

"Reaching a Crossroad"
By Ambar Avila and Haileigh Smith

Estelle "Stella" Leon

Her cheeks flushed crimson as she stood in her father's study, her throat itching to say words that should not escape her lips. Her father spoke calmly with an expressionless face explaining that he would be transferring her to a boarding school in the upper part of the state. Stella stared into her father's dark eyes and trembled as she listened to his harsh words. She shivered at the touch of his hand that laid carefully on her shoulder, feeling his cold heart in this empty embrace.

She tore her gaze away from his glancing towards the patterned carpet beneath her leather shoes. Her father was never one who had given her much attention. Her precious memories from when she was younger were blurred with the reality of an absentee father who put his work before his daughter. To get his attention, she began rebelling at home by fooling around with the neighborhood kids, talking back to her elders, and ignoring orders. However, her plan backfired, and although she gained his attention, he thought she was ruining the family image.

Stella took one last look at the olive colored room filled with elaborate European furniture and valuable antiques. She traced her thin fingertips along the mantle of the stone fireplace that once housed such warm memories but had suddenly turned cold. There was nothing left for her there. Through her tears, she packed her belongings to prepare for her departure the following day.

A New Beginning

Carefully pulling her wavy, ombre brown locks into a side braid, she looked into the mirror to examine the navy blue uniform lined with white accents. She took a step closer and noticed the puffiness under her eyes after a long sleepless night. Recalling yesterday's events, she let out a deep sigh reflecting the emptiness of her heavy heart. She threw herself across her new bed with her arms and legs dangling over the edges. She felt like an orphan; it was the first time she had ever felt so alone.

Tears fell for what seemed like the millionth time in the past two days. She pressed her face into her white pillow and let out a loud cry. Through her whimpering, she heard a light tap of footsteps enter the room and make their way to her bed. In that moment of weakness, she pulled herself upright, wiped the leftover tears with her sleeve, and turned to see a petite girl. The girl seemed to be about seventeen, the same age as Stella. Her blonde locks fell to her shoulders, and her innocent green eyes opened wide with concern.

"What's your name?" the girl questioned with curiosity. "Miss, do you have a name?" she repeated mockingly in response to Stella's silence.

"Of course I have a name, doesn't everyone? I'm Estelle Leon, but you can call me Stella."

"Good to know. I'm Eloise, your new roommate, and I'm here to show you around. Everyone is waiting for you downstairs. Follow me," she replied making her way to the door.

Surrounding Stella at the bottom of the staircase was a group of smiling girls of various ages welcoming her to their 'home'. Eloise stood outside the huddle of girls who were giggling and smiling brightly.

“Alright! Alright! Guys give her some space!” she laughed as she reached for Stella’s hand and pulled her out of the crowd. Stella patted down her skirt and smoothed down her hair blushing from the rush of attention.

Not long after their meeting, Eloise and Stella became inseparable. Soon Stella realized that with this new lifestyle at the boarding school, her social status and family name did not matter. At the school, Stella never rebelled and everyone loved her lively personality, including the headmistress Phyllis Codere.

One afternoon while laying in the grass with Eloise, Stella looked up towards the clear sky as a finch flew above them casting a shadow over their daydreaming faces. She followed the bird with her eyes, and for that moment, she became one with the bird and felt the crisp breeze press against her face. She then realized that she felt trapped in the boarding school and that she longed to be free like the bird. Although she had enjoyed the people at the school, she felt that she was not moving forward with her life and she wanted to escape and experience the world.

Later that night, Stella made her way to the headmistress’s office with the intent of asking to go on a trip to observe the city life. If Stella wanted to experience the world outside of the comfort of the school, she needed to know what it might be like.

She walked up quietly to the mahogany doors. Although Stella knew that Ms. Codere had always liked her, she had never asked for such a favor. With her hand slightly shaking, she raised her fist and knocked lightly on the door.

“You may enter,” a deep voice echoed from behind the wooden barrier. Stella took a breath, slowly opened the door, and stepped into the large room. Stella was amazed at how pristine the room was; there was not a single object out of place. She glanced around the open room in awe until her gaze landed on Ms. Codere. Her glasses rested on her nose as she glanced up from her thick book to see her visitor.

“Oh, Stella,” she said as she pushed her glasses up her nose to keep them from falling. She sat with her hands folded as she waited for Stella to say something. Stella felt a rush of heat, and her hands began to sweat as she stepped closer to Ms. Codere.

