NINETEEN SIXTY-TWO

1.

Soon after we moved into the storefront, Richard took me to an apartment on Avenue C where a musician named Karen lived with a man named Tom. Their bathtub was in the middle of the kitchen, with a piece of plywood laid over it as a table. Karen, the object of our visit, was so thin she had to sit on a pillow to cushion her bony hips while she played her banjo. She had dark hair that fell to her waist and sang in a husky voice that Bob Dylan later compared to Billie Holliday's. Karen was thin because she popped uppers and chain-smoked cigarettes. At night she and Richard and possibly Tom would take acid and go up to the roof and watch whatever, lights and stars I suppose. A few weeks after our visit, I volunteered to take Karen's six-year-old daughter Abbe to Coney Island. That was on a Sunday afternoon. Richard and Karen must have been lovers by then.

It was the summer of 1962. I was twenty years old and stopping in New York City on my way to Europe for the first time.

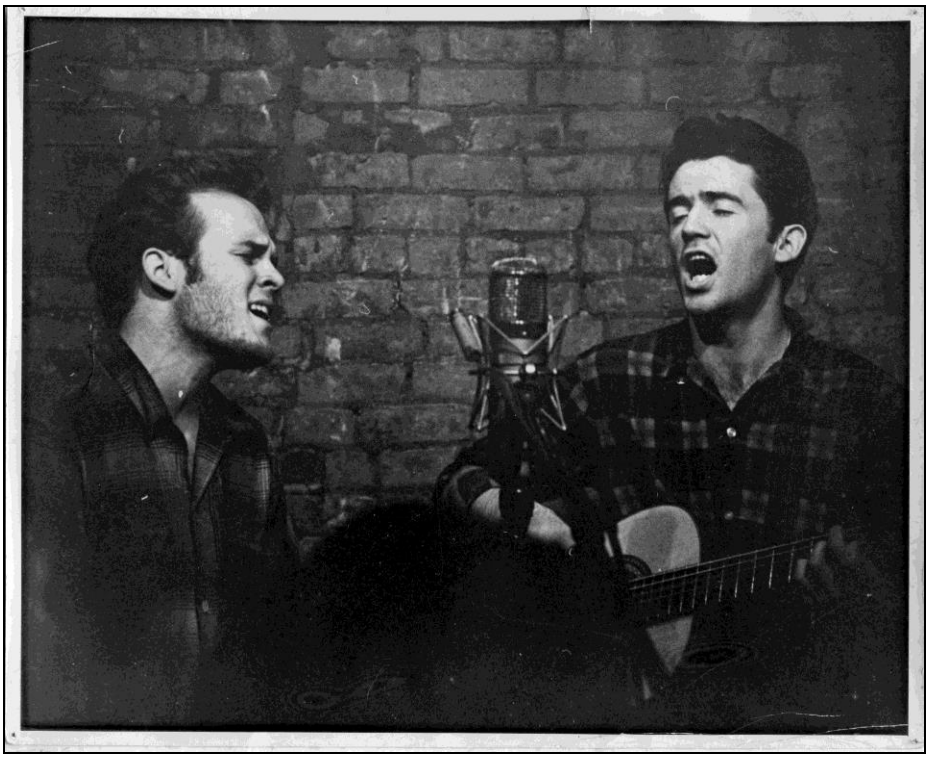
The storefront was an apartment at 632 East Eleventh Street, between Avenue B and Avenue C. Behind the green front door was a single room, with stove, refrigerator, and metal shelves in back and a double bed in front under a big window facing the street. The bathroom was a disgusting little room off to the left, containing a shower, a sink so dirty I never used it, a toilet, and a small window looking onto an airshaft. A bigger window in the main room, to the left of the stove and refrigerator, also opened onto the airshaft. Its windowsill functioned as a kind of rat runway.

The floor was covered with a motley collection of linoleum. I would sweep the dirt from the linoleum into little piles to pick up later. I kept all the food in the refrigerator so the rats and cockroaches wouldn't get it. I had never seen a cockroach before, Oregon innocent that I was, but the storefront was full of them. The previous tenants had installed a room divider covered with brown paper and at night the cockroaches would rustle around inside. The insects loved paper. Also the stove. Whenever I turned on the gas, roaches would stream out from under the burner grates.

Green door, 632 East Eleventh Street, New York City, 1962

I tore down the room divider because the rustling roaches gave me the creeps. But it all seemed romantic to me. Crumbling tenements full of cockroaches, home to European immigrants a hundred years earlier, were exotic to the thousands of twenty-year-olds who escaped their clean middle-class lives, their houses with two bathrooms, dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers, garages, and lawnmowers, and migrated to New York in the early Sixties. I felt safe because the residents of my tenement neighborhood sat on their stoops much of the time. I liked that, all the people outside, leading their lives in public. Like a foreign country to someone from Oregon.

Richard, who looked like Woody Guthrie, was Tim Hardin's singing partner, but short stocky Tim was the superior musician. I had gone to school with him since kindergarten and knew him as something of a bad boy, a kid who acted up a lot but who was also smart and talented. Both his parents were musicians—his father played in a jazz group and his mother was a violinist in the Eugene Symphony—and Tim seemed able to play any instrument he picked up. He also sang in the high school a cappella choir and stood next to me in an ensemble called the Purple Pipers (after our school colors of purple and white) that performed around town, including on television.



Publicity photo of Tim and Richard, New York, 1962

Tim and Richard had made their way to Eugene earlier that summer and were staying with Tim's grandmother, Manner Small, in her elegant house across town on College Hill. Tim found out that I was on my way to Europe and begged a ride to New York for him and Richard. I had already arranged to travel east with Eddie, a boyfriend of my friend Joy's. Eddie agreed that Tim and Richard could come along.

I joined Tim, Richard, and Eddie at the airport in Cheyenne, Wyoming. When they left Eugene, I had to stay behind to recover from a serious case of poison oak. After exposure to poison oak, the medical encyclopedia cautions: "Do not bathe in a tub, as this could spread the oil." That is exactly what I had done after going for a bike ride south of town with a foreign student at the university named Xavier.

We had stopped after dark in what must have been a field of poison oak. He made advances but I fended them off, and when I got home, I had a long soak in the bathtub. The next day I was completely covered in a red, oozy, itchy rash. At first, I lay in bed wrapped in strips of sheeting that Mother soaked in water and oatmeal or cornstarch and that dried almost instantly from my body heat. The doctor prescribed sulfa drugs and I managed to take the final exams for my sophomore year at the university but fainted during my Italian test.

When I felt well enough to travel, my family drove me to Portland, where I caught a flight to Wyoming. It was my first plane ride. Eddie, Tim, and Richard met me at the Cheyenne airport and we set off east on Interstate 80, which was still under construction. Tim and Eddie took turns at the wheel (I don't think Richard had a driver's license). We traveled day and night, four days and four nights, stopping overnight only once, in South Bend, Indiana, where I spent seven dollars for a hotel room.

I sat in the front passenger seat and never drove, although I had a license. My legs were still swollen and weeping pus from the poison oak, and they sometimes smelled bad, which I hoped no one besides me noticed. When we got to Illinois, Eddie took control and forbade Tim from driving anymore.

Tim should not have been driving us in the first place. He was dangerous behind the wheel. In high school, when he played solo trombone and I accompanied him on the piano, he would rarely pause for stop signs as he drove me to and from practice sessions at his parents' house in Eugene's east hills. I also remember a terrifying ride with Tim, his mother, and his grandmother, skidding on a gravel road while returning to Eugene from a music contest in Forest Grove, outside Portland.

* * *

In New Jersey, Eddie stopped for gas and I went to the restroom. The sun had set by then but the air was still hot and humid. I stood in front of the mirror behind the only washbasin and brushed my long hair, which hung straight beside my face and down my back. A girl of about eight and her mother were also in the restroom. "Look, Mom," said the girl, watching me pull the brush through my hair. "A witch!"

An hour or so later, we dropped Tim and Richard off in Greenwich Village and drove to Eddie's parents' house in Jackson Heights. I stayed there until Eddie's mother told him to find someplace else for me, so he got me a room at the YWCA near Columbia University. One day I found a note in my mailbox. It was from Richard. He wanted to see me.

Richard came to fetch me and we took the subway to Greenwich Village, where he sat me down in a café next to the Waverly Theater. We ordered hamburgers and milkshakes. Richard held my hand. "I love you," he said. "I want us to move in together." Who would lie about love, right? The next day I cashed two hundred dollars' worth of traveler's checks and gave them to Richard, who found the storefront and bought many yards of bright blue fabric that we fashioned into a curtain between the bed and the front door. The storefront cost sixty-five dollars a month, plus one month's security.

Somewhere along I-80 I had let it slip (bragged?) that I had nine hundred dollars with me. I had bought my traveler's checks at the First National Bank on Willamette Street in Eugene after I cashed out my savings accounts. The money came from picking beans the summers after sixth and seventh grade, then from working as an accompanist at Arthur Bailey's voice studio during high school and college and at the Eugene Fruit Growers cannery the summer after high-school graduation. Nana, my grandmother Potter, had also set up a savings account for me.

I intended New York as a stopover, a place where I could add to my savings so I could stay in Europe at least a year. If I had been smart and kept my mouth shut, my plan might have worked. On the other hand, I would not have had much of a story to tell. Just a few boring paragraphs about a couple of months' sleeping and cooking in the dull studio apartment in midtown Manhattan I had put a deposit on—brown sleeper sofa, beige carpet, yellowed window shade—not far from my slightly less dull job in a *schmatte* showroom on Madison Avenue, going to the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue once or twice a week, and calling home from a payphone every Sunday.

