wants to defend herself, "You act as if desire is this rational thing. It's more like this wild fire that consumes you. Have you never been in love? Don't you love that craziness that captivates all your days. You wake up with a purpose. Everything seems to have magic."

"But that kind of love is paralyzing. Your characters can never escape their conditions."

"They have dreams and they follow their dreams."

"They are lost in a facsimile of real emotions. They are all so plastic."

Skylar explains her formula for writing a chapter in a romance novel, "In every chapter the character has to score three time. That means that there are fundamentally three episodes in every chapter. In fact, the character only has to score once. So there has to be two minor climaxes that progress to the final explosion," she makes a gesture with her hand.

When she says *to score*, she means this in a very vulgar way, to fuck or to screw. But in the genre that she writes, she tries not to be overly explicit. Even when she is quite graphic, she always uses her language to suggest.

"When I use the phrase *to score*, I don't mean it literally. The character has to come to a climax that just grabs you by the balls." It is interesting that Skylar uses a very male terminology to appeal to a female audience. She is also portraying a female character.

"My character meets a man who is very tepid. It's almost as if he can't get it up. And the woman has her own anxieties about sex. Will he like me after it's all over? Can I trust him not to be with another woman? Is he financially secure so that I can stay with him? Even though she longs for the guy, she can't follow through with her desire."

She continues her exposition, "I to reveal something that is common and part of everyday experience and show that it is dirty and a total revelation just to talk about. I have to take your trash and your dirty laundry and turn it into a scandal."

"Most of us don't have anything to justify a scandal. We simply don't have enough to lose. Not like the prince or the well-to-do of the romance novel. He risks everything if he loses his title or squanders his fortune. And so my readers have to assume the identity of the bad girl. All the while she knows that she is the good girl."

"So she racks up all these points as the bad girl. She gets her groove on. She can do things that she never could do as a good girl. She's more or less undercover. She's like a super-heroine. She learns to like sex. She learns to come alive."

Ari licks her lips. Her swimsuit top tugs at her breasts. She fools with the strap to loosen the suit. He is watching her as she does. Her lips are wet. She pouts. She smiles back. He pretends that he wasn't looking at her. She smooths out the top with her hands. He again

sneaks a peek at her before she catches him. He thinks that he is being sly.

She kneels on her towel as she prepares herself to bathe in the warm sun. She reaches down for the suntan lotion. She has already applied liberal amounts in the hotel room. But she wants to make sure now that she has adjusted her suit. She works her way around the edges of her top. She massages the lotion deep into her skin. She wants to be sure. Better safe than sorry.

She slides her fingers down from her breasts so that they now work their way into her abdomen. Her muscles are pulled taut from numerous workouts. They emphasize how she is hot for physical action. She pushes her body to the limit and then some. She imagines those intense moments when she is out of her head. She is on automatic driven by the others pushing themselves to the driving beat. She finds a strength that she doesn't even realize exists. Both her hands now stretch the skin to simulate the workout, Her flesh burns beneath the touch.

As she glides down the side of her body, both hands come to rest on her hips. There is a sense of pride in this gesture. Even though she may feel a little insecure in private, she doesn't want to give in to her discomfort in public. She smiles to radiate her confidence. She is almost teasing him. He finds her attractive. He desires her intently. But she is telling him that she knows what she is worth. She is not going to give in that easily.

She is primping. She tosses her hair and holds her head in the air. She asserts a wild independence. He is going to have to work just to approach her much less to get any closer than admiring her from a distance. She playfully wiggles her nose. Then she touches her finger to her lips. As she pulls her finger away, she again licks her lips. Then she takes a drink of water.

Some of the water drips on her breasts. She jumps slightly and squeals. She dabs it off with a towel. She is doing none of this for him. She hopes that he doesn't catch her reaction.

She hesitates lying back on her towel. It will only make it harder to watch what he is doing. She wants to be part of his action. The sun already burns hot.