“Ms. Codere, I was wondering if I could ask you a favor,” Stella said in short breaths.

“What is it?”

“Could we go on a trip to the city?”

“What provoked you with that idea?” she laughed.

“Uhhh,” Stella said brushing her hair away from her eyes. “I’ve noticed that we never stray outside the boundaries of the school, and it seems like it would be a great opportunity for us to compare and contrast the city life to the country.” Ms. Codere stared at Stella with hesitant eyes trying to identify the deeper meaning behind her request. She studied Stella noticing her prim posture as she stood with her back straight and hands placed behind her back. Her chestnut hair was braided above her right shoulder, and her eyes shone with determination.

“Alright, I’ll see what I can do,” Ms. Codere said with a smile as Stella jumped a bit with excitement. Stella said her thanks, exited the room, and made her way up the stairway back to her room.

In a month’s time, the sun shone brightly in the midday sky as Stella and Eloise walked

through the streets of Chicago. Although the train had taken a while to get there, it was a Saturday and the city was alive. Cars drove carefully as pedestrians weaved through traffic to go to fashion boutiques and lively diners. The cool breeze brushed against Stella's face pulling strands of her hair out of her tight braid. A smile played at her lips as she watched a young woman make her way towards the group of girls, her heels tapping with rhythm against the pavement. The woman held her head high as her brown fur coat and long straight black hair blew in the wind. After she passed, Stella knew she was the person she desired to imitate, and she yearned to be as confident and wealthy as her.

Back at school, Stella sat at her desk under the desk light with a pencil in hand and multiple papers scattered across the desk and floor. The light from the lamp awoke Eloise, and she turned towards Stella and asked, "Why aren't you sleeping?"

There was no response from Stella. She continued to adjust the sketches.

"Stella?" Eloise asked once more as she raised from her bed to look over Stella's shoulder. On the paper was a sketch of a dress she had never seen. Following the trace of the pencil, floral print wrapped around the bodice and flared out into layers of sheer pink cloth at the waist. Layers of the sheer pink cloth fell gently on top of one another making a beautiful ruching design. Eloise was in awe.

The following morning Stella reviewed her sketches wondering what her life would be like if she pursued a career in fashion. Upon asking Eloise for her opinion, she was greeted with support and encouraged to ask the headmistress if she could leave the school and go back to Chicago to study fashion.

That night, Stella returned to the headmistress's office, but this time she was more nervous. She knocked lightly on the door and waited for a welcoming response, but no sound emanated from within the room. She knocked once more, and again, she received no response. Stella placed her hand on the doorknob, quietly pushed the door open causing it to make a creaking sound, and peered inside. Anticipation grew within her and it made her feel uneasy. The fireplace was ignited and the light from the flames danced along the perimeter of the room, but there was nobody inside. The sound of footsteps echoed from the end of the hallway, and Stella quickly closed the door. She let out a breath of relief, glad that she had not been caught peeking inside the room.

Wondering where Ms. Codere had disappeared, Stella walked through the eerie halls of the school eager to find the headmistress and ask for permission to leave. After minutes of searching, she found herself in the foyer of the school with Ms. Codere descending from the grand staircase. Stella quickly adjusted her posture and calmed her breath as she paused to confront Ms. Codere.

"Excuse me, Ms. Codere?" Stella asked.

"Ah, Stella, what is it?"

"I have another favor to ask of you," Stella said as she twiddled her fingers.

"Another? Do you want us all to go back to the city?"

"Not exactly. Just me," Stella said firmly.

"I don't understand. Please explain this to me some other time. I am extremely busy tonight," Ms. Codere said as she turned to walk back up the stairs to avoid the situation.

"Please wait!" Stella exclaimed in an attempt to ask for permission to leave as quickly as

possible. "I would like your permission to leave the boarding school. After the field trip, I found something that I want to pursue, and I would like to go out and study it more," Stella yelled as her voice echoed through the empty halls. Ms. Codere stood still at the top of the staircase with her back facing Stella.

"No," Ms. Codere responded curtly as continued walking towards her room leaving Stella at the bottom of the staircase.

Dumbfounded, Stella slumped to the bottom of the staircase and sat desperately wanting to escape. Saddened by Ms. Codere's answer, Stella continued to sit at the bottom of the staircase throughout the night without sleeping, eating, or drinking.

Ms. Codere awoke the next morning to the sound of girls running through the halls concerned with Stella's condition. Angry about not getting enough sleep, Ms. Codere went to the staircase with the intent of telling the congregated girls to return to their rooms. When she arrived, she saw Stella standing in front of the staircase with her head held high and a look of determination on her face. Stella glanced up to look at Ms. Codere who stood there in shock.

