

From *A WOVEN WORLD: On Fashion, Fishermen, and the Sardine Dress*

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Chapter 11. THE PARIS NOTEBOOK

When my daughter was in college there was a stretch when she wore fishnet stockings. She painted her fingernails black and lived with a rocker who sang with screaming drop-to-his-knees intensity in an underground club—Geno’s in Portland, Maine, for those who may remember the scene. They lived together and fed white rats to their pet boa constrictor. Lucinda played in an all-girl band named The Brood. They hoped to tour the punk clubs of Europe. That’s when Mom exercised a little diplomatic authority. “Are you sure you don’t want to go back to school?” The year off had become an open question for her. For me the scholarship to Skidmore was a gift not to be denied. I could not have gotten her through school without it. I had dropped out of university when I became pregnant with her. That detour had led to two decades of tough and improvised self-sufficiency as I raised her, ferrying past parental judgement, shotgun teenage marriage, divorce, poverty, and the good graces of a few wise older women, one of whom wrote to me, “The only time you’ve ever disappointed me was when you told me you didn’t like field hockey.” I have never forgotten her. Those were the decades I learned my strengths, when, through adversity and spite toward those who had judged me, I felt more deeply present to the responsibility of shaping my life, more deeply committed to finding truths worthy of sharing

with the child entrusted to me by my youthful folly. I wished for her an easier road than the one I had taken.

The fishnets really got to me.

“You’re wearing the vocabulary of porn.”

I saw the sleazy deck of pornographic playing cards my teenage brother had kept hidden in his closet.

“It has nothing to do with that,” she spat in all her independent glory.

She saw the punk scene--Siouxsie Sioux, a badass language of female power.

“I finally had a look,” she tells me decades later, “for telling people to fuck off.”

During the War on Poverty when federal funds supported the launch of family planning clinics in underserved regions, I worked for over a decade for Planned Parenthood, trained as a para-professional sex educator and clinic organizer. I was not squeamish, as many parents are, about discussing sexuality with my daughter or about expressing my own as a source of pleasure and power in the pre-AIDS years. I wanted my daughter to feel empowered and pleased by her sexuality. But I did not want her to be degraded or violated or fetishized. And I did not want her “look” to suggest she might invite that. Was I suggesting it would be her fault if she were mistreated because she had worn fishnet stockings? Not my intention but that must be how she heard my complaint. I am sorry for that. Fishnets are a ubiquitous accessory among fashion models, roller derby stars and at least one crime-fighting superhero, Black Canary. But at the time, my daughter’s fishnets were for me a focal point of my maternal anxiety at knowing that just because she was a woman she faced vulnerabilities from which I could not protect her.

In recalling this, I began to wonder, when did fishnets enter the fashion lexicon? They were popular at the Moulin Rouge in 1800, cementing their association with strippers. But the erotic suggestion of fishnets, I have found, shows up much earlier in history. The Westcar Papyrus, a work written probably in ancient Egypt's 13th Dynasty, offers five tales about miracles performed by magicians and priests as told to the Pharaoh Khufu (or Cheops) by his five sons. The tale told by Baufra takes place during the reign of his grandfather Sneferu, the first king of the 4th dynasty (circa 2500 BCE). The pharaoh, suffering from royal ennui, wanders through his palace and can find no distraction to interest him. He calls to his high priest for help, who directs the pharaoh to go to the lake, where a boat will be fitted out "with all the beauties from inside the palace." The women rowing to and fro and the birds wading on the banks of the marshes will cheer him up. So Sneferu orders twenty oars made of ebony decorated with gold and "twenty virgin maidens with perfect bodies and well-developed bosoms, compassed with braided hair. Let them be draped in nets after they have disrobed their clothes."

And thus they row, these fishnetted nudes, and thus the king is cheered by his catch. But that is not the miracle. The "stroke maiden" runs her fingers through her braids and dislodges a malachite hair pendant in the shape of a fish. It falls into the water. She aggrieved falls silent and stops calling the pace to her rowers. The boat stops. Sneferu urges the stroke maiden on, telling her not to worry, he has the means to replace the pendant. "Row!" he orders. No. She'd prefer to have back her own property. The king calls again to his high priest, who casts a spell that makes one half side of the lake rest on the other half—like an omelet flipped sideways in the pan. The priest walks out on the lake's dry ground, picks up the lost fish pendant, returns it to the stroke maiden, and flips the waters back to their original position. The maiden resumes her beat. The

boat resumes its task. Sneferu spends the rest of the day celebrating the miracle and the powers of his priest. But the stroke maiden deserves some credit for sticking up for her desires. She is more than an instrument for soothing the pharaoh's ennui. A woman in fishnets is the catalyst for invoking supernatural powers that turn out to be more powerful than the king's own authority in bringing him pleasure.