She decides that she wants to get wet. This will make it easier to bear the heat. She saunters over to the water. The sand is almost scalding until she gets right up on the water. Her feet splash in the waves. She laughs a couple times. Then she douses more of her body wet. She wants to avoid getting her hair wet. She swims around a bit then she gets bored in the surf. She jumps out and goes back to her towel. While she is still wet, she reclines. The sun plays upon her body. It still glistens in the blinding light. She gleams with a sense of life. She wants the sun to rain down all its power on her. She drinks it up. There is a little chill from the water. It makes her tingle. She can feel this warm sensuality wash over her.

She lets herself relax completely. She is not sleeping. But she feels at ease. She doesn't worry about a thing. A power seems to pulse from within. It turns her on. She surrenders to that feeling.

"My character is proud of her body."

I interrupt, "She is all too willing to gratify the male fantasy. Her main concern in life is fitting into a pair of tight jeans. Or buying a thong to accentuate her ass."

"That's not so. I'm just expressing how hard it is for a woman to be noticed by a man."

Skylar seems insulted by my characterization of her novels.

"Look at my character. She is real. She has a career."

"Her career sounds like no more than a costume that you put on a paper doll."

“That’s not it at all. She’s outside. She’s relaxing. She knows how to put her work away.”

“But that’s it. She just hangs up one costume and puts on another.”

“What do you want her to be, a workaholic. She can’t bring her work to the beach.”

“But she doesn’t sound all that creative.”

“I’m writing a fantasy for women.”

“In some way, you’re limiting their fantasy. Your saying that the only reason that a woman exists is to attract a man.”

“It’s not like that at all. There’s romance. And that’s so important to a woman’s life.”

“But there are many ways to be romantic that aren’t so explicitly sexual. Your characters all seem as if they are trembling until they are calmed by a man’s touch.”

“It’s a convention. It’s just a way to express the women’s deepest desires. It’s like an amusement ride or a video game. It’s an amusement. It becomes characteristic about a particular approach to life. It’s cheap and gaudy.”

“You’re leaving out so much that is in my novels. My characters have real lives. They go to work. They enjoy their jobs. They have families. Parents. Friends.”

“But it’s all basically the same thing. The female character all ache to be with men. They barely exist if they aren’t with a guy. At worse, they’re all on the make.”

“That’s a cheap shot. You don’t appreciate the subtleties of women’s fiction.”

“That’s not where my criticism lies. You’re hiding behind a style that you don’t represent. Even if I’m a little more sympathetic to what you do, it’s pretty much the same thing. The women are all in this dreamy state waiting for a powerful male to rescue them. It exaggerates male prowess and reduces the ability of women to deal with their own situations.”

“But my female characters are all self-reliant.”

“But it’s a fake self-reliance. Your character really don’t learn from other people. They may have a streak of independence. However, they don’t veer off far from the norm.”

Skylar doesn’t take well to my criticism. She feels that her novels have been successful at exciting an audience. People appreciate her style. There are elements of mystery in her novels. The characters face a flurry of emotions that make it difficult for them to navigate through their lives. But they find direction is love and romance.

“People want something to believe in. I offer my readers a sense of confidence about themselves.”

“But they will never be able to penetrate the private world of your characters. They are just not in the same league. You hold that against your readers. You hold them hostage to your prescriptions for their lives. You receive the red-carpet treatment. And you want to share your secrets with your readers. It is completely silly. There is really nothing of import that goes on behind the closed doors.”

“What are you saying?”

“Your movers and shakers really have none of the intellectual depth that could manage in a real technical situation. Your rich and powerful don’t seem to have a clue about real economic analysis. They could discourse on monetary policy. Again, they are only slightly different than your paper dolls. It’s all the same. And you give this illusion to your readers that it only takes an attitude to succeed in that world?”

“It’s fantasy!”

“Yeah, but it’s a fantasy that entraps the reader even more in a dead-end belief. It gives them no real ability to analyze their environment beyond buying a new dress to fit in better. You act as if woman can gain power this way, but all they can hope for is being the glittering accompaniment to men of power.”

