

The room was filled with light when Evelyn awoke. She thought she had just rested her eyes for a few minutes, and remembered the weight of her eyelids forcing her back into dreams that seemed to entangle her. She awoke with a start to find no other presence in the room, no shadow leaking from the adjoining bathroom door, left ajar, no sound of his shoes or running water. The blinds flapped nervously as the summer air drifted into the room, like a lone bird's wing that couldn't take flight. She felt a mild panic. "Marty?" she whispered in a barely audible voice. She was afraid to crack this silence, and to only have the silence returned. She gathered the sheets around her, slowly moved from the bed, and peered cautiously out of the blinds to see what the day's clouds might bring. She already knew it was a turning day. She vaguely hoped to see him standing on the sidewalk, waiting for her; to see him look up and acknowledge her face peering down, and wave frantically at her to join him, but she only saw an old woman pushing an overloaded shopping cart down the street. The shopping cart seemed to be filled with all of her worldly possessions. Evelyn saw herself in this woman. Only, she wasn't sure what items would fill her own shopping cart. These solitary people who wandered the earth seemed to carry with them the material remnants of a previous life; tangible memories of who they used to be. Evelyn carried her memories, too, but she couldn't put them in a shopping cart, except perhaps a few torn dresses. She would have to put herself in a shopping cart. And then there was the little girl she tried so desperately to escape from—there would have to be room for her.

The old woman suddenly stopped her cart and peered upwards at the hotel windows. She put her hand over her forehead as a visor to block out the sun. Evelyn wanted to move back from the window, but something made her continue looking down at the woman. She wondered if the woman saw her from this height. Could she have detected her own misery through the cheap window glass and distance that separated them? Perhaps this was her daily routine, to wander the streets with her life in a basket and peer up at the apartments and hotels, dreaming about entering such a building and having her own four walls, a bed and a mirror, even though she may never look at her own reflection, and having a set of blinds to block out the rest of the world. Evelyn's finger slipped and she let the blind snap shut.

Soon after, Evelyn was standing on the same sidewalk, clutching a small bag she had hastily thrown together, after ten uninterrupted minutes of staring at her own image in the mirror, wondering why she had been abandoned and if it were really a bad thing. She had stood naked in the mirror, covering her breasts with her arms, hugging herself for comfort and self-realization. She wanted to smash the mirror, but she restrained herself because she did not want to break anything else. Maybe she had anticipated this. To wake up with only herself... she had not done so in years. She quietly gathered her clothes, and the small bundle of money Marty had left for her on the corner of the bed, and deftly left the room.

The day was cool, and the air was foreign on her skin; a small, teasing breeze that made her small, protective hairs stand up. She held her elbows, standing on the sidewalk. The man at the front desk had given her a kind, fatherly look when she checked out.

"You don't need him, mademoiselle," he said. Then nodded reassuringly, by way of saying that was all that needed to be said. She didn't answer. She didn't believe him, yet. She lifted one corner of her mouth, and went out. She didn't call a taxi; instead, she began walking in the sunshine, with her heels dipping in the shallow cracks in the cement. She felt as though she was learning to walk; her legs were thin and unsteady, as she held her chest in. She was afraid everything might fall out, loose, onto the pavement; a cartoon vision of her ribs breaking and her vital organs, even her eyes, falling out, and her kneeling on the ground, mortified, and people walking by and watching. The thought made her hold her elbows and close her eyes tighter, to keep everything in. She had asked the man in the hotel where she was. A small French village outside Paris called Carrières-sur-Seine. She blinked. They had travelled nearly all the way back to their starting point. She thought she could hide here for a while, but she didn't know how she could manage. Marty had left her money, but it felt greasy in her hand. She had not begun to forgive him, and the money was linked to a part of him she didn't know or trust. She didn't care about the money; she never had money before. She had also never been entirely alone before. She was trapped again. Screw him, she thought, not sure of which him she meant. Every man that thought they had her, or decided for

her who she was or what was best. They didn't have her, now. As she walked through the quaint, sunny village, trying to calm her thoughts and decide what to do, she noticed the old woman with the shopping cart coming towards her. She must have looped around again. This was her village, her home. Everyone needed a landmark, a center. As the woman came closer, Evelyn noticed she was not old. She looked haggard, but no older than her mid-forties. Her hair boasted long grey streaks, partly tied back off her tired, weathered face. Her eyes were large and had seen too much. She didn't see Evelyn, and was about to jostle past her with her life in her cart, until Evelyn spoke, "Excuse moi." The woman stopped as though a stone wall had suddenly been thrown up in front of her cart wheels, and slowly looked up at the jittery, younger woman standing in the street. Evelyn reached into her bag and took out the money. She pulled a few large francs out of the wad in her hand, and gave the rest to the woman. "Find shelter," she said. She knew the woman could find a new life, if she wished for it. It would take more than money, but it could be done. The woman grabbed the money in both hands, clearly not sure what to do next. She nodded at Evelyn, her face pale, her eyes moist and her lips twitching. "Pour quoi?" she finally said, in a voice that seemed to have not been used for years. Evelyn shrugged and smiled, "please find shelter," she repeated, and began to walk away from the older woman with her heart pumping, feeling less helpless. The village was another respite; prettier, and not so remote. She hadn't kept much of Marty's money, but she had enough to make a decision. She headed toward the train station. She was going back to Paris. She wasn't going to be afraid anymore.