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So I'm in Paris, with the pigeons and the tourists and the Monets. The Seine flows its way along the banks, grey and almost beautiful. The old facades are the most judgemental I've ever seen, disdaining the river, Paris, us. The sky is a wintry gunmetal grey, the same as you see all over Europe, but here its reflection in the old windows of the palaces and the coats of the pigeons in front of Notre Dame takes on a distant cast.

I follow my feet into a brasserie in St Germain, exhausted from a day of sightseeing. It's in a back-street, away from the young kids and the tourists, populated with a seedier clientele. I set myself up in a back corner, where there's almost no natural light and the old men's cigar smoke pools in forgotten, fragrant wisps. I order some red wine and pull out my pack of cheap cigarettes.

My phone rings. I wrestle it out of my backpack and try to answer it before the sound annoys the waiter, who already seems fed up in that weary Parisian way. I can see on the small grey screen that it's Hitomi, checking on me.

'Where are you?' she says.

'Paris. Second day. How's the weather in Tokyo?'

'Almost snowing. You can feel it coming. There?'

'The same.'

We're on an international line, mobile to mobile, bouncing through god knows how many satellites, and we're talking about the weather. So, this is the state of things.

'I haven't seen you in a month,' she says. 'I'm starting to forget your face.'

'I know,' I say. 'But I thought of you today, looking at a picture in the Musée d'Orsay.'

'At least you think of me once a day, then. When are you coming home?'

She means Tokyo. Somehow, over the years, Tokyo has become home, Hitomi has become home.

'I'm not sure. When my money runs out. I miss you.' I'm not sure if it's true, but I say it anyway. These things become reflex.

I hang up, and bury the phone back in my backpack. After two more glasses of red wine, the interior of the brasserie is becoming pleasantly hazy, and as they dim the lights I can feel my world contracting to a small dim tunnel in front of me. Crossing half the world, just to get pissed like you could at home. I give myself a drunken internal talking-to, then pay, and walk slowly and carefully out into the chill air.

The streets are now livelier and less savoury. Shady looking characters are selling something, drugs or prostitutes or both, trying to get my attention, thinking that because I'm drunk I'm an easy mark. I brush them off with my only words of angry French.

I mean to head to the river for a drunken gaze, but soon I'm lost in a series of alleys, darker and darker with each

corner. There's nobody about at all except an old man pissing into a doorway. I'm lost. This area isn't that big, I can't have strayed too far. I take another corner. Immediately, there's a hand around my forearm and a sharp something prodding my lower back.

'Argent. Maintenant,' a voice says.

'Okay, okay,' I say, and straight away give him my wallet. I feel nauseous.

'Le sac aussi.'

The unseen hands disappear, there's a sound of running feet, and I spin around to see nothing whatsoever.

I stumble out of the laneways to find the Seine. I stand looking into the water, catching my breath, waiting for the nausea to subside. Someone needs to call the credit card company, so I find a payphone to tell Hitomi. I reverse the charges.

'Someone robbed me,' I say as soon as she answers.

She makes me slow down and explain myself without slurring too much.

'I told you to be careful. This never happens in Tokyo.'

'I can't stay in Tokyo forever, you know,' I say. 'I needed to get out. At least for a while.'

'So you said. But somebody took all your money. Are you going to come home now?'

'I'm not sure. Maybe there's a way you could send me some money, just for another month or so. I might head on to Lyon, or Geneva...'

'Why are you avoiding me? Why won't you come home?' Hitomi asks, her voice shaky.

A police siren wails by in its lackadaisical French way. Across the river, the lights of the Louvre are burning like beacons. I can't think of any answer to give her, so I stay silent. A minute goes by.

'I wish you'd find a better enemy,' Hitomi says finally. 'This call is very expensive.' She hangs up, and the payphone starts scrolling messages in French across its perky screen.

Later, I descend the river embankment and listen to the dirty water lapping against the cemented edge. I sit down. Occasionally a boat pushes past, sailing by my feet and under an ancient bridge, bearing a half load of Parisians on the way to some assignation, or to an empty apartment. The wine is wearing off, and the day's images project themselves onto the Seine: Monet, cigars, and two unseen faces, the mugger's and Hitomi's. This is what it is to be lonely in a foreign city; the clearest faces are ones you have to imagine.

As I sit, the cold presses into my limbs. Only a few flakes of snow fall; the weather holding its breath for the moment. Soon, I hear footsteps. A man is approaching. The nausea rises again. We're alone on the embankment.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sam Grunhard.