After moving into the storefront I called home on Sundays, as in the boring story, but I didn't tell my family what I was really doing. A few years later, when I announced that I was driving to Mexico with a man named Edward, Mother sat at the kitchen table and wailed, "What have I done wrong?" Better that she never knew the truth about that summer in New York.

One night before we moved into the storefront, Richard and I went around to the abandoned building where Tim was squatting. Tim had bunk beds, a hot plate, and a girl in the squat. Richard and I spent the night there, on a bed in front of tall naked windows with a heavy green curtain for a bedcover. I worried that people might see us through the windows. That was the only time Richard made proper love to me.

After that, when we were in bed in our storefront, all he wanted was for me to fellate him. I did it, but I hated it. Then after a while Richard was hardly there at night, and he got someone to lend me a cat so I wouldn't be alone and to discourage the rats. I snooped around and discovered a letter to Richard from someone called Emily, obviously a girlfriend. From the letter, I gathered that they had run out of money. I figured I had come along just in time with my nine hundred bucks. Emily was in Boston and was not Richard's girlfriend anymore.

At night, I sometimes walked to Greenwich Village to see Tim and Richard perform at the Cafe Wha?, a coffeehouse on Bleecker Street where folksingers passed the hat for tips and where Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Woody Allen, and other performers got their start. I would walk home alone from the Village at two

o'clock in the morning, hurrying along East Eighth Street and looking over my shoulder as I crossed Astor Place and passed the Carl Fischer music publisher's building on Cooper Square. Carl Fischer was a familiar name to me from years of piano lessons.

At some point that summer, Tim moved into an apartment half a block down East Eleventh Street from the storefront. Richard had told me he was moving out of our place and that he felt guilty, though he didn't specify about what. I had been staying in the storefront during the night and on weekends and Richard used it during the day while I was at work. After I found the letter from Emily, I understood that Richard and I had not really been living together, that he had just needed a place to stay and had no money and so had gotten me to pay for the storefront. I ginned up a few tears, then walked across the street to Tim's place to spend the night. A lot of people seemed to be staying there. As I settled down on a padded bench, a woman yelled not to open the door to the bedroom: "People are trying to shoot up in here!"

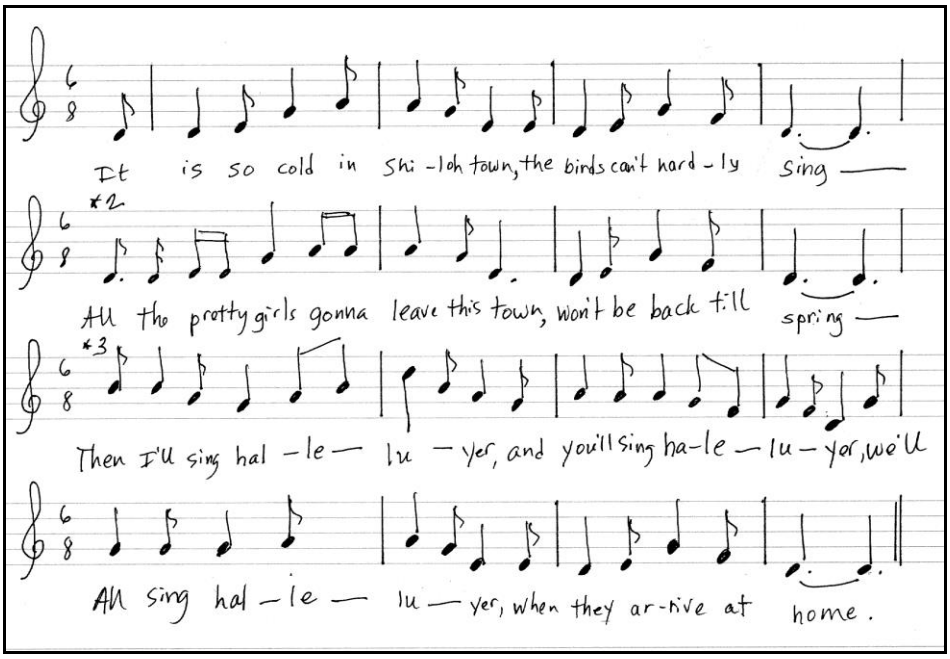
Tim was a junkie by then, of which I was dimly aware. I think he must have been using drugs even in high school. On a trip to Portland my senior year, when we presented the high school's production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Carousel*, Tim, who played the part of Billy Bigelow, seemed out of it. Many in the cast assumed he was drunk, but now I think he was probably stoned.

The last time I saw Tim on stage was at McCabe's Guitar Shop on Pico Boulevard in Santa Monica in about 1979. He was overweight and performed poorly, forgetting lyrics and abusing the audience. It was a shame to see him in such bad shape. I said hello to him afterward. The next time I saw Tim was at our twentieth high school reunion in August 1980, when he played baseball with a group of guys and their sons in Armitage Park, near the McKenzie River. One of our classmates, now a dentist, said Tim's fingernails were dark, a bad sign.

Tim died of an overdose in Los Angeles four months after the reunion, at age thirty-nine. One morning, while waiting to be called for jury duty in the West Los Angeles courthouse, I opened my copy of the *Los Angeles Times* and found Tim's obituary. Tim had recorded ten albums by then and was working on another, released in incomplete form after his death. Tim wrote the songs "If I Were a Carpenter" and "Reason to Believe" that became hits and were covered by artists more famous than he ever was, such as Bobby Darin, Joan Baez, Johnny Cash, Rod Stewart, and the Carpenters. "How can we hang on to a dream / How can it really be the way it seems?" Tim wrote.

The song "Shiloh Town" is credited to Tim, but it is really his reworking of an old ballad. The arrangement Tim recorded in 1973 is different from what I learned from him and Richard in 1962. That is the same version a banjo player named Hedy West recorded in 1963 on her first album, which I tracked down in the University of Oregon library. It is also almost the same as the Richie Havens

song “Shadow Town,” except that he changed “Shiloh” to “Shadow.” I suspect that musicians in New York in the early Sixties heard Hedy West’s song (she moved to New York in 1959) and took it from there. In any case, here is the tune I learned back then, which also works as a round (second and third parts start at *2 and *3):



In New York I learned to make rice pudding, ate my first sardine sandwich, and discovered Lithuanian black bread in a store on the corner of Avenue A and East Eleventh Street. To pay the rent and buy food, I worked in the showroom of Benjamin Noble, Inc., at 152 Madison Avenue. My boss was Jules Thames, “Thames like the river in London,” is how he would tell people on the phone to spell his name. The company made women’s housecoats and bathrobes at a factory in North Philadelphia, sold primarily under the Kay Noble brand. The employment agency charged half my salary (I don’t remember how much I earned, but it was not much) for three months as its fee for finding me the job.

My work was keeping track of orders from the buyers who visited the showroom. I sat at a desk, usually wearing no bra under my dress and no nylons on my legs because of the heat and humidity, and made lists or answered the phone. A rack of housecoats and bathrobes stood across from me. Sometimes I modeled the robes over my dress.

Mr. Thames, a short balding man who dressed expensively and spoke with a New York accent, lived in Rockville Centre, on Long Island. He was training me for an assistant buyer’s position. This was my first experience living in a big city, and I enjoyed walking to the subway on Fourteenth Street in the morning and

getting off in midtown Manhattan, strolling around the neighborhood at lunchtime and eating in a crowded deli or diner. Sometimes I phoned in an order for pizza from the hole-in-the wall pizzeria downstairs. They delivered to clients all over the block. I liked that about New York.

Mr. Thames sometimes gave me a drink of Chivas Regal after the day's work was done. But he never suggested that I take my dress off when I modeled the sample clothing, or at any other time.

Soon after the main office sent me to North Philadelphia to tour the factory, I resigned, packed my things, and bought a ticket on Icelandic Airlines, which offered cheap trans-Atlantic flights to Europe via Reykjavík. I had worked at the office only a little over two months. I had not been honest about intending to work for just the summer and felt bad about deceiving Mr. Thames. Benjamin Noble, Inc., sent my final paycheck to my parents' address in Oregon.

2.

I was in poor emotional shape that summer, and it had not been difficult for Richard to take advantage of me. My problem was a broken heart. One day the previous fall, the young man who broke it walked over to the table in the student union where I was sitting alone. He had just returned from a trip to Israel and Europe, so it might be that my hairstyle, a French twist, caught his eye. He surely had no idea that I had been in love with him for the past ten years.

I was crazy about him, had been ever since he and his family moved into the neighborhood when I was in fourth grade. Later, I used to watch out the front window for him and his friend Ray to walk by on their way to high school. Then I would hurry outside to catch up with them, as if by chance. He was two years ahead of me in school, a beautiful boy, a natural leader endowed with charisma, an excess of friends, "the gift of the gab," as Mother described it, exotic looks—in short, a born star. In school photos, he stands in the back row because of his height, but his white smile and dusky face beneath dark curls catch your eye as if spotlighted. Even in those early days, the camera favored him.

