



Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine

Volume 5 Messages

Article 47

5-1-1998

Destination (Part Three)

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Recommended Citation

Haynie, Katherine (1998) "Destination (Part Three)," *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 5, Article 47.
Available at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol5/iss1/47

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Destination (Part Three)

Katherine Haynie

Calia looked at me in the twilight and asked me if I were really sure about leaving. I didn't have to answer. "When will you go then?" she asked, trying to keep her composure.

"Soon." I reached over and stroked her deep purple hair as I looked at her glowing with a heavenly aura in the twin moonlight. I kissed her on the forehead as I got up to leave. "You won't leave without saying goodbye, will you?" she called after me. I swallowed hard, trying to get past the lump in my throat and turned back to her. I could see a silver tear travelling down her pale cheek, and I knew she must have seen the same on mine, but I couldn't get up the words to answer her. We stared at each other for a moment without saying a word. Finally I answered, "I'll see you back at the room."

I took the long way back to the living quarters, walking down the old, overgrown path by the water's edge. The water was perfectly still. Instead of the deep, brilliant green it wore in the daylight, it sat quietly in black tonight. There weren't even any fish to break the surface of the water. The area was in complete silence. But how different it was in my head. Thoughts raced around inside and screamed at me from different directions. I tried to work through them while walking down that weedy path until finally I just stopped listening to them. I sat down on a sandy patch near the shallow side of the lake. I saw a bird on the opposite shore. It was hunting tonight. I thought it probably was looking for food to bring back to the nest for its young. I saw a flash of red on its neck as it lifted its head in the moonlight, and for a split second, it felt as if our eyes met. It seemed like an eternity that I spent staring at the bird, yet all too soon the bird lifted its long, regal wings and was gone in the shadows of the night. I then knew that this bird was no mother looking for food for her young. This was a Caspian. The slender neck painted with brilliant scarlet and the long graceful wings of perfect indigo hue were the characteristics of this defiantly independent bird. They lived alone and were seen in groups only once a year—to mate.

I thought for a moment in the darkness and looked down at the locks of wavy, red hair resting on my shoulders. I could take this as a sign if I wanted to. I hung my head and let my hair fall over my face, running my fingers through it and pressing the silky strands against my skin. I suddenly wished that I believed in signs.

On the way back to the living quarters, I stopped at Tal's room. He was sitting at the square, brown desk, writing in a small, worn notebook. I knocked softly twice on the frame of the open door and stepped in quietly. He looked up and stared at me with a question in his eye as to why I was there. "I just stopped by to apologize for today."

"So, do you still think you're right?" he asked me.

"Of course." I grinned at him for a second before changing the subject. "I just wanted to apologize for upsetting you. Both of us know that we'll never convince each other of anything anyway. I also want to say goodbye."

"Goodbye? Where are you going?"

"I'm leaving."

"But where? When?" He stuttered a little, "Why?"

"I don't know exactly where I'll go, but I'm leaving soon. And I don't know when I'll see you again. You know why: for exactly the same reasons that you and I fought this afternoon. I'll never win here, and no one will ever be happy with me until I'm either assimilated or gone. I refuse to be assimilated."

I stepped closer to the desk, and put my hand on his shoulder.

"Promise me one thing, Tal. Take care of Calia. She loves you, and I know you love her too, but please, please treat her right. She's the only friend I've ever had here, and I need to know that you'll look out for her as she and I did for each other all our lives."

He looked at me, with those shining onyx eyes and nodded his head. "If this is what you really want, then I wish you the best."

(to be continued...)