"Have you been out here all night?" Ms. Codere asked.

"Ms. Codere, I would like to leave this school," Stella said with a stern voice. This was the first time the other girls had heard of Stella's request. In support of Stella's plans, Eloise stepped out of the crowd to stand in solidarity with Stella.

"Please let her leave," Eloise said standing proudly next to Stella. "She's found something that she's truly passionate about, and it would be a shame to let that go to waste."

The rest of the girls turned to look at Ms. Codere eyeing her with anticipation. Trying to keep a stern face, Ms. Codere invited them both into her office to talk about the situation further.

After an hour of discussion, Ms. Codere allowed both Stella and Eloise to leave for the city to pursue their passions, and they agreed that if any trouble occurred, they would return to school.

The next day, Stella and Eloise boarded a train for the city. The hours spent on the train went by fast as the girls discussed what their new lives would be like.

Arriving in downtown Chicago, the girls were overwhelmed by the crowds of people that swarmed the streets. Men and women walked by wearing opulent clothes that they could only dream of wearing. Men wore clean-cut business suits and swung briefcases at their sides. Women walked around in loose flowing dresses that swayed in perfect unison with each step taken in their designer high heels. Stella gazed with a smile hoping that one day she would wear and design similar high-end clothing.

Stella made her way through the crowds, and Eloise followed closely behind hoping to keep up with her in the rush hour madness. The noise of rumbling cars and conversation filled the smog littered air. Wrappers floated around the street with every gust of wind. The two friends continued down the sidewalks dodging vendors and people rushing to work. They walked endlessly until Stella came across a small boutique. Beautiful dresses hung on tall mannequins enticed Stella to enter. Together, Stella and Eloise walked through the glass double doors and entered their dream.

The girls were greeted with a smile from a lady clothed in a simple blue dress that covered her knees as she walked. Since they were looking for jobs, Stella was quick to ask if they were interested in hiring new employees. The woman gave her a quirky smile and took a liking to Stella

and her straightforward attitude. Stella continued to stare at the woman with anticipation as her hands idly wavered over the rack of dresses before her. The woman replied saying she would think about it and disappeared into a back room.

As the two girls wandered around the store, the woman returned asking if they knew anything about clothing. After Stella showed them a few of her sketches, the woman noted that she had a few positions that needed to be filled. Stella and Eloise looked at each other smiling and accepted the positions.

The beginning of their new career proved fun for Stella and Eloise. They learned about the art of designing, the different materials, and various techniques, but it became apparent to Stella that it wasn't as fulfilling as she had imagined. They worked diligently throughout the day but were never paid much. If Stella was going to accomplish her dreams of becoming a wealthy designer, then she needed to continue her journey elsewhere.

Hazel

Days before quitting her job at the shop, Eloise heard of a legendary seamstress named Hazel Hastings. She was a brilliant designer that started such fashion trends as the flapper dress. Eloise was set on visiting Hazel Hastings to gain experience from her. Stella succumbed to Eloise's determination, and they set out on a journey to meet Hazel who lived in uptown Chicago.

It was a Sunday afternoon when Eloise and Stella approached the grand doors of "Hazel Seamstressing." Once inside, they noticed women working slowly but steadily at their stations lined with strips of cloth, measuring tapes, and sewing machines. Mannequins wearing plush fur coats stood to the side wearing pearls and feathered hats.

Out of everyone in the room, there was one who caught their eye. It was a woman with dark wavy hair that rested above her ear. It was Hazel Hastings. She leaned over a table calmly sketching with no worry on her face. She gave off a warm aura inviting anyone around her to come near. Stella studied her swift movements and tried to figure out what gave her such a presence; she wanted to become like her. When Hazel escaped from her sketching trance, she glanced up to see Eloise and Stella standing at the entrance with looks of awe on their faces.

"Welcome ladies," Hazel said from across the room with a slight smile. "What can we do for you?"

That was when their adventure with Hazel Hastings began.

Since that morning, the two friends worked for Hazel learning how to sketch items ranging from elaborate hats to low cut dresses to laced gloves. Above all, they learned how to be unique and classy. However, Stella remained unsatisfied, and although she tried to become at peace like Hazel, she found that she could not reach happiness while working there. Every day she noticed Eloise glowing with satisfaction working alongside Hazel, and Stella realized that she was not living the life she wanted.

