

Yes

Since rain would fall all evening, Margot didn't go to the park. Instead, she accepted Susan's invitation to meet her and a friend for coffee. Margot took the subway halfway across the city and then uptown to a north-side mall, where she browsed before meeting Susan at the food court. She would have preferred strolling through the park, which she and Sean had visited several times. She loved the colors, forms, and contrasts – sharp and smooth in abundance – and felt empty without what had become a daily allotment of trees and lakes and flowers, bereft as if a promise of rejuvenation had faded from purple to gray.

While Susan gossiped with her friend, Margot daydreamed about places she and Sean had seen together – a garden plot with stone figures peeping through shrubbery, the reflection of willows on the surface of a still pond, the curve where a path opened to an expanse of light, earth, and water, an acre of green with a scrimmage of budget-sized two- and four-footed wild life making free.

She wanted to visit these luminous places again and turn Sean's promises over in her mind before she saw him on the weekend. Chances were, he'd ask her to marry him. We can never be certain about what's coming at us down the road, but it seemed likely that life with Sean would go better than her first marriage, which ended after five years, the last two a ceaseless crawl up Mount Dollar Sign. No children. She still had a few years.

She didn't mention Sean to Sue and her friend so as not to squander the most compelling part of her life in chitchat. She enjoyed hearing them talk about men, however, sometimes pertly, sometimes wisely. You can never tell – no matter how much you know – what life with a man will be like.

Margot recalled her second longest walk through the park – two hours on a Saturday afternoon, she and Sean together. He found six different ways to tell her that the future of their love depended on what they put in first place – the community they said they'd build or something else each wanted and didn't care to share with the other. Could they spend half of each day together for the rest of their lives?

Their exchange of words, weighted with meaning in the oak grove, frittered away in the clitter-clatter of the mall. She excused herself and went back to the subway. Half an hour later, she walked briskly through the park in a chill, penetrating rain, past the sodden, beleaguered oak wood and the ruffled pond. Her special luminous acre trembled in gusts of windy rain. Her sneakers got muddy and she shivered as she strolled along a path she'd discovered after Sean went on tour with the band he managed. Even so, her brain still worked clearly.

Miserable weather, you see, doesn't always interfere with our thoughts about love.

"Why not?" she said over and over. "Let's do it."

She was cold and dripping when she got to the subway.

Back home, she found three messages on her answering machine. "I checked the weather. You can't be at the park." And: "Out with your friends, no doubt. Call me." Then: "It's after

nine. The malls are closed. You must have gone to the park anyway. Don't worry. I'll comfort you if you come down with a cold."

"I know that," she said, not to Sean but to the machine. "I love you, too." She picked up the phone with a quiver of mirth. Never mind our doubts and hesitations, sometimes we do know. Life hadn't brought her many moments as joyful as this