In the student union, he asked me to go out with him and I said yes. After our second date, we parked in a cemetery, the same one where my parents are now buried. We made out for a while and I must have resisted a stray hand or two, because he turned away from me and opened the driver's-side window. "It's okay," he said, "I guess we won't need these," tossing a package of condoms out the window. His dramatic gesture meant that it was all right if I didn't want to have sex. But that was wrong. I would never have turned him down. I wanted sex with him.

I wondered later whether throwing the condoms out the window was a signal that I failed to pick up, that what he wanted was for me to refuse sex because, well who knows why exactly, but maybe it was a test of my purity, my acceptability. Would he have loved me if I had not had sex with him? In the end, we did have sex, but not nearly enough to suit me and much too hurriedly, usually in his mother's car and once upstairs in his bedroom while his parents were out. After we had finished in the bedroom that time, he said, "You'd make a good mom," which made me uncomfortable. I had never wanted children and did not like being viewed as a baby machine.

We were still in the bedroom when his parents returned, earlier than expected, and I ran to the downstairs bathroom to get dressed. When I came out, his mother demanded to look in my bag. It was a big carpetbag, the same one I eventually took to Europe. I said no. I had stashed my pantyhose in there, being too rushed to put them back on. She insisted. I resisted, but I turned as bright as the pink wool dress I was wearing and left the house humiliated.

For my twentieth birthday, he took me to dinner at Tino's Spaghetti House and bought me a glass of rosé, my first taste of wine. He went to Seattle the next week for Thanksgiving and carried a photo of me in his wallet, to show his friends, he told me afterward. My period was late, it was rainy, and after my family's Thanksgiving dinner I walked alone through the university campus, crying. I never told him how afraid I had been. Getting pregnant was about the worst thing that could happen to a girl in those days, but as it turned out, I was lucky. I denied it when he accused me of telling a mutual acquaintance that we were going to be married, but I had.

"I found these in the car," his mother said. I stood with the whole family, him and his parents and his brother, in their kitchen. A bowl of three-bean salad sat on the counter behind me. His mother was on my right, next to the window overlooking their driveway. After we had chatted awhile, his mother reached into her pocket and held out a handful of long hairpins. "I think these must be yours," she said.

My French twist was anchored by oversize bobby pins like those she held in her hand. Of course they were mine. I always searched for the hairpins that fell out while we parked (meaning while we screwed in her car), but obviously some had fallen behind the seat cushions and she had found them.

Soon after that, only three months after it began, our story ended, though the fallout lasted for years. I discovered he was through with me on New Year's Eve, when he took me to a party and spent the entire time in the kitchen, leaving me sitting on the living room couch trying to make conversation with his friends, people I didn't know. Possibly he came out to give me an obligatory kiss at midnight, when 1962 arrived. He had arranged for his brother to pick us up after the party because the streets were snowy and "I'm going to drink," he had said.

I later wished that I had asked for my coat and walked home alone in the snow, even though it would have ruined my favorite shoes, a pair of black Amalfi mary janes. But I stayed on the couch until he was ready to leave and his brother had arrived with the car. As we pulled up in front of my house, he said, "How would you like to double-date with Scott's sister and her boyfriend?" I had the wit to say no, but as could have been predicted, within weeks, or perhaps only days, he was dating Scott's sister.

I could not sit still, wore a path walking across our front lawn, could not eat, got thin. After dark I would sneak up to his house and spy through a basement window into the study where he and his brother did their homework. The study had a couch along one wall. All I ever saw was him lying on top of Scott's sister on the couch, both fully clothed. I imagined the darkness hid me, but I was chagrined to learn, years later, that the neighbors had observed my spying and gossiped about me. My parents never said a word about my obsessive walking or my loss of weight. I knew, without them saying anything, or because they said nothing, that they were glad, because of his being Jewish, that he had dumped me.

Just before I left New York, he wrote that he would be in the city before going to the South to work on voter registration and could he come visit me. Richard had moved in with Karen by then. I went for a walk on the appointed day, out of nervousness, and while I was gone, his taxi arrived. When I got back, I invited him inside the storefront. "You have to get out of here," he said. "Do you need money?" I said no. I left for Europe a few days later. He wrote to me in Paris: "Wear your hair up, it attracts the right kind of men."

Three years later—a few months before he married Scott's sister—I visited him in Berkeley, where I had gone to study linguistics and he to study law. I asked why he had dumped me and he told me I was like a wet mop. "You'd do anything," he said. Could he mean the time we fucked in his mother's fruit closet? In the basement right under his mother's feet while she walked around the kitchen over our heads?

3.

I exited New York on August 29 in a panic. It was raining when I lugged my suitcase to the post office to send back to Oregon. I had left a trunk for Richard to ship to my parents, which he did. The sun came out and I didn't have sunglasses and couldn't figure out which subway to take to Idyllwild Airport. I ended up in a taxi. I had five hundred dollars with me, the remainder of my traveler's checks (so much for my plan of saving money in New York), and the carpetbag, which

weighed ten pounds. My Icelandic Airlines flight cost one hundred ninety-nine dollars, one way to Luxembourg.

On the plane I read a copy of Herman Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* that Tim had given me and wrote in a notebook that I felt despair, loneliness, courage, purposefulness, and purposelessness. Sitting next to me was a lanky, dark-haired musician from San Francisco named Karl. He and his guitar were on their way to stay with friends in the south of France, and he gave me their phone number, just in case.

Going to Europe had been my dream all through high school. Adventure, culture, to be in the famous places I had read about, that's why I thought I wanted to go so badly. The truth, which I realized as soon as I stepped off the plane in Luxembourg, was that I wanted to escape myself, to rid myself of my unhappiness and the parts of my personality that made me so. In short, like untold numbers of travelers before me, I wanted to become a different person. I imagined that by crossing the ocean and changing continents, I would blossom into a charming extrovert that everyone would like instead of the bookish introvert who never even got invited to the senior prom.

After the long flight from New York, which included an unscheduled eight-hour stopover in Gander, Newfoundland, when the plane's governor (whatever that is) failed, and another stop in Reykjavík during which we passengers were driven at midnight, past steaming hotsprings, into town for a meal, I emerged from the Icelandic Airlines plane, entered Luxembourg airport, and found I was no different than when I had started out. *Caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*. ("They change their sky but not their soul who run away across the sea"—Horace).

I was colder than before, however. August in Luxembourg felt like fall, not high summer. I went to the restroom, changed into a wool skirt and sweater, and caught the Paris train. The car where I was sitting ended up in Strasbourg, but I eventually reached Paris. I searched for a cheap place to stay, not forgetting that I intended what was left of my savings to last an entire year. The first night I stayed in a hotel with three American girls I met on the train. The next night I spent sitting in the Gare du Nord, pretending that I didn't understand French when the station officials asked to see my train ticket. The following day I went to the Bois de Boulogne, thinking I might nap on a park bench, but men kept bothering me.

While looking for a room at a hostel that turned out to be closed for the summer, I met an English boy called Anthony. He was preparing to hitchhike to Bordeaux and invited me to come along. I said yes but regretted it almost immediately. I found a hotel room for twelve francs and he wanted to sleep on the floor for free. The next morning, after a breakfast of café au lait and chocolate bars, we went to one of the *portes* (gates) of Paris to begin our trip. It was the wrong porte, which meant that instead of heading in the direction of Bordeaux,

we got on the road to Rouen. Anthony did not want to spend money for a hotel, so we spent that night shivering in a ditch outside Chartres. For dinner he ate raw turnips from the field beside the ditch. I was thoroughly disgusted and ate nothing. I never did see the cathedral.

It rained the next day and we were stuck in Tours for three hours trying to get a ride. I was wet and hungry and mad. Finally a car picked us up and drove us to the U.S. Army post at the port of La Rochelle, on the Bay of Biscay. We were given a bed at the home of a Sergeant Robinson and his nice Texas family. I had to sleep in a double bed with Anthony. By now I could barely tolerate him.

The next day it was still raining, and I refused to stand next to Anthony to hitchhike beside the road. Luckily, we got a ride to Libourne, outside Bordeaux, with a couple of American army boys and found a French family who let us sleep in their cottage in the country. After warning me not to drop the bucket down the well outside the cottage, Anthony promptly dropped it in himself.

Cottage in vineyard outside Libourne, France, September 1962

The cottage, a small stucco building with a red tile roof, was in the midst of a vineyard. In fact, the whole place was smack in the middle of one of the most famous wine-growing regions in the world. I knew next to nothing about wine and didn't think to ask what kind of vines surrounded the cottage. However, the famous Bordeaux red wines from around Libourne, such as Pomerol and Saint-Émilion, are made primarily from merlot and cabernet franc.

I walked into Libourne and from the post office called the number Karl, the man who had sat next to me on the Icelandic Airlines flight, had given me. I

found a room in town for the night and the next day took the train to Toulouse, where Karl, Catherine, and Catherine's Dutch husband, Vincent, met me and treated me to a drink outside the station before driving us to the Château de Labarthe, near the town of Puylaurens. The château belonged to Catherine's family in Versailles. Catherine gave me a room on the second floor and fed me a meal. I went to bed early and dreamed of my lost love. In the morning, I wrote in my notebook that the château was a thousand years old, but that was wrong.

4.