One morning as Stella was studying a garment she had made, the doorbell chimed and a man walked in with a notepad and pen in hand. Hazel greeted him with a smile and invited him over to where Stella was working.

"This man is Ray Floyd," Hazel mentioned. "He traveled here from the lower state to write a

story about our shop and how our flapper dresses have become increasingly popular over the years. I will leave him in your care.”

Stella smiled at the man and offered Ray a seat so he could interview her comfortably. Concluding their conversation, Ray asked Stella if she planned to continue working as a designer. After a few minutes of thought, Stella replied with a subtle, “No,” and excused herself from the conversation. She rose from her seat and made her way past the crowded shop to Hazel’s desk and said, “I am not sure if I can continue working here any longer. Being here has been a nice experience, and I deeply admire you. However, I don’t see myself achieving my goal of being as content with my profession as you are if I continue working as a seamstress.”

Hazel looked at Stella with her bright green eyes and gave a small nod.

“That is fine,” Hazel began. “If you do not feel like you can thrive in this environment then you should leave.”

Stella gathered her belongings and bid everyone farewell. Although confused, Eloise hugged her friend goodbye. They now walked different paths, and neither of them knew if they would see each other again.

Stella walked down familiar streets as she whispered her goodbyes to a town she once loved. Happiness no longer resided in this town she called home. However, after years of designing exquisite flapper dresses, Stella reflected on the feelings of freedom and independence that the flapper girls emanated when they entered the seamstressing shop. Wanting to experience these feeling, Stella departed for a more exciting life in the city.

Finding the Self

The crisp night air hit Stella’s face as she wandered the streets of Chicago. She walked around aimlessly, and for the first time, she followed the path her feet chose. Jazz music rang in the distance, and a woman with a bobbed haircut and fur coat began to swing her body along with the rhythm. Not paying attention to where she was dancing, she bumped into Stella almost making her fall.

“Oh, honey, my apologies,” the woman stated. “I almost knocked ya over!”

“Don’t worry about it,” Stella replied.

The woman stepped closer to Stella and noticed the overwhelmed expression on her face.

“You look all balled up. What’s wrong? I’ve never seen ya before...”

“No, I’m alright, and usually I don’t come out to this part of the city. I used to work for Hazel Hastings, so I was always near her shop,” she replied feeling uneasy with the way the girl invaded her personal space.

“Well, isn’t that the bee’s knees! I usually buy my clothing from her. My name is Florence. Listen, you’re a bit far from your home at this time of night. Would you like a place to stay?”

“You shouldn’t worry about me. I’ll be alright”

“That’s baloney! Come with me,” Florence replied tugging on Stella’s sleeve.

They made their way to a small apartment that rested above a club. The apartment was strewn with clothing ranging from dresses to scarves to hats. Florence directed Stella towards a room with a few cushions and blankets and told her to make herself comfortable. Covering herself lightly,

Stella laid on the cushions, closed her eyes, and drifted to sleep.

The next morning Florence took Stella shopping. Stella cut her long auburn locks into a short wavy bob. She opted for comfortable lace dresses with heavy eyeliner and bright pink lipstick that encased her lips. Her life of being a proper, diligent working woman was flipped upside down. She was no longer the person she was the day before.

The next night Stella and Florence went to a jazz club and danced with men they had never met; they felt the lively rhythms of the saxophone and piano take over their bodies. They lived freely, which resulted in nightly parties becoming routine. Stella was living the life of a flapper girl; she felt courageous and confident having discovered a part of herself that she didn't know existed. She enjoyed the thrill of conversing with others all night, meeting men, and having fun.

Stephen Riley

After another day of shopping with Florence, Stella made her way into a dimly lit club where she couldn't see anyone but the people beside her. She heard the roar of laughter coming from one end of the room and the tunes of a tambourine and clarinet from the other. She sat down at a table lit by candlelight.

When she turned her head, she saw a man with dirty blonde hair wearing a black suit sitting at the next table over. He turned to look at her, and she instinctively looked away blushing because he had noticed her staring. She took a quick side glance to see if he was still looking at her, and he was. Stella's lips curled up into a flirtatious smile, and she clasped her glass of whiskey in between both hands letting the tip of her finger trace along the rim playfully. She heard a chuckle come from his table, and when she looked up, the man was making his way towards her with his glass in hand. Stella swiftly brushed the stray hairs from her face and looked up with a teasing smile. She could see him more clearly now, and his eyes were the color of a lake she once visited as a child. She had always been a sucker for blue eyes.