Now, decades after my daughter's punk phase, when she is an accomplished visual artist and academic, a woman who can throw onto her runner's body a cheap faux-tapestry skirt and black tee and look like a hipster model then give a brilliant lecture on kinetic landscape representation in her work, I have nothing but admiration for her fashion sense. In fact, I often defer to her for advice on my own style, which seems perpetually to elude me. I could think of no better travel companion for a research trip to Paris seeking traces of my maternal great-grandmother, Louisa De St. Isle Bregny.

How do I tell a story when there is so little story to tell? I have looked for my great-grandmother in New York, knowing she had lived and run a dressmaking business there for thirty or forty years. I did not find her at Castle Garden, the old concert hall turned into immigrant station during the flood of arrivals from Europe to the U.S. in the mid-1800s, when she would have arrived. I did not find her on ship manifests or immigration and naturalization documents. I did not find her at the Tenement Museum on the Lower East Side, though I took a tour of the home-based sweatshop to understand how those less fortunate than Louisa had found sustenance in the garment trades. I did not find her at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Tribeca when I arrived at one in the morning, the hallway sooty from street construction. But the room was so small it

conjured the old New York of Louisa's time, a dense and crowded city growing so fast it had to cram more and more people into less and less space.

I did not find her at 273 West 11th Street, the five-story red brick walk-up where she lived in 1880. The building is gone. One of only two houses on the block demolished to make way for an apartment building the size of two former brick walk-ups. I did not find her at the 11th Street café where I stopped for coffee, though in that narrow space, brick walls maybe ten feet wide, pressed tin ceiling, I again felt the compressed scale of places in old New York. I sat beside a young Japanese couple, he with an open notebook, characters indecipherable to me, and she with spiked leather boots and faux fur vest, hair streaked with blond wisps sweeping her cheek, the two talking fiercely. I was about to apologize for sitting two inches from them at the only table space available. Outside the wind had jacked up the ten-degree cold, so cold I had chilblains on my thighs from walking from Tribeca to Chelsea. Who wouldn't be glad for a warm table no matter how cramped on such a day? The spiked-boots woman instead apologized. "We're just talking not fighting." She translated this to him and we all laughed. She was explaining to him how to fill out a W4 form that he kept protected in a clear plastic sleeve.

Louisa would have had an experience like this—tucked into a homey and crowded space for warmth, cold backlit clouds adrift above the brownstones, someone translating for her the necessary forms for the new life. Did she speak English when she arrived? French remained her first language. I know this because I found among my grandmother Marie's things a letter that Louisa had written to Marie on the day my mother was born celebrating the birth. The handwriting is French—still Louisa's language of intimate conveyance forty years after her immigration.

I did not find Louisa in the history of fashion or the memoirs of women who had lived when she lived, though I fell in love with her contemporary Louise Michel, who wrote of growing up with wolves wandering into the courtyard of her childhood home, Louise Michel, a woman born of a mother who was a servant in the home and a father who was the son of the household head, the young man hightailing out of France after knocking up the maid, but his father, honorably, taking the child in as if his own daughter and educating her and setting the stage for her dynamic life. Michel became a teacher, an orator, a revolutionary leader during the Paris Commune, a prisoner and exile in New Caledonia. That was a life worth remembering, but it could not speak for Louisa de St. Isle Bregny, dressmaker to Empress Eugenie, proprietor of “Bregny & Cie.” “private house” in New York City, daughter of unknowns (did my mother once say Louisa’s parents had been bakers?), mother of my grandmother, anchor to the matrilineal line I seek to know if only to honor the truth that I have received more than mitochondrial DNA from my female ancestors. Needlework has long been a skill of women in every social class, their “work.” Custom dressmakers, as labor historian Helen Sumner wrote in 1910, “have always been aristocrats among clothing makers.” Surely there must a trace of her.