South of France, Languedoc. Long, golden days. Coffee on the terrace after lunch, walk to the town three kilometers away. Three times zero point six equals one point eight miles, you learn to do the conversion in your head. The dusty road shaded by plane trees, the bench on the hill overlooking the valley. The hollow place next to the house where the panzer *tank had parked during the German occupation. The Albigensians. Marilyn Monroe. The Kennedys. Columbus Day. The Cuban missile crisis. Make love, not war.*

Château de Labarthe, Puylaurens, France, September 1962

The château was not what I expected. Not a castle like the châteaux on the Loire, just a solid, square manor house, built in the sixteenth (not the tenth) century, as I learned years later. But it had symbolic significance. Its thick walls, its geometrically placed windows, its main door set precisely in the middle of the façade made the château seem the embodiment of the logical French mind, the rational French spirit.

This, however, was also the south of France, a center of high culture in the Middle Ages, where the myth of romantic love was born, where courtly love flourished in the songs and poetry of the troubadours. As it happened, on August 2, three weeks before I left New York, Marilyn Monroe, who had sung happy birthday to President Kennedy in Madison Square Garden only a year before, wearing a glittering flesh-colored dress so tight she had to be sewn into it, died from an overdose of sleeping pills. She was thirty-six years old.

The death of a sex goddess. What did it mean? Marilyn Monroe was a universal symbol of sexual desire, frequently associated with death—*la petite mort* ("little death"), the French euphemism for orgasm, springs to mind. She was also the quintessential romantic ideal, a woman infinitely desirable and ultimately unattainable—put forever out of reach by death. The death of a sex goddess could even be said to symbolize the classic romantic fantasy, that of a passion so great that it can only end in death.

Yes, the days were full of light. In the morning, a circle of sunlight poured through a knothole in the wooden shutters covering the windows of my bedroom. The shutters flung open, the windows revealed blue-green conifers and in the distance, a church spire. The château sat below the village of Labarthe, and the church bells kept the time, sounding weaker or stronger depending on the wind.

Village of Labarthe, viewed from château

A driveway curved in front of the house, then doubled back to the main road. People seldom parked in front of the house but left their cars or scooters at the side, near the kitchen door. Next to the house was a low barn. The light was

strong, disorienting. Every direction seemed to be south. South behind the house, toward the village. And south from the front of the house along the driveway that, according to the map, actually led north to the road and then to the town of Puylaurens.

Puylaurens was at the top of an isolated hill, which is what *puy*, or *pueg*, means in the old Provençal *Òc* language (*langue d'oc*), the language of the troubadours. *Òc* was the Provençal word for yes. The bus that stopped at the top of the hill was the main connection between the towns in the triangle northeast of Toulouse—Castres, Lautrec, Graulhet, and Albi, birthplace of the painter Toulouse-Lautrec.

Main street, Puylaurens, September 1962

It took an hour to walk from the château to town, down the dirt driveway to the road shaded by trees and up the hill to where the shops spread out and a park bench overlooked the plain that stretched to the Pyrenees and then Spain. On that tree-lined road, I once watched a shepherd in a long, hooded black cloak stride beside his flock, flinging his crook before him. As he passed into the distance between the trees, he looked for all the world like a survivor of the Middle Ages—a refugee from the Albigensian Crusade, perhaps—when this was the land of Languedoc and the Count of Toulouse ruled.

My travel plans for Europe were vague, based mostly on the hitch-hiking-and-running-into-interesting-and-helpful people model, and I had no idea that I'd end up in the south of France, much less around Toulouse. Before I left for Europe, Nana urged me to visit Toulouse because she believed her mother's mother had been born there. If I had known that Toulouse was the ancient capital of the Visigoths in the fifth century A.D., I might have done more than walk around and take photos of churches and the Canal du Midi when Catherine's sister drove us into the city one day. In ninth grade Latin class, we learned about Julius Caesar's defeat in 52 B.C. of the Celtic tribes, known to him as Gauls, but not that tribes of Celts had lived in the area around Toulouse. And it took some digging for me to determine that the ancient Roman road between Narbonne on the Mediterranean coast and Toulouse followed roughly the same path as today's A61 autoroute, and that it ran only about twenty miles south of Puylaurens.

Could the dust the shepherd's flock kicked up near the château have contained traces of blood from the many battles fought in the area? In the thirteenth century A.D., long after the Roman legions had left the scene, Puylaurens was in the thick of a military action launched by the Catholic Church against what it regarded as a heretical sect—the Albigensians, named for the town of Albi, where large numbers of them lived. Albi is only thirty miles from Puylaurens, and so the land where the château now stands could easily have been an Albigensian stronghold.

The Albigensians, also known as Cathars, sought to purify Christianity, which they believed the Catholic Church had corrupted in every way—morally, spiritually, and politically. They viewed the universe as ruled by two eternal principles, one good, the other evil. The opposing principles were represented by God and the Evil One (Satan), light and dark, the soul and the body, peace and war, and so forth. Catharism was thus a form of Manichaean dualism. The Celtic gods had also fallen into two groups, light and dark, day and night.

To Catholics, the beliefs of the Cathars strayed from orthodoxy in a number of ways. But the heresy that particularly alarmed the Church was the belief that Satan had made the physical world and all things in it—that the evil principle, rather than God, had created the human body and is the author of sin. In other words, that there were two creators: Satan was responsible for the body and God for the soul.

The pope proclaimed the Albigensian Crusade in 1208. Crusaders from Paris and northern France fought against the nobility of Languedoc, who supported the Cathars. In 1229, the crusade ended when the nobles of Languedoc ceded their territories to King Louis IX of France. By 1400, the Catholics, with the help of the Inquisition, had extirpated the Albigensians, although their ideas persisted. The era of courtly love also vanished in the devastation caused by the crusade.

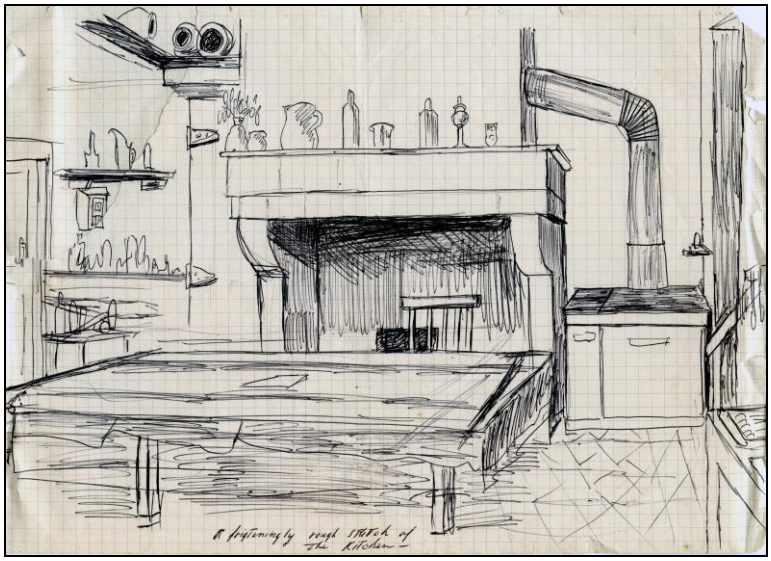
However, the troubadours' songs survived, moving north with the *trouvères* and east to Germany with the *minnesingers*.

Christianity still has not resolved the problem of evil addressed by dualistic belief systems such as Catharism—why does evil come into the world, when God is all-good and all-powerful?

* * *

I arrived at the château in late summer, at the beginning of the wine-grape harvest, the *vendange*. Vincent, who fancied himself a gentleman farmer, drove to Castres and returned with a pair of riding boots, plus a crop. The château had no horses. Vincent strutted through the vineyards, snapping his crop against his boots while the workers gathered the grapes. He did little actual work. Catherine and the farm's supervisor, a tall handsome man with unusual dark blue eyes, attended to the harvest. It was traditional to entertain the workers at the château when they had finished the vendange. Catherine cooked and served an elaborate meal for twenty or thirty people, ending with a dessert of tiny *pots de crème au chocolat*.

Round loaves of bread arrived every morning, delivered by bicycle from Puylaurens. Catherine ground coffee beans in a wooden grinder with a handle on top and a drawer below to catch the grounds, which went into the middle of an old-fashioned French *filtre* coffeepot (hot water poured into the top drips into the bottom through a built-in filter containing the grounds). A gas stove stood next to a huge open fireplace that must have once been used for cooking. We helped ourselves to coffee and milk, pouring the café au lait into deep bowls, and cut ourselves slices off the loaf, smearing them with sweet butter and marmalade. I paid twelve dollars a week for room and board.



Karl's sketch of the château's kitchen

I was not the only guest. Karl had been at the château since August. John, a young Englishman studying husbandry at Oxford, arrived shortly after the wine harvest. Vincent had bought a tractor by then. His idea was to plant a paying crop—such as corn—on a sloping field on one side of the road to town. Fortunately for Vincent, John knew how to plow, and after Vincent spent two days on the tractor pretending to know what he was doing, he turned the plowing over to John.

John knew how to lay the furrows along the slope so as to minimize erosion from the rains, and he knew where to turn at the edge of a field—not to mention how to turn without tipping the tractor over. Toward the end of September, a Yugoslav émigré arrived from Tunis. André was a good balalaika player, but his nylon shirts smelled as if he used the tails to wipe himself. I knew because I helped Catherine with the laundry and washed André's shirts by hand.

I washed myself in a wooden cubbyhole off the upstairs hall that contained a toilet and a shallow washbowl, filled by carrying pitchers of water up from the kitchen. Workmen were building a bathroom next to the kitchen, with tub, shower, washbasin, toilet, and bidet. Meanwhile, bathing was accomplished using a washcloth, and a shampoo meant pouring a pitcher of water over your head, lathering up, then pouring another pitcher or two over to rinse. My hair was still long.