He sat down beside her and asked, "Baby, you gotta name?" in a voice that could make any woman melt. The man stared into her eyes, and Stella had to catch herself from drifting off into his eyes.

She replied, "Estelle, but you can call me Stella," as she bit on her bottom lip. He began eyeing her plump lips that resembled a blossoming, soft pink spring flower.

"My name is Riley," his eyes flickered back up to hers. "Stephen Riley."

After hours of flirtatious talking and dancing, Stephen led Stella outside. The clock struck midnight, and Stephen reached over carefully tracing the line of Stella's jaw. Stella eyed him playfully, leaned closely into him while tugging at his sleeve, and began whispering forbidden words into his ear. Soon after they left the club, Stephen had his arms wrapped tightly around her waist, their bodies dancing under the moonlight.

After months of fooling around with Stephen, Stella became pregnant and delivered a baby girl with light chestnut-colored hair and brown eyes named Shirley. Although Stella was now a mother, she could not stay away from the "excitement" of being a flapper nor take on the responsibility of caring for a child.

She was no longer the Stella she used to be. She was now lost, drowning in uncertainty. Years

passed and she found herself spending time in 'speakeasies' immersed in a life of smoking, drinking, and sex. Unable to break away from her flapper lifestyle, she lost herself and rarely spent any time with Stephen and Shirley.

The Escape-Breaking Free

On a clear night with other flappers, everyone made their way towards the basement of a jazz joint to enjoy a night of booze. Unfortunately, because of the prohibition, the police did a surprise check-in and discovered Stella and her friends drinking. Although many tried to escape, the police force was too strong, and Stella was arrested. She had to spend the night in the local jail.

Moonlight peered through the window casting a shadow over Stella as she sat reflecting over how her life had progressed since she had left the boarding school. She thought about how she left Hazel and Eloise because she felt unhappy. However, living the life of a flapper was not treating her well either. This jail experience awoke Stella, and she became ashamed.

Becoming a flapper did not help her find happiness. Instead, it only distracted her from her search. She needed to escape. After being released in the early morning, she rushed home only to find her daughter and Stephen asleep. Disgusted by the life she had been living and the way she had treated her family, she felt it would be better if she just disappeared.

She quietly packed her belongings and headed for the train station. The next morning, she found herself sleeping on a bench unaware of where she was. She turned to see a familiar face peering down at her.

"Excuse me," Stella began. "How long have you been sitting here?"

"Quite a long time. I noticed that you decided to sleep at the station, and I thought that I would keep you company until you woke up. It's not safe to be outside, ya know." Stella looked at the woman with careful eyes realizing that it was her best friend Eloise. Stella suppressed her excitement noticing that Eloise had not recognized her.

"Thank you very much for your consideration," Stella said. "I appreciate it, but now that I am awake you may go on your way and continue your business." Eloise gave a slight nod and went on her way.

Finding Hope

Arriving in Arlington, a town she once lived in, Stella walked around trying to figure out where she was going to stay. It was almost night and the sun began casting shadows on the buildings. She was surrounded by darkness and became afraid when she felt someone place a hand on her shoulder.

"Excuse me, Miss," the man began. "Are you alright? You look a little lost." Stella's eyes focused on the man.

"Do you happen to be a journalist?" Stella questioned. Taken aback by the random question, the man nodded.

"Yes, I am," he said with curious eyes. "Do I know you from somewhere?"

Stella blushed, embarrassed that she was the only one who remembered the past. "I believe so. I once worked for Hazel Hastings, and I have a feeling that you once wrote something about her

shop," Stella replied. The man's eyes opened wide.

"Are you the lady I interviewed who quit her job afterwards?" he asked.

Stella brought her palm to her face and replied, "Yes."

"If you had not said that, I would not have recognized you! I'm Ray Floyd. What has brought you to town?"

Stella looked up at the dark sky to conjure up an answer, but in truth, she did not know what led her there and she did not even remember arriving.

"I am not sure..." Stella said. "Something led me here, and I do not know what it was." Ray gave her a questioning look and offered her a place to stay for the night.

They reach his one-bedroom apartment near the center of town. Stella made herself at home as they talked about what had happened in their lives. She learned more about his profession as a journalist, and after a few days, she began helping him with his work by conducting interviews and writing short articles.

Soon, she developed a passion for journalism and found herself constantly writing. Ray Floyd noticed her talent and asked if she would like to contribute a weekly writing piece for the local paper. She became intrigued with writing and spent her time bonding with Ray. Soon, Stella began to work for the newspaper and eventually became editor.