When Lucinda and I arrived in Paris, we agreed to walk off our jet lag. We would plan but we would also wander, taking in the immutable aspects of the city—placid Seine, lofty Montmartre, refuge of the Bois de Boulogne, plane trees in the Jardin des Plantes. We stayed in a small boutique hotel on the Rue des Gobelins near the eponymous tapestry factory--the Gobelins brothers, master dyers, who had crafted grand tapestries in the time of Henry XIV and where weaving continues on looms working with 17th century techniques. At first my American eyes had seen the name through the taxi window and thought “goblins”—as if this place were

some kind of Disneyland of cute icons. Pay attention. Pay attention. I told myself again and again. You know nothing about this place.

We made our way through Le Mouffetard, the medieval cobblestone street quiet on a Monday, stopping for a bite of gruyere crepe, sitting for espresso, then sloping down toward the Seine and finding ourselves staring up at Notre-Dame. No choice but to go in, be humbled by the grandeur of a space devoted to reverie. I lit a candle for our ancestor. Had Louisa worshipped here? The cathedral had been sacked during the Revolution, religious icons smashed, the space turned into a warehouse. It was restored during Louisa's youth, part of the reconstruction of Paris led by Napoleon III in the Second Empire. She may have lit a candle in prayer in the exact alcove where I stood lighting mine, heard the massive organ pipes fill the cavernous nave, billowing the walls against the flying buttresses.

We climbed the winding and worn stone staircase up to the Chimera Gallery, added during Louisa's childhood. Designed by architect Viollet-L-Duc, the hybrid creatures joined the gargoyle gutter spouts that had stood there for centuries. I remember learning in Prague that the Vatican had a special office for approving what chimeras were allowed on cathedrals. The intent is to say to demons, "Don't try entering these premises. The demons are already here." We lingered beside the stryga, most contemplative of the beasts, head in hands, wings and horns aloft, tongue protruding, as if to say that a thinking animal is itself a demonic presence. Or perhaps that there is no room here for mockery of lofty pretense. That tongue-splayed irreverence is already here.

Louisa must have felt that she was on the right side of history, a time in which the wealth of empire meant huge investments in beauty and civic pride. Her youth had been a time of

suffering and turmoil in France--riots spurred by harvest failure and food shortage, cholera and smallpox, coup after coup, war after war. She was a teenager when Louis-Napoleon staged the coup to proclaim himself emperor. He'd served two terms as president, and the law did not allow a third. During his 1851 coup hundreds of his opponents were killed on the street, tens of thousands arrested, thousands sent to penal colonies in Algeria or Guyana or into exile. Newspapers were not allowed to print political news without permission of the government. After three warnings, a paper could be shut down. He believed that his fate was to rule. As a child, he had visited his uncle Napoleon Bonaparte at the Tuileries, an experience that ignited his ambition. He was one of those men, he later wrote, "whom I call volunteers of providence, in whose hands are placed the destiny of their countries." It was a hard road for him to get there. Before his presidency, he served time in prison and exile in England for his earlier attempts at a coup. He had written in prison a book widely celebrated by socialists on the elimination poverty through assistance to the working and farming class. That helped him win his place in public office. But it's hard to get a grasp on the man. He seemed to want both monarchy and republicanism. Perhaps these two forces were at war within him.

From 1815 until the time Louis-Napoleon attained the stature of emperor as Napoleon III in 1851, the population of Paris had doubled with no expansion of its area. As emperor he annexed eleven surrounding municipalities, displacing hundreds of thousands of citizens and increasing the number of arrondissements from twelve to twenty. In the city center, hundreds of buildings were torn down, new avenues lined with gas lights, the buildings all faced with cream-colored stone. The poor suffered in the advance of this progress. Citizens were angry over lost streets and being moved to outlying slums, tradesmen lost shops, and new workers came in from

provinces to compete for the new jobs. Napoleon III was hated for turning away from the poor to realize his goal of making Paris into “the capital of capitals.”

Louisa would have come of age as the empire did. She would have known the city’s reconstruction as a tempo of life, a filthy and dark medieval city becoming a showpiece with broad tree-lined streets, new railways and new shipping lines, hygienic water and sewer systems. The Bois de Boulogne was constructed, modelled on Hyde Park in London. The Garnier Paris Opera House went up, the largest theater in the world, and the Luxembourg Gardens were replanted as part of a plan to create “green and flowering salons” in each of the city’s neighborhoods.