“My female characters are ambitious. They combine brains and looks.”

“Ambition to what? A brain without idea. There are no discussion of any substance in your books. There’s this pretense that a brainless model can lead a Fortune 500 company.”

“These are women who succeed by managing their finances. It’s only another step to running a company.”

“Either they’re all about the bottom line. Or they have these Pollyanna views about helping the homeless or caring for the environment. Nothing resembles any real political discussions that you see online about such issue. It’s not as if your characters could be functioning member of Greenpeace. Or that they could actually participate in the grass roots organization of a political party.”

“I write to distract people. They don’t want to read about abstract intellectual discussions.

“But you insult their intelligence. If your characters are so real, why don’t they deal with actual problems. Whether they have money for their children’s health care. Whether the school has a big enough budget for supplies. Whether someone can overcome trig so they can make it into college. Your characters dwell on whether they can fit into a pair of size 1 jeans. Their minds can’t project outside of themselves. So they dwell in an empty world of self.”

“What do you propose? You are just such a downer about the world. It’s not like I’m writing a supplement to the Bible. These are romance novels.”

“But there’s really nothing romantic about them whatsoever. People who think like that never have the wherewithal to escape their problems. They read to distract themselves. But it’s like getting drunk. When you sober up, everything remains the same. All that you can do is drink some more. In good literature, people can analyze the situations in which they live. They don’t escape as a form of denial. They learn what really motivates people around them.”

“All that is not real. It’s just stuffy intellectuals trying to tell the world how to live.”

“No. It’s people learning for themselves how they can change their lot. Having something more to care about in their life than a narrow version of success.”

Skylar criticizes my thoughts about writing. She feels that it is paramount to create a mood. She works to describe the setting for her stories. Atmosphere is critical.

“You can’t get too caught up in conversation. You have to give the characters a chance to live with their emotions. Let the setting breathe. Allow it to reflect the inner feelings of the characters.”

I want to learn from her. I want to find out what motivates her. I want to be able to do the same thing that she does. Write books that affect my readers. Books that make them cry. Books that they want to buy. Skylar Green is a popular novelist. She has fans.

“You can’t make writing a chore. It seems that you want to force things. Your characters dwell on things too much. They spend all their time mulling over their lives. They just sit in limbo. They don’t do anything.”

I am trying to learn from her criticism. I just don't know whether I want to be part of her world. I want something else from life.

My criticism of her is valid. All her characters are on the make. They have an angle that they are trying to work. They live for the game. Love is a point tally. They claim that they want romance. But it's simply the culmination of the same attitude.

"It's just the opposite," she claims. "They hate role-playing. They are looking for a way out."

"All your characters are these fashion princesses. They are all waiting for a fairy godmother to push them to the next level. It's worse than Mother Goose!"

I see this image of her readers stuffing chocolates while the characters are lost in the delirium of constant fasting. Neither world leads to much realism.

She continues to defend herself, "You're just being a moralist. And hypocritical to boot. Even you get turned on by the sex."

"Admit it. It's really just porn."

"No. My books have a purpose."

"To excite frustrated women."

"As opposed to exciting frustrated men. What is literature? It's all pretty much the same. You promise more than you can ever deliver."

Stefan has always had this thing for Caitlin. She would tease him. But she has always felt too good for him. He would watch her frolic at the beach surrounded by a court of other men.

"When are you going to come around to my room?" she asks as a way of taunting him. He knows that she'd laugh at him if he actually showed up at her door. That has never stopped her from tempting him. She would seductively pose for him all the time. Her hope is that these images would burn deep on his brain. But she has no intention of following through with her flirtatious activity. If he secretly carries a torch for him. So be it. She might shake her scantily-clad body in front of him. But there is no way that he would ever be able to touch his crystalline fantasy.

In many ways, Jordan is a more lasting beauty than Caitlin. Caitlin is the rose fast withering out in the noonday sun. Jordan has hidden herself from the harmful affects of time. She bestows her love on Stefan. For a long while he feels blessed. He wonders why she has chosen him. Stefan offers her all his caring and sensitivity. If Caitlin has missed this treasure in her midst, so be it, Jordan will express an attraction of eternal value.