In the afternoon, Catherine served us demitasses on the patio off the dining room. We used the dining room twice while I was there. The first time was for the

Rear view of Château de Labarthe, looking toward patio and French doors to dining room

feast after the vendange. The second was between October 16 and October 28, when we huddled around the radio, listening to the Cuban missile crisis unfold. We heard that President Kennedy had set up a naval blockade against Cuba, threatening to retaliate if the Soviet Union launched missiles from Cuba against America. Then Castro mobilized the Cuban forces, and two days later, Khrushchev threatened to retaliate against the United States for the blockade.

We sat at the dining-room table, making plans for when the bombs would begin to fall. The main question was how to avoid the radioactive fallout if atomic war broke out. The château had no basement, but there was a wide hole next to the house where the Nazis had parked a *panzer* tank during the German occupation in World War II. We reasoned that the prevailing winds, if they traveled west rather than east, would send a radioactive cloud to China before it reached France. (We reasoned wrong; the prevailing winds in Europe blow west to east.)

So we decided that the three-foot walls of the château, and the stout wooden shutters over its doors and windows, were our best protection. Then the crisis was over. We celebrated with wine from a previous year's harvest.

5.

The crisis that might have ended the world is indelibly linked in my mind to Oregon's worst-ever natural disaster—the Columbus Day storm. On October 12, 1962, just two days before a U.S. spy plane photographed missiles in western Cuba, an extratropical cyclone, equivalent in force to at least a Category 3 hurricane, struck the Pacific Northwest. For those who lived through what reporters called the "Big Blow," and for those of us who weren't there but who have heard and read about it and seen the pictures, Columbus Day is a day to remember, like Pearl Harbor or the assassination of President Kennedy.

The statistics are staggering. The storm cut a swath 125 miles wide and 1,000 miles long from Eureka, California, to British Columbia, Canada. Peak winds reached 170 miles per hour at Mt. Hebo radar station on the Oregon coast, 125 miles per hour at Corvallis, and 116 miles per hour at the Morrison Bridge in Portland. Official records show 104 miles per hour at Portland International Airport, 90 in Salem, and 86 in Eugene—higher than the official peak gust for any other storm in Oregon's Willamette Valley from 1948 to 2003. More facts: In a few hours, the windstorm killed nearly fifty people, felled 17 billion board feet of timber, and caused over $200 million in damage to schools, public facilities, airports, homes, and farms in Oregon. It destroyed historic landmarks. Cattle were killed by falling bales of hay, thousands of chickens blew through the air. Downtown Junction City burned. Campbell Hall tower at Oregon College of

Education (now Western Oregon State College) cracked off, caught in a photograph that came to symbolize the storm.

In France, headlines punned: "*Ouragan en Orégon*." *Ouragan* means "hurricane."

The Pacific Northwest is known as one of the safest places to live if you want to avoid natural disasters (we now know about the Cascadia subduction zone, but we used to think earthquakes only happened in other places, like California). People in Oregon and Washington expect heavy rains and flooding in winter and forest fires in summer, but they have no experience of hurricane-force winds.

It would be more than a decade before forecasters could predict oncoming weather using data beamed back to earth from geostationary satellites, and the first warning that a catastrophe was on its way to the Northwest did not come until nine o'clock on the morning of October 12. A radar ship off northern California reported that its barometer had dropped to 28.41, with winds of 92 miles per hour and heavy rain. Forecasters thought the report was a mistake. After checking, however, they issued a storm warning at ten o'clock.

Although Oregon and southern Washington were calm that morning, the atmospheric pressure was falling. At Lloyd Center in Portland, clerks observed barometers behaving strangely. In Eugene, the airport barometer was nosediving. By about two-thirty that afternoon, in his seventh-grade advanced-placement science class, my brother noticed that the teacher kept glancing at the barometer—"a good barometer, the kind that records air pressure on a piece of paper attached to a drum that rotates once every twenty-four hours," my brother remembers. Every time the teacher looked at the barometer, the needle had dropped lower.

The air was hot and still, says my brother. Though some of the windows were ajar, they provided no circulation. The windows were large and square, with brass latches at the bottom and hinges at the sides, and they opened out toward a rough soccer field that ended in a line of willow and alder trees. To the west, the sky was clouding up, as if for a fall rainstorm. But it was much warmer than usual when a big storm blows in, and humid. Then, as if at a hidden signal, all the windows in the science class, together, without a sound, lifted wide open.

"It was dead still inside and outside," my brother remembers. "I suppose it took a full second. There was plenty of time to look over and watch as the windows opened in unison."

The teacher, who had gone to college in the South, glanced at the barometer again, then told my brother's class, "You'd better go home now."

The junior high school spread over low, swampy ground. A drainage slough grandly called the Amazon ran next to it. Across the street was a housing project,

built after the war for couples whose husbands were attending the University of Oregon on the GI Bill but that had never been torn down.

My brother and his friends had only a few blocks to walk home. In my brother's memory, the sky was the same color of gray as far as anyone could see, and all the birds had vanished. When the boys reached the bottom of the hill where we lived, the trees, as if exhaling, leaned slightly westward and began to creak. A bank of dark gray clouds appeared on the western horizon. From its flat top rolled small curled-over clouds, looking like a row of curved teeth—as if, my brother says, "you were to flatten out all the teeth of a circular saw and place them in a row."

At four o'clock, the barometer at the Eugene airport went off the recording sheet at 28.86 inches, and the temperature rose from fifty to sixty-one degrees in a matter of minutes. Then the wind came. The roof of the junior high school lifted off and crashed into the student housing project. One piece killed a graduate student as he tried to board up a window in his apartment. Everywhere, on the state capitol grounds, on campuses, in neighborhoods, trees fell like giant matchsticks. Downtown, people ran for their lives as windows burst and debris hurtled through the air.

An architect recalls that when the wind started, fraternity boys at the university were outside playing:

> It was a Friday afternoon, I remember that, and the fraternity boys had started drinking early. When the wind started up, they began playing hide-and-seek in the bushes. I watched them from the windows of the art and architecture building, where I was teaching. Then the trees began to sway, and the fraternity boys ducked around behind them, dodging the branches, then the trees themselves, as they fell. That's what I remember—those boys playing and laughing among the falling trees.

The university counted sixty-six downed trees on campus, many having stood for over seventy years. An artist friend remembers the trees:

> I looked out in the backyard, where we had a cherry tree. The grass at the base of the tree was bucking and heaving, as the wind bent the tree and tried to uproot it.
>
> The next day I went to the campus. I knew lots of trees had blown down, but what I hadn't expected was the smell—the smell of freshly cut wood, the smell of all those cracked and fallen trees, lying in heaps all over the campus.

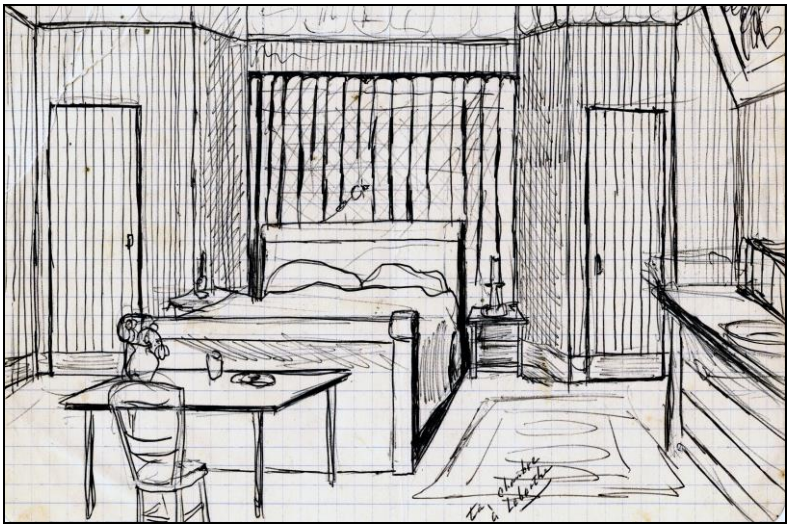
A friend who was studying to be a schoolteacher at the time remembers where she was:

> I was with a lover when the storm hit. He was married, and after about an hour he got worried about his family and went home. None of this is in my diary—I was too discreet—but I know it happened.

6.

Back at the château, the season was advancing. Clouds would blacken the sky over the mountains while I walked the three kilometers to Puylaurens, making a stark backdrop for the haystacks that squatted golden in the setting sun. Storms began to blow up. The rain pounded against the windows, the trees in the park whistled and swayed. It was too wet to do anything outside, so we played ping-pong in the upstairs hall under a bare light bulb.

Off the hall were several bedrooms, two reached by a shallow step leading up and to the right. My room was on the left. It was the master bedroom, the largest in the house, but Vincent and Catherine slept downstairs in the warmth of a small bedroom off the kitchen. The master bedroom had a carved walnut bed set in an alcove between two narrow doors, one leading to a closet and the other to the hallway. A picture hung from a soffit to the right of the bed, above a heavy chest. Candlesticks stood on small tables on either side of the headboard and a small lamp hung above, in front of a drapery.