Empress Eugenie was an impresario of high fashion. She made Charles Frederick Worth, the first name-brand designer, a celebrity. Before him, the dressmaker’s art was that of women, in part because of the physical intimacy of the dressmaker’s relationship to her customer’s body. Stripping, measuring, fitting, corseting, trying on the toile, stripping, measuring, fitting, hands guiding the fabric along the client’s frame. Louisa was a performer of the dressmaker’s art bringing the *femmes élégantes* onto the stage of life. Anna Bicknell, a governess in the Palace Tuileries in those years, wrote that “there was a sort of intoxication in the very atmosphere of Paris, a fever of enjoyment—a passion for constant amusement, for constant excitement, and, amongst women, for extravagance of dress.” She wrote that Eugenie “had the art of constantly choosing something new and unusual, which attracted attention, so that, instead of being satisfied with conventional types of silks and satins, which formerly had been considered sufficient for all occasions, every one tried to invent something different from the others, and to improve upon

what they had seen before.” There was a constant struggle “to reach a higher degree of splendor, and extravagance became universal.”

At the Tuileries the empress had several rooms lined with oak wardrobes with sliding panels. Four mannikins were stationed there for preparing the dresses for the day. Bicknell recounts that “orders were given through a speaking-pipe in the dressing room, and the figure came down on a sort of lift through an opening in the ceiling, dressed in all that the Empress was about to wear.” Dresses tiered and pouffed, shirred into gathers and festoons, decked with paillettes and gorgettes, garments more florid than royal wedding cakes, sequined and beaded, beribboned and braided with gold, corsaged and feathered, dresses that require a lexicon of lost words to describe: leg-of-mutton sleeves, chinoiserie roundels and foulard des Indes, organza and tulle, polonaise and paletot, pin tucks and welt tucks, vandyke and passanterie, casaque and aigrette, selvage and bias.

When Lucinda and I returned from our first walk in Paris to Hotel Henriette, we found a fashion shoot happening in the lobby so small we had to thread our way through electrical wires vining the floor and monstrous cameras bolted to tripods. The room was dark with an island of intense white light focused on the perfect braceletted arms of a model pale as a hospital sheet. The bracelet was a chunky circle of ivory-colored plastic that wound round and round her wrist. She held the arms, elbow down on a pedestal, wrists up and slightly crossed. Lucinda described the stillness in the room as “a tomb of fashion seriousness.” We blundered through, apologizing for our intrusion, slipped into the elevator just large enough for two and found our way to sleep.

At breakfast Lucinda was reading a history of Paris fashion—how the dresses got so low cut in the early 1800s, the nipples showed. The English, fearing French licentiousness, raised the

neckline. No more nipples in public. Lucinda planned to head off on a 12-mile run—her method for reconnoitering a new place. I would meet my research assistant to look for birth records circa 1838, passenger lists circa 1864, historical records of a coterie of French dressmakers and tailors leaving Paris to settle in the French Empire in Mexico circa 1865. I was looking for someone who lived after Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and before Ivan Turgenev's "The Execution of Tropmann." In the case of either literary example, this was a time from which a woman would have many reasons to want to escape.

My great grandmother did not intend to move to New York City. She was bound from Paris for Mexico sometime in the mid-1860s. By the time her ship got to New York, it was no longer safe for her to continue her journey. Had Napoleon III sponsored her trip, part of his plan to send European immigrants to populate the nation? The pretense for the war and occupation was Mexico's unpaid debt to France. But the "Mexican Adventure" had more to do with economic power derived from resources. France wanted to block the rise of North America as a superpower. The American Civil War meant a decline in imports of cotton from the Confederate states. The cotton shortage devastated the Lyon textile mills. The Confederate government had offered Napoleon 22,000 tons of raw cotton in 1862, but to obtain it France would have to sail through a U.S. blockade. Napoleon was unwilling to risk war with the Union, so he declined. To complicate matters, France had turned to India for cotton, and they demanded payment in silver. As France ran low on the precious metal, the silver mines in Sonora added further appeal to the exploit.