Stefan is faithful to his new love. Of course, he is. His solitary nights have been filled with pining away for Caitlin. Now he has something real, and he doesn't want to let it go. When he looks at Jordan, that belief in her upstanding character shines forth. He can hardly imagine her at the beach collecting lovers for a bracelet of charms. Jordan is focused. She doesn't need the upset of multiple heartbreaks. She lives her life in reality. She has a career. She isn't beset by deep self-doubt about herself.

Once Stefan is with Jordan, he begins to see Caitlin in a different light. Her once vivacious appeal now seems faded. He almost sees her drifting off in the current unable to protect herself against the rising waves. She is beyond rescue.

Stefan spends these passionate nights with Jordan. She is so open with him. And he has

found the key that unlocks her paradise. For a while, Stefan is surprised how easy it is. He believed all women to be a complex puzzle. He never knew what to say to get Caitlin's attention. But Jordan changes all that. She has lived her life lost in a deep romantic longing. He understands her urges. He is so comfortable sharing his thoughts with her. She opens herself to him with no fear.

Suddenly, it dawns on him. He just has to think about it all in reverse. He tells his friend Brand, "You just have to use your physical appeals to tap this romantic side of a woman. I always thought that I needed to be all complex. But it's so simple."

"Why are you even worrying about this now. You have Jordan."

"It's just a thought. An intellectual challenge."

But it becomes more of a challenge the next time that he sees Caitlin.

"I haven't seen you down at the beach in a little while," she tells him. She looks as seductive as ever.

"I just haven't had the time."

"I hear that you have a girl."

"Sort of." He is a little shy. He qualifies his relationship with Jordan.

"My offer still stands."

"Sure it does."

The next time that he sees Brand, he tells him about what Caitlin has said to him.

"When you're with a girl, it seems like everyone in the world wants you. And when you get dumped, you can never get anyone to give you a second look. It's almost as if a girl can smell that you're used merchandise."

Stefan appears in denial, "I'd never do anything with Caitlin. I'm with Jordan now. Those are two different things."

The first night that he is separate from Jordan, he begins to fantasize about Caitlin.

"I have to go to Orlando to visit my mother. I'll only be gone a few days."

Stefan doesn't want to think of himself as so shallow. But he misses the sex more than her company.

He tells Brand, "It's not like I'm going to do anything."

It just seems too easy. He has met Brand at a bar. And there's Caitlin with a couple of her female friends. She is in a short skirt and high-heeled sandals. Her legs are such a turn on. Her deep tan looks so attractive at night.

Stefan walks casually over to the bar.

"These are my friends Cheryl and Linda."

They both smile at Stefan. But he hardly sees her friends. His eyes are on Caitlin. It seems that she can barely keep on that flimsy top of hers. She is standing next to him and rubbing her breasts against him.

"She's just teasing me again," he tells himself. But he stares deeply into her eyes. He locks onto that magic. At that moment, she shakes her ass to the music. He wants to touch her. She can sense his intent. She walks right into his fantasy.

They have both kissed in their minds. It isn't long before he is falling all over her. Brand tries to keep her friends company. They give him the long distance treatment. But that doesn't deter Caitlin and Stefan.

*"I really want you to come to my place tonight." She whispers, "I really mean it."
Her words shake at the core of his being. He has thought about this moment for months.
Now his dream is about to become real.*

He momentarily thinks about Jordan.

*"She's not here. What do I have to worry about." He pretends that he is testing himself
out. He'll go to her apartment for a drink. This will give him the chance to meet the real
Caitlin.*

*Caitlin is a photographer. When he arrives at her place, he is amazed at her work. He
always took her for the brainless bimbo at the beach. She is really showing him up. He spends
part of his time focused on one picture of an ocean scene.*

"Do you like it?"

"This is amazing."