Karl's sketch of my bedroom at the château

At the foot of the bed stood a small writing desk and chair, and behind them, opposite the bed, two tall windows looked out on the park and its giant firs, reminding me of home. Wooden shutters hung inside the windows, and when they were closed, the room was dark, with only the one knothole to let in the light. It was possible to sleep very late in that room.

One night, after an evening of ping-pong in the upstairs hall, I lay in bed and listened to the rain blow against the tall windows.

Lying in that bed was like lying in an old trunk, like sleeping or dreaming in a trunk in the attic, next to a yellowing wedding dress wrapped in brittle paper and smelling of mothballs and lilac sachet. Wallpaper covered the walls and stretched between the exposed rafters of the ceiling. The wallpaper was printed in an old-fashioned design of pale green stripes with faded pink roses running between.

The paper entirely covered the walls, not stopping for doors or doorjambs, and with the doors closed, the room seemed to have no exit, no doors at all, like that musty trunk lined with wallpaper, the lid closed and possibly even latched, though it held no objects of real value, only sentimental treasures like the ancient wedding dress and an oval mirror with beveled glass surrounded by a tarnished but ornate brass frame.

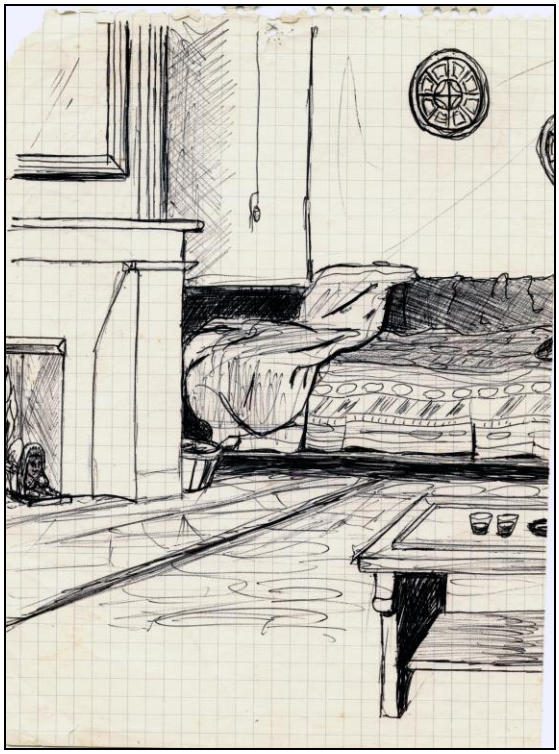
In the daylight, the room felt spacious, even romantic, as much because of its age as because of its tall ceilings and the view through its windows. Night was different. Then, the room assumed a sinister aspect, a contrast to the bright, light days, like a survival of the ancient, opposing principles of dark and light. Then, the wallpapered doors, those doors that didn't look like doors until they were opened, became like dark passages to a world beyond the wall—the way to the underworld, such as the one through which Orpheus traveled to rescue his wife Eurydice from death; or through which Hades abducted Persephone, taking with her the fruitful season, causing flowers to die and crops to wither; or through which evil spirits slip silently into our lives.

At night, after I had closed the shutters over the windows, I would feel my way to the bed and lie there in the dark, my eyes open, waiting. Before long, I would hear the click of the latch, and a sliver of light would invade the room. Behind it a man's dark figure would appear, then cross silently to my bed, slide in, and grope about for my body. I would struggle against him, silently. Finally he would leave. But every night he came back, and every night we silently struggled until he went away.

At first, the man was always Vincent. Then the other men discovered the door that led into my room from the upstairs hallway. After that, when the door opened it might be any of them, Vincent or Karl or André. Never John. I always

pushed and kicked them away, and never made any noise. I didn't want Catherine to know about those nocturnal visitors, especially that one was her husband.

The storms came more often. John and André left. I stayed indoors and read in the study, a little room between the kitchen and the dining room that had a fireplace fitted with an electric heater. A Moroccan blanket covered the low couch, and Turkish brasses hung on the wall.



Karl's sketch of the study at the château

I found a copy of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn* in the study and cracked up at his stories about his job at the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America and the randy men and women he hung around with outside work. The sex scenes were pretty funny, too, with the women oozing all over the place and Miller ramming it to them or waving his cock in the air to lead them to him in the dark.

I was a big fan of Henry Miller's, described in the introduction to *Tropic of Cancer* as "a talker, a street corner gabbler, a prophet, and a Patagonian" (meaning a renegade, a man at odds with modern industrial America, with the Protestant work ethic, with conventional moral and social values—antibourgeois, anti-WASP, anti-American, a man from the back of beyond, i.e., from Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia). I enjoyed Miller's writing for its energy and bawdy humor.

And even though his surrealistic riffs on whatever happened to be going through his head as he sat at his desk can sometimes make for tedious reading, they are also marvelously imaginative. How many writers can go on for twenty-eight pages (in *Tropic of Capricorn*) about metaphysical intercourse?

One day, Vincent, Karl, and Catherine were talking in the kitchen, at the long table by the fireplace where we ate our meals. I knew they were talking about me. That night, Karl came into my room and said it was time for me to go, and that they would drive me as far as Versailles. We left late at night. Fog surrounded us as we crossed the mountains of the Massif Central. In the morning they dropped me at the station in Versailles, and from there I took a train into Paris.

7.

I gravitated to the Left Bank and looked up Mike, a classmate from my old neighborhood in Eugene who had also gone to Europe that summer. Mike rented a cold-water room in the Hôtel de Carcassonne at 24, rue Mouffetard, just off the place de la Contrescarpe in the fifth arrondissement, an old neighborhood behind the Panthéon where poets and writers such as Paul Verlaine, James Joyce, George Orwell, and Ernest Hemingway once lived.

Place de la Contrescarpe from Mike's room on rue Mouffetard, Paris, November 1962

I didn't know the details at the time, but guidebooks and websites now inform everyone that in the Twenties, Hemingway rented a room for writing in the same hotel where Verlaine died in 1896, that Joyce finished his magnum opus *Ulysses* while living in a borrowed apartment on the rue du Cardinale Lemoine (one of the streets that feed into the place de la Contrescarpe), and that Hemingway and his first wife Hadley lived at No. 74 on the same street as Joyce.

When Hemingway speaks of the place de la Contrescarpe in his stories, he calls it simply "Place Contrescarpe," as did my Paris friends and I. The first page of Hemingway's collection of Paris stories, *A Moveable Feast*, mentions Place Contrescarpe, and his short story, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," describes its "sprawling trees" and "round square" (the fountain you see now is a recent addition) and "the narrow crowded world of the Rue Mouffetard."

Rue Mouffetard dates from Roman times and used to have a squalid reputation as the haunt of ragpickers, streetwalkers, pimps, muggers, drunks, and *clochards* (bums). The place de la Contrescarpe still had a regular collection of clochards when I arrived on the scene. The air of seediness in the neighborhood was in fact one of its attractions. The narrow streets and grimy buildings seemed little changed from the Middle Ages. That part of Paris had escaped the modernizations of Baron Haussmann in the mid-nineteenth century because it is built on a hill, the montagne Sainte-Geneviève.

Two women friends of Mike's from California, Louise and Marilyn, lived near the place de la Contrescarpe in a fine bourgeois apartment on rue Laromiguière, off the rue de l'Estrapade. Marilyn had been hired by Louise's father to look after her. Marilyn and Louise invited me to share their apartment, which had a living room, a dining room, two bedrooms, a bathroom with a big bathtub, and a small kitchen. The stove even had an oven, not common in French apartments at the time.

I borrowed Marilyn's blue wool coat while waiting for my winter coat to arrive from Oregon and walked often to the Jeu de Paume museum in the Tuileries Gardens to look at Cezanne's apples and oranges and my other favorite Impressionist paintings: Monet's series of the cathedral at Rouens at different times and in different lights, Gauguin's paintings from Tahiti, Rousseau's *Snake Charmer*, and above all, Van Gogh's *Church at Auvers*, which hung on the right at the top of the stairs and dazzled me with its swirling electric blue paint. The Jeu de Paume was my favorite place in Paris.

The weather was cold and snowy, and the fountain in the Tuileries was covered with ice. When I walked home after dark, the lights on the quays reflected off the Seine like flashing jewels. I may have been freezing (my carpetbag contained hardly any winter clothes), but Paris was still beautiful.

On the nineteenth of November, I celebrated my twenty-first birthday in Paris. Louise and Marilyn threw me a party and invited their friends. I received a check for twenty-one dollars from my parents and a diary from Louise, where I started a list of the books I had read since leaving New York. So far, besides *Steppenwolf* and *The Tropic of Capricorn*, I had read Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* and *Dodsworth* at the château, as well as Andre Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale* and Antoine de Sainte-Exupery's *Le Petit Prince*. In Paris, I read Nikos Katzantzakis's *Zorba the Greek*, making a note of Zorba's famous quote ("If a woman sleeps alone it puts a shame on all men. God has a very big heart, but there is one sin He will not forgive. If a woman calls a man to her bed and he will not go"). My choice of reading material depended on other people's libraries, and among others on my eclectic list were P. G. Wodehouse's *Carry On Jeeves*, Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*, and Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

I was heavily under the influence of D. H. Lawrence in those days. I reread *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Paris (though I couldn't have carried my "COMPLETE, UNEXPURGATED, AUTHENTIC, AUTHORIZED" Grove Press paperback edition with me because it wasn't published until the next spring) and received a copy of *Women in Love* for Christmas that year. It wasn't just the sex in Lawrence's books that intrigued me. I was moved by his writing about nature and man's desecration of it, and also recognized that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is as much an antiwar novel as a sex novel.