History remembers how many French troops went to Mexico in December of 1861 (6,000), how many in January of 1862 (2,600 including 600 mercenaries from North Africa who

were thought to tolerate Mexico's heat and tropical diseases better than the French). But who stitched the britches and mended the shoes of these thousands? Who made and mended the dresses of the officers' consorts? Who brought French fashion to Mexico, for it too had arrived. When one prominent French woman, as described in M.M. McAllen in *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe's Last Empire in Mexico*, "arrived at mass wearing the latest in French fashion (meaning a hoop skirt, décolletage, bare arms, and Parisian hat), the officiating priest became offended that she was not wearing the black mantilla customary for most women supplicants. The priest made a rude gesture to her husband, who in reply complained to the priest's superior." It was decided that the priest was within his right to excuse her from church, which prompted "an angry letter that the French were good Catholics, just as reverent as the Mexicans, and French women should be allowed the right to attend mass in the attire of their homeland." Surely all of a woman's finery could not have come with her in a sea chest. Who made that dress? So many skilled and accomplished and specialized artisans stand behind history's performance of wealth and power: the dressmakers, beaders, sleeveers, pressers, tailors, shoemakers, tool makers, saddle makers, carriage makers--that vast class of artisans who served the European ruling class, last gasp of the *ancien régime*, as they roved from chateau to palace to royal hunting grounds in sumptuous ostentation. History does not care about the makers only the overtakers.

"De Ste. Isle?" queried the woman who keeps the records. "That would be a very unusual name in France." My great grandmother Louisa De Ste. Isle Bregny appears not to have existed. I can almost hear her laughing at the endless erasure of women, this accomplished woman who established a business in New York City and ran it right into the twentieth century. At that time, though, a woman and her children, I've been told, might be included on her husband's passport.

No need to have one of her own. But her birth? Should there not be at least a record of that fact? She knew a Paris where women were fighting for the right to divorce, the right to a secular education, an end to the distinction between married women and concubines, between legitimate and illegitimate children. She knew a nation of worker revolts in the silk mills, a nation ruled by an autocrat who failed at every one of his military ventures and compensated for his failures by engaging in obscene sexual mores.

Napoleon III was a systematic philanderer. At the Palace Tuileries, a staircase led from his imperial study to a bedroom above. Potential candidates for liaison were presented to him in his study. If he was not attracted to candidate, he announced, "I am summoned by my papers." If he was attracted, the woman was taken to a room to undress, led naked to the bedroom where the naked emperor waited. "You may kiss His Majesty on any part of his person except his face," she was told. One woman said he wore a mauve silk nightshirt. She reported that "his performance in bed lacked distinction." And then there was the two-year affair beginning in 1863 with his young *cocodette*, "The Laughing Margot," whom he set up in two homes. There was no question of discretion; indiscretion was the turn-on. Her place became a party scene for the sophisticates. "The gravest and most frivolous persons flocked thither," writes Fenton Bresler in his biography of the emperor. "Ministers, senators, equerries, chamberlains, diplomats, tenors, soldiers and buffoons."

Eugenie was fully aware of her husband's cocking around. Of the ladies presented in court, she said, "I'd like to know which one of them hasn't slept with the emperor." Her compensation for these indignities led her to become increasingly influential in political decisions. She sat in on cabinet meetings, served as regent when the emperor was on military

ventures, and had her own diplomatic discussions with ambassadors to Paris during the 1860s, among them Bismarck, who called her “the only man in Paris.” She was the most powerful woman in Europe and a philanthropist. When the city of Paris offered her a diamond necklace worth 600,000 francs, she asked that the money be used to fund an orphanage for girls. She held huge receptions at Fontainebleau and Compiègne to which she invited Flaubert, Dumas, Berlioz, Verdi, Delacroix for conversation.

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“De Ste. Isle? I find no one by that name,” said the woman who keeps the records. Was Louisa a “first hand” or one of the “*petit mains*” in a couture house? Did she work for Worth or in competition, one of the hold-outs against the turning of the tide in fashion toward male couturiers? Was she an *entrepreneuse* who had more work than she could do by herself and hired less skilled seamstresses and skirt hands and embroiderers to work for her? How did she pass from modest origin into the empyrean of dressmaking in Paris and then in New York? Imagine the silks that passed through her hands, the crepe de Chine, the chiffon, the fine lace saved from the finest dresses to be employed on a new creation?