*His complement affects her intensely. She is so attracted to him. And now he knows how
truly to touch a woman. Caitlin opens herself completely to him.*

*He has never known the night to have such a feeling of contentment. Caitlin's naked
body is like a work of art that he appreciates by totally involving himself with her. He does not
hold back.*

*The sex acquires a more desperate quality than his times with Jordan. Caitlin leaves no
doubt that her experience has stood her in good stead. She knows how to provoke his desire to
the maximum of pleasure. At the same time, her deep kisses help to sustain his interest. The
night floats by as if it is only an instant.*

*He wants to be with her all day. He wants to give all of himself to her. But he quickly
awakens from his dream. The daytime sun hits him like a rock. He does everything that he can
to deny his miscue.*

*He wants to tell himself that it is just sex. But he has come to believe this night with
Caitlin more fervently than anything that he has ever known before.*

When they meet for a drink that evening, she tries to beg off.

*"You've seen my work. That's the only thing that I'm really passionate about. Guys are
always temporary with me."*

*This seems like another challenge on her part. But neither one can forswear their night
of passion. So tonight also ignites with burn even stronger than the time before. As he explores
her body, he realizes how much he has missed in the past.*

*Caitlin has offered him nothing to build on. In some ways she taunts him with her
attributes. But that doesn't stop the feeling on his part. Jordan is coming back tomorrow. He
feels that he is falling out of love.*

*As the sun comes up on the lovers, he wishes that this moment could last forever. He
hates his trite romanticism. But he really believes in her wonders. The sunrise is such a soft
tribute to their night together. He dissolves in her arms.*

*When he meets Jordan, she can barely tell that anything is wrong. He seems even more
affectionate than before. He even has flowers for her.*

"I'm glad that you met me at the plane."

"I told you that I'd be there."

She can't wait to get back to his place to make love. She has never seemed so lovely for

him. But something is wrong.

Stefan hardly believes the fantasy with Caitlin. But their time together has exposed the weaknesses of his relationship with Jordan. Stefan again sees through the eyes of Caitlin. He remembers her photographs, the magic that she seems to bestow on the world. He wants more of that.

When Caitlin calls him later that evening, he breaks the news that Jordan is back. They have just finished eating, and she is in the bathroom getting ready for bed. Stefan feels the dilemma. He wants to slip out to see Caitlin.

Caitlin would usually take this as a sign. She would head off to another one of her suitors. Stefan would be history. But he has affirmed her artistic side. She has never been the weak side of a triangle, the other woman.

Caitlin imagines Stefan in the arms of Jordan. She has no reason to suspect that he will come back to her. After all he has had his cheating fling. Now he has what he really wants. The marrying kind.

The night settles in heavily. Caitlin does all that she can to fight the feeling. Tonight she is drinking alone. They are millions of men that she could call. But none would do the trick.

As she passes out on the couch, Caitlin is surprised how weak she seems. This is terrible. The next day, Caitlin feels that she has put Stefan out of her mind. He is the hangover that she will get over by noon.

As the afternoon sun hangs down, Caitlin's funk has hardly passed. She is still moping. Linda and Cheryl both call. She blows them off. She wants more.

She figures that if she calls Stefan, that she will seem to be pestering him. My how the table have turned. She goes to the gym for a workout. Maybe this will take her mind off her predicament. As she works up a sweat, it only makes her want his touch more. That burn that she feels all over her body his only a preview of the caresses that he offers her.

She wants his kiss. She will melt with that kiss. She has nothing.

Caitlin doesn't want to spend another night alone. But she can't imagine going back to one of her young studs. She takes this as a cue to do some work. She tries to capture the feeling of the night with her camera. She finds couples trying to hide their passion in crowds. Lonely men with nowhere to go. Women frozen in their realization of their isolation.

She hurts with each image that she captures. She feels the triumph of true love. She longs for her man. He is with someone else.

She does everything that she can to embrace her feeling. She looks for images that might suggest more. She wants to show a desire that bristles beneath the surface. She wants the world to come alive with her camera.