"Ours is essentially a tragic age," Lawrence begins. "The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins." War has ruined men and nature alike. Lawrence tells how Clifford Chatterley's father had the oak trees in the remaining bit of Sherwood Forest next to his estate chopped down for trench timber during World War I, and then how Clifford, returned from war unmanned, a cripple from the waist down, runs his motorized chair up a hill covered with wildflowers, creating a heartbreaking path of destruction.

The sex in Lawrence can be very tender. I have always loved the scene where Constance Chatterley bends weeping over a flock of pheasant chicks in the wood and Mellors the gamekeeper comforts her ("His heart melted suddenly"), telling her not to cry and stroking "the curve of her flank" before leading her to his hut. I've read that Lawrence was trying in his writing to overcome his puritanism, and possibly his impotence. At this long view, I see that for me, reading Lawrence was a way of dealing with sexual disappointment, the pain of rejection.

It was also helping turn my lost love into a romantic ideal.

In *Women in Love*, "I want the finality of love" resonated strongly with me. Also, "She wanted the secret of him, the experience of his male being." I dreamed constantly about the man I had lost, wrote that I wanted to have his baby, "then go live by myself in California, on the warm beach." That kind of thing makes my diary difficult for me to read. My emotional state was fragile, and I was having

trouble expressing myself in conversation. “Everybody thinks my incoherent speech is a big joke,” I wrote.

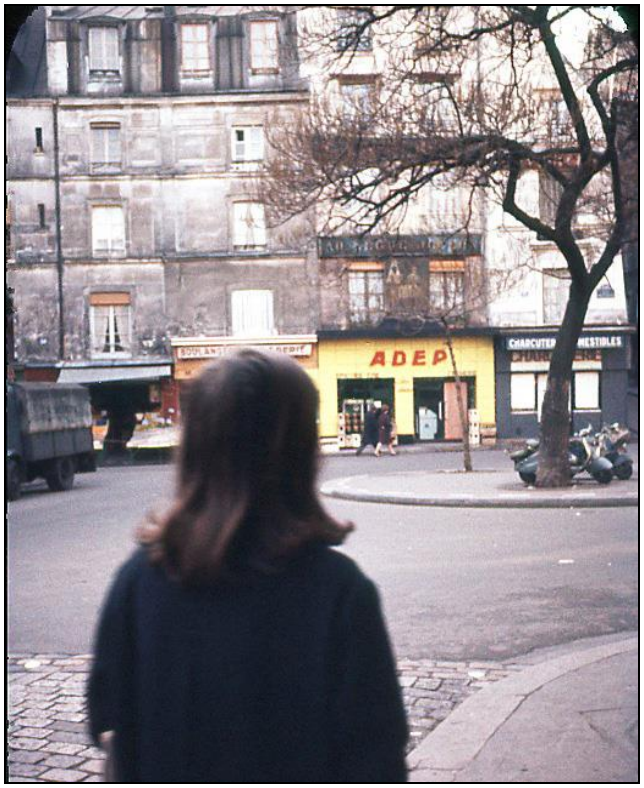
It snowed and was very cold right after my birthday, so I stayed inside and prepared for Thanksgiving dinner, which fell on November 22 that year. We were planning a dinner for twelve people. I made three pies, one mincemeat and two apple (I had brought a paperback edition of the *Fannie Farmer Boston Cooking School Cookbook* with me) but no pumpkin. Marilyn and I had looked for canned pumpkin but decided, on very flimsy evidence, that it did not exist in France. Mike and Marilyn sneaked into the American PX outside Paris in search of turkey but got thrown out, so we went to the local market and bought two *dindons* (French turkeys).

Dome of Panthéon and snow-covered rooftops from Paris apartment, November 1962

The dinner was a big hit, *un succès fou*. We laid on the turkeys, accompanied by dressing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and gravy, yams, green beans—to cook them I had to run up and down the stairs to a hotplate in a basement room occupied by two French boys, Jean and Philippe, because the apartment’s stove had only two burners—and fruit salad. Our French guests were aghast that we put everything except dessert on one plate, but they ate anyway. I was proud of my cooking and felt quite the bourgeois housewife.

The party broke up around two-thirty in the morning. One of the guests came back without his room key, having lent it to someone to put books in his room. Louise said he could sleep on the floor, but he whined until she asked if he could sleep with me. He was so embarrassed, he offered to take a bath first. Marilyn and Louise collapsed in hysterics.

When I wasn't in the apartment reading or cooking or taking a bath myself or at the Tuileries visiting the Jeu de Paume, I might go shopping for groceries on rue Mouffetard, either at the bustling open-air market down the hill or in the shops along the place de la Contrescarpe.



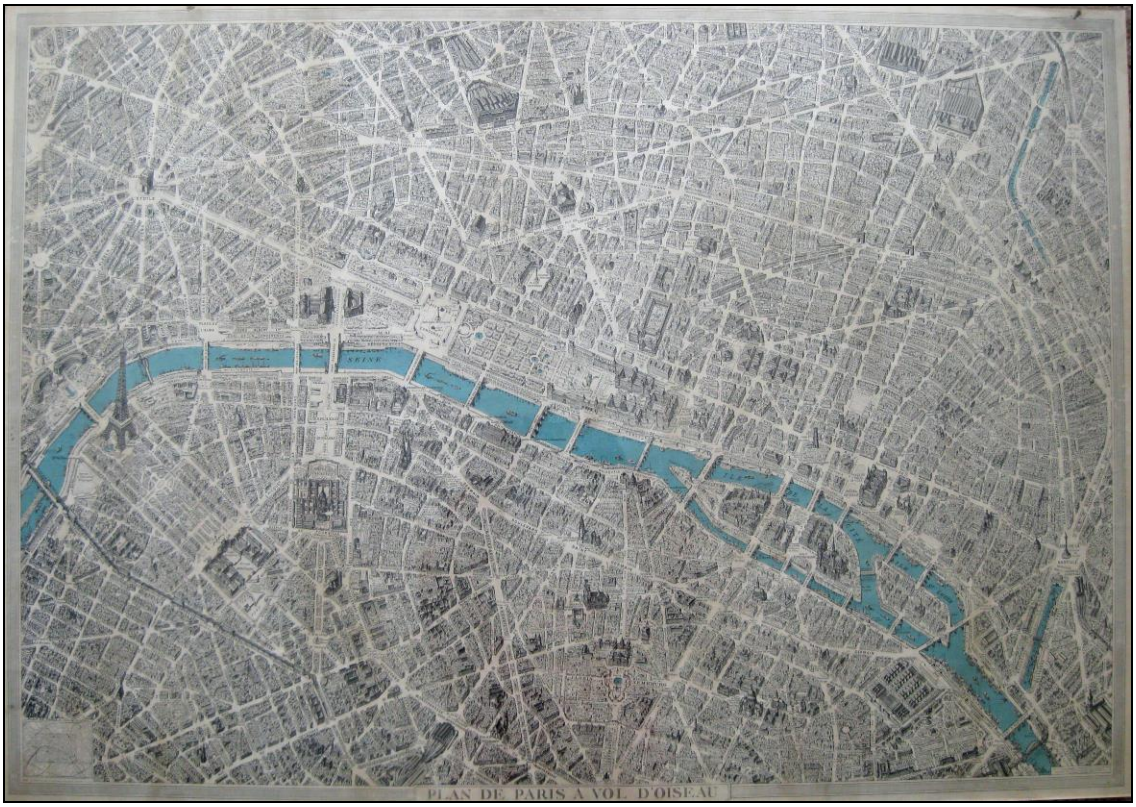
Shops on rue Mouffetard at place de la Contrescarpe, Paris, November 1962

The street market was always jammed with shoppers, and the sellers in the market stalls were aggressive and intimidating, so I mostly frequented the shops, which included a bakery, a small grocery store, and a pork butcher's. On the other side of the square were a *crèmerie*, for dairy products, and a *patisserie*, and I recall a shop selling firewood and charcoal (*bois et charbons*) on rue Mouffetard just above the place de la Contrescarpe. Mike has reminded me that across the street from his hotel was a horse butcher's.

There was also a public bath on the lower part of rue Mouffetard. About half the residents in Paris and the surrounding region lived without bathrooms or inside toilets in those days. In addition to our bathtub (people sometimes visited

just to take a bath), we had an inside toilet, but other tenants in the building, such as Jean and Philippe in the basement, had to use the outhouse in the courtyard or piss in their kitchen sink.