After giving up on another day of archival dead-ends, I decided to take the train to Compiègne to seek some atmospherics of the place where Napoleon had courted Eugenie and that became their autumn palace during his reign. For the Royal Hunt a forest had been built in a series of octagons. Horses trotted out from the palace under a grand canopy laced over with vines and sculpted plane trees. The hunt is immortalized in nine massive 18th century tapestries woven at Gobelins designed by Jean Baptiste Oudry, known for his paintings of dogs, that hang on palace walls. The grand chase in the forest. Over a dozen dogs. Men on horseback. Women sidesaddle.

A forest of trees and stags and foxes and rabbits. A melee of wildness and genteel ritualized killing. A tiny figure in the lower right-hand corner of one tapestry, shows the artist, leaning over his sketch pad, sentinel to the act of witness.

On such a hunt, Napoleon sought to bed the vivacious Spanish beauty, Eugenie de Montijo. He'd given her a horse on a previous visit to Fontainebleau. At Compiègne he rode with her into the forest, passion doubly roused, but she denied him. I like to imagine a coterie of seamstresses hanging out in some dark recess of the palace grounds, making bawdy hay of the erotic escapade.

The emperor has split his pants again.

Yes, he was so hard he split his pants, and still she would not let him have her.

He blamed the tear on a feint executed by his mount at the sight of a rabbit, but we had all seen the bulge in his pantaloons grow more desperate as the week bore on.

That pansy ass.

And when she came to our salon to be dressed for the ball, she told us what she'd told him. Make me empress and I'll make you a man.

Then she acted all the virgin at the ball, that spirited huntress who knew her prey.

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On the return train to Paris a small, lean woman with a narrow Mohawk on a shaved head asked me in French, "Is this the train to Paris?"

I'd already noticed her, attractive, black, silver earrings (were they skulls or razor blades?), black leather femme-stylized biker jacket and jeans all pocked with fashion tears.

"Yes, I think so."

We joked.

“Then we will be lost together.”

“Let me ask someone in my bad French.”

Her accent was very thick in English. Somewhat English, somewhat French. Maybe North African.

“Can I sit with you?”

I was worried she wanted to hit on me for money, but I said yes.

Slowly our stories unfolded. She had grown up in London. Her mother died there of AIDS. She went back to Kenya to see her father for the funeral. She has a half-sister there. They didn't want to know her. She said she was trying to get back to Somalia.

Somalia, where forty years of drought and a collapsed government have led to war, poverty, disease, and starvation, where AIDS burns like a wildfire, young women and girls hit hardest through transactional or sugar-daddy or violent sex, where people living with AIDS suffer such stigma that their families want nothing to do with them, where Al-Shabaab terrorists siphon off the food and drugs targeted for humanitarian aid, where to become a displaced person may be the only way to survive. How hard must a person's life be in order for her to long for a return to this homeland?

I told my traveling companion some stories from my life, but they didn't sound very hard anymore.

“You've had a hard life,” I said. “I'm sorry.”

“You don't need to be sorry,” she said.

We rode quietly while the train passed through wooded hills, then a spindly plantation of trees, then a vast field of something that looked like cabbages. We were hurtling out of the past toward the Paris not of the Tuileries and Montmartre but of the *banlieues* and *cités*, those Brutalist projects where immigrants from Algiers, Tunisia, Mali, Syria—many of them Arabs-- were stacked twenty-stories high. They mixed with earlier immigrants from Poland and Italy and Portugal. Christian, Muslim, and Jew thrown together by their disadvantage, without a vocabulary for bridging distance in a secular nation and lacking a community to embrace them. These neighborhoods on the Paris outskirts are beds of the poverty and social isolation. Crime, drug use, and violence are high in alienated communities where a sense of belonging is absent.

I might have come to Paris in search of the past, but I found in the present moment lament beyond my imagining.

“Because of what we’ve talked about,” my companion said, “I want to tell you.”

“Yes?” She paused, as if embarrassed to continue. To what extent could she entrust me with her story?

“I am a stripper.” But she said “strippah” in that British way that sounds so beautiful. “Don’t judge me. I’m sorry.”

“You don’t need to be sorry.” I thought then of the woman’s vulnerability and power all clothed in the economy of her body and how she had used it to survive. Her body unclothed signified her survival.

Then we arrived at the Gare de Nord.

We embraced. Gone.