She doesn't see Stefan again until her gallery show. She feels that she has forgotten about their torrid nights together. Caitlin doesn't return to her old ways. She settles down with a sculptor. He understands her artistic passion.

Jordan is off getting a drink.

"I've missed you, Caitlin."

"You let me die out there. You never called."

"I tried. I could never get away."

"She is beautiful."

He wants her to say something more. He wants forgiveness. He wants absolution. He wants her back.

He calls her the next day.

"This is not a good idea, Stefan. I'm practically married now. I'm not the silly girl who used to hang around on the beach."

"I know that. I need to see you."

She agrees to meet him for a drink. She wants to get this out of her system once and for all.

"I want to go back to your place," he tells her.

"It's not going to happen. You have a life and so do I. We shouldn't mess with it. We shouldn't tempt fate."

After a few drinks, Caitlin remembers their nights of fire. Her new man can't do that for her. He is so understanding. But he doesn't understand the true Caitlin. A little coaxing and she is back in Stefan's arms.

He seems good with his words. That has always been his strength. She used to mock his intellect. But he always seems to get what he wants. He is really bringing her down again.

In bed, she comes alive again. She can feel her spirit spread wide over an endless plain. She is like an eagle soaring. Her flight is everywhere.

When the morning sun again hits them, they are entangled in a restful embrace. They do not want to let go.

"Stefan, this wasn't supposed to happen. We can't let this happen again."

Her body reminds him of the passion of the night before. He doesn't have the courage to leave Jordan. But he wants to stay with Caitlin forever.

"Skylar, this guy is a real dog."

"But you are getting hot just imagining Caitlin."

"But it's all so short-lived. You give her this creativity that seems to contradict the earlier image of the party girl. You make him seem appealing even though he's the total nerd. All of this lacks motivation."

"The motivation is obvious. It's the desire of the reader."

"It's not that much different from the lusty couple on the beach."

For all that he loves Jordan, he realizes that she has helped him unlock a part of himself that she can no longer satisfy. Caitlin has made an art form out of sex. Her body knows no limits. Part of it is her athletic conditioning. Even when her body seem to give out, she holds something in reserve. With her legs spread, she looks down on him with such a wave of power. She focuses all this energy in her strong thrusts. She rides and rides him until he seems to expire. The she fills him up with her kisses. He only wants more.

Nothing with Jordan will ever come close to this. It frightens him that Caitlin takes him to this point. That she can consume him so completely.

He caresses her back as he would if he was painting on a canvas. It reminds him of their exhausting time together. It is all that he can do to hang on. He kisses her neck as he embraces from behind.

She wants to know if he has anything left.

"I will ride you this time to death."

He is surprised that he can still hang on. He has completely come out of his body. And what remains is this possession. It is paradise. It is hell. It is universal.

He falls to his knees under the pressure of it all. He buries his face in her body. This will not stop. The night is now endless. Their passion has no bounds.

If he has to shock the world about his desire, that is what he must do. Stefan hates to hurt Jordan. She will be crushed by his betrayal. That is how it must be.

“It was obvious from the beginning what he was going to do to Jordan. She was simply a device in your story. She had no reality. She is what your readers are like. They are all hopeless souls. They think that they can live like Caitlin. It will never happen.”

“They want to believe. Don’t take that away from them.”

“But it’s all a fairy tale. They reason if they can work their way through your banal complications and trite attractions that they can find success in a complex world. You only sink them deeper in their own morass. Stefan’s situation with Caitlin seems like child play compared to the real world dramas that your readers suffer. But they’re none the wiser as they go along with your cliché formulas for happiness.”

Caitlin looks incredulous as she watches Stefan emerge out of the night. For so long she really believed that he would go back to Jordan. Now it seemed that they would be together if not forever, for a long time.

“So you get your readers all worked up that they can have everything. In their world, Stefan is already married to Jordan. And he makes all the promises to Caitlin just to have her hang on. But there is no romantic resolution. And she is lost in the dusk of her own dreams.”

“You are a real downer.”

“No, I’m a realist.”