Reaching a Crossroad

About ten years passed since Stella left her flapper lifestyle, and on her way to work one foggy morning, Stella caught sight of a frail man with a little girl around eleven years old. As she studied the man's aged face, she was convinced that the man was Stephen and the girl was her daughter. She admired them from afar until her gaze met the man's familiar loving eyes. Stephen stopped abruptly, calmly staring at Stella. Through his ocean blue eyes, he noticed that Stella had changed greatly and aged well. With one glance at her, he was reminded of the times they shared and the pain from her disappearance.

Through the quiet morning crowd, Stella walked towards him slightly afraid of his reaction. It had been years since she had left them. As she walked closer, she noticed the wrinkles around his eyes and the grey in his hair. She looked at him with a slight smile; she felt as if it was all a dream.

Stella questioned him about his life as she took short glances at the girl behind him. Stephen replied in between heavy coughs, which sparked worry within Stella. He assured her he merely had a cold, and Stella relaxed and turned her focus to Shirley. Although she was excited about talking to her daughter, she grew nervous when Stephen introduced Stella to Shirley as an old friend.

Over the next few months Stella and Stephen agreed to spend time together with their daughter. Stella was determined to get to know her better and desperately wanted to become a part of her daughter's life again.

As time went on, Stephen's health declined. His cough worsened and more health concerns arose. Eventually, Stephen developed pneumonia, and noticing that his time was running out, he willed both Stella and Ray to watch over Shirley.

Little Shirley

Months passed and Stella was still living with Ray. Stephen's illness worsened, and he passed away in late July. With nowhere else to go, Shirley moved in with Stella and Ray. Shirley had always known that her mother had abandoned her at a young age. When she met Stella, she suspected that Stella was closer to her father than just a friend, but she did not want to believe that Stella was her birth mother. Once Stella and Ray finally gained the chance to tell Shirley the truth, she was in disbelief. Shirley felt she had been deceived.

Streams of tears ran down Shirley's face as her emotions took over. She battered Stella with questions, and her patience ran thin with Stella's clear avoidance of each question. Stella tried to console Shirley, but it only made her angrier and less understanding. Shirley felt numb as emotions and confusion swarmed her. She ran towards her bedroom door and away from Stella.

The next couple of days were quiet while Shirley avoided Stella. They rarely saw one another. When Shirley did come across Stella, she would quickly retreat back into her room and close the door.

The following week, Shirley grew tired of living a lie and felt like a burden. On a cold, drizzling night, she ran away from home. This time she was the one to leave her family, not Stella. Shirley ventured off into the world to find her own path and experience life. When she left, she never looked back.

Wide Awake

Stella was heartbroken and went back to Chicago for a few days in search of her daughter. Ray suggested that she should simply let Shirley go. Like Stella, Shirley needed to discover the world on her own.

Although Stella did not know Shirley's whereabouts, she tried to find her hoping that she might see her again, but eventually, she returned home devastated. To help comfort Stella, Ray encouraged her to reflect on her life experiences, how they met, and why she came to Arlington.

This experience prompted Stella to write about her life. She wrote about the lifestyles she had lived and what she had learned about herself. Though she had made mistakes in the past, she felt free, happy, and loved. She recalled when she first travelled to Chicago and how her dreams and aspirations had changed from then to now. In Stella's present life, she found peace and contentment and was grateful to have found her passion.

Illuminate

On the first day of spring, Stella went to the train station where her new life had begun. As she looked around, she reminisced about the various events that had occurred there and found a familiar face amongst the crowd of people. Her old friend Eloise sat on a wooden bench looking lost and hopeless. At first, Stella just watched her believing that the woman in front of her was just a figment of her imagination. However, as she stepped closer to the sorrowful, middle-aged woman, she became overwhelmed with joy when she realized Eloise was really there.

Stella took a seat next to her and sparked a conversation. She learned that Eloise never really explored life while working for Hazel and how she felt as if something was missing within her. Stella told Eloise about the autobiography she had written and how she found a new happiness while being

a journalist. Through Stella's wise words, Eloise became inspired to find her true happiness.

After hours of talking, Stella waved goodbye as Eloise boarded a train. Stella's story prompted Eloise to take a different route to discover her dreams, which allowed both of them to find fulfillment in their lives. Stella watched as the train disappeared into the fog shrouded distance as Eloise departed from her old life to find refuge in a new one.