Two or three times a week I would walk to the American Express office on rue Scribe, near the Opéra, to check for mail or cash a traveler's check. The streets of Paris! As everyone who visits or lives there knows, it's a city for walkers. Looking at the bird's-eye-view map I bought while in Paris, I trace my usual path to American Express—from the map's lower right corner up to the turquoise ribbon of the Seine, across one of the bridges, ending in the middle of the map:



Plan de Paris a vol d'oiseau (éditions Blondel la Rougery, 1959)

> Leave the apartment, go left on the rue de l'Estrapade past the Lycée Henri IV, take tiny rue Clotilde to the Panthéon, then follow rue Soufflot past the Sorbonne to the boulevard Saint-Michel. Perhaps stop for hot chocolate at the café on the corner of rue Soufflot and boulevard Saint-Michel, though one of the waiters might demand more of a tip.
>
> Once on the boulevard Saint-Michel, head across the Seine and the Île de la Cité (the larger of the river's two islands, site of the original settlement by the Parisii tribe in the third century B.C. and of Notre-Dame

> cathedral, completed in 1345) to the Right Bank, turn left on the rue de Rivoli, walk past the fashionable shops and the Louvre museum, turn right on the avenue de l'Opéra, and finally cut around the opera house (officially, the Palais Garnier) to rue Scribe.
>
> Another way: walk along the south bank of the river to the pont de la Concorde, across the bridge to the place de la Concorde, then go past the Madeleine church with its Corinthian columns to rue Scribe. Or turn left off the boulevard Saint-Michel onto the rue de Vaugirard, go past the Palais du Luxembourg to the boulevard Raspail, take the boulevard Saint-Germain to the river, cross to the place de la Concorde, and from there find rue Scribe.

Whichever way, it was about an hour's walk along streets lined with grimy buildings that have since been scrubbed to a creamy yellow, disconcerting to those of us who first saw Paris when everything was gray.

Near American Express, on the avenue de l'Opéra, was Brentano's bookstore, where I bought a copy of Alan Lomax's *Folksongs of North America*, still part of my library. I also shopped at the famous Paris department stores, Au Printemps and La Samaritaine, as well as at Monoprix, which was cheaper. I bought things like a black V-neck sweater and black tights and Gauloises cigarettes in blue packages for my father for Christmas.

One day while walking down the boulevard Saint-Michel I heard someone call "Charlotte! Charlotte!" and turned to see my friends Joy and Penny a few yards behind me. We were classmates in the University of Oregon Honors College. They had come to Paris on the Sweet Briar College junior year abroad program, and though I had already seen Penny a couple of times in Paris, it was a big surprise running into both of them, especially on the famous Boul' Mich'.

The three of us met for steak, *pommes frites*, and rosé at a café near the boulevard Saint-Germain and talked for hours, both there and back at the apartment. Joy said she had burned her last letter from Eddie, who had gone to Israel to work on a kibbutz. She had also hitchhiked alone through Scandinavia the previous summer. Penny invited me to a party a few days later—with free champagne—for a boy who was being released from the army. I was supposed to be the boy's date, but at the party, I talked more to Penny's friend Jean. At one point Jean turned to me and said, "*Elle est formidable, cette femme.*" In other words, Penny had pretty much knocked his socks off.

Other traveling Americans joined us on rue Laromiguière—Sue from Berkeley, Louise's husband Tom, and Penny Seeger, the younger sister of Mike and Peggy Seeger, of the famous family of folk-music collectors and musicians.

Ann, an artist from Scotland, also moved in. Penny Seeger taught me a folk song ("So early, early in the spring") that her sister had recorded and said she would like to sing with me. I was preparing to audition at La Contrescarpe café on the square, playing the lute (actually, an Arabic oud) that I had bought on the rue de Rome for 180 francs (about forty-five dollars).

Ann made a nice sketch of me with the lute/oud one afternoon. The instrument had no frets and was difficult to play, especially since I wasn't much of a guitar player either. Although I sang well enough, I failed the audition. I was disappointed to realize I was not destined for a career as a folksinger. Joan Baez, who was born the same year as me, had made the cover of *Time* magazine the week of our Thanksgiving feast on rue Laromiguière.

Sketch of me by Ann Ward, Paris, November 1962

We spent many afternoons at the apartment drawing or painting and sometimes modeled for each other. One time I even posed nude, for pay (three francs). Several times a week we had guests for meals, wine, conversation, and music. The neighbors were not amused by our singing and often banged on the wall—even though we had good singers and guitarists as visitors. One was a friend of Tom's, named Mitch, who dropped by a couple of months after John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote about him when he was playing and singing in Torremolinos, Spain.

For entertainment outside the apartment, we might catch a movie (I saw *Jules et Jim* at the place de la République) or a play (Marilyn and Sue saw Ingrid Bergman in *Hedda Gabler* and got Bergman's autograph) or go to a concert

(*Messiah*—sung in French—before Christmas). A favorite watering hole was Les Cinq Billards café at 20, rue Mouffetard, next to Mike's hotel. We always called the café "Madeleine's." The reason, I deduced after a long Internet search, was that Madeleine was the waitress at Les Cinq Billards, and so we had "named" the café after her.

"For Charlotte," linocut by Louise Lieber, Paris, November 1962
(Linocut images print in reverse, which Louise didn't allow for, so it looks like I'm playing the guitar left-handed)

I often stopped at Madeleine's to wrap my freezing fingers around a cup of hot chocolate and warm my feet. Madeleine's must have had a stove, though I don't seem to remember what the place looked like, which is odd considering how often my diary mentions going there.

Occasionally, our group ate omelettes or drank Scotch or Coca-Cola at the Café de la Chope, on the uphill side of the place de la Contrescarpe. We learned from our pal Ronald that La Chope was a hangout for Algerians. "Last year," he

said, “the police would roll up with tommy guns every night at ten or ten-thirty and all the Algerians would raise their hands. Now they just talk louder than anyone else in the room.” The Algerian war for independence had ended only eight months before I arrived in the neighborhood.

Although I had noticed North Africans on the streets, I don’t recall being aware that violence had occurred in Paris during the recent war, such as bombings by the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and killings of FLN supporters by the French authorities. I have read that the area around the place de la Contrescarpe and rue Mouffetard was heavily policed during the conflict. After the peace treaty was signed in March 1962, it is reported that over a million refugees fled to France, both *pieds-noirs*—Algerians of European ancestry—and Muslim Algerians who had supported the French and feared reprisals.

* * *

And of course there were the famous tourist sites—this was, after all, my first trip to Europe. Sue and I visited Notre-Dame on a bitingly cold day, and I rode to Versailles on another freezing day with Penny (my friend from Oregon) and her roommate Ashton in their little car, dubbed “*Le Bidet Noir*.” I remember waiting for them on the steps of the Panthéon, shivering in a wind that felt as if it had blown all the way from Siberia.

Another time I tagged along to the Louvre with Marilyn and her Egyptian date. After climbing a few steps and buying my ticket, I stepped inside—and was bowled over by the sight of a grand staircase on my left, the Winged Victory of Samothrace perched spectacularly at the top. Even though my new pair of black patent heels hurt my feet, I managed to limp around to the other must-sees—Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo, paintings by David and Delacroix, Egyptian hieroglyphs, the Great Sphinx. The museum wasn’t crowded in those days, so we could view its treasures up close. Afterward, as we walked on the quay Saint-Michel, a man propositioned me (“I’ll give you a commission”). We weren’t quite sure what he meant by “commission,” but he certainly surprised us.

At one point Xavier-of-the-Poison-Oak reappeared. He invited me to dinner at his family’s mansion in the seventeenth arrondissement or another equally posh district. His parents left for the evening, bidding us goodbye while we sat on the sofa. Xavier and I ate at a table in the kitchen, without the help of their maid, who had been given the night off. I felt insulted. Also self-conscious about my shoes, whose heels I had cut down with a hacksaw so they’d be easier to walk in.

One afternoon a few days later Xavier showed up at the apartment and we had a fight about the proper place of women vis-à-vis men. His view: a woman needs to submit to a man, a man needs to take responsibility, woman needs to let

man be responsible for her, etc. All the while, he gazed at me with great calf's eyes and tried to pull my dress off.

It was the coldest winter Europe had seen in a hundred years, the coldest in England since 1740. The Baltic froze over, icebergs floated in the North Sea off Holland. On Christmas Day in Paris, we walked for blocks through falling snow before finally finding an open restaurant. It was a Chinese place, so for Christmas dinner we had rice, shrimp, sausage, curried chicken, and chicken noodle soup, with cakes for dessert. Back at the place de la Contrescarpe, clochards huddled over the subway vents, and ice covered the inside of the windows in Mike's room overlooking the square.

Place de la Contrescarpe, Paris, Christmas 1962

I had moved to Mike's room when he left for Austria before Christmas to be a ski bum. Washing my long hair in the cold, cold water from the tap in Mike's room was a test of courage. (The squat toilet down the hall was also a challenge, especially when I came down with the flu.) I cooked on Mike's gas burner, mostly eggs, onions, and potatoes, a standby student one-pan concoction.

By that time, Sue had moved into the Hôtel de la Paix on rue Blainville, just off the place de la Contrescarpe, and I went to her room to bathe and wash clothes in hot water. I don't remember whether the hotel had a shower down the hall but

probably not—people were accustomed to washing in a sink, as I had done at the château. I thought about moving to the hotel, but ten francs a night (two dollars and fifty cents) seemed too expensive. I was seriously worried about running out of money.

Sue was astounded to receive a note from one of the chambermaids at the hotel: "*Prier de ne pas tant salir la chambre*" ("Please do not dirty the room so much"). That might have been the chambermaid who lived next door to Sue and had her lover up at all hours. Or the one who had an illegitimate child, much to the amusement of Madame (the concierge).

We heard that the head chambermaid, when she couldn't sleep, would go to the darkened office, draw a curtain, and watch the action in the main hallway through a two-way mirror. And that when a tart staying in the hotel caught two nude Peeping Toms outside her door, Madame, unable to resist a drama, called the police. The *flics* charged up the stairs and hauled everyone away, including the tart, who turned out to be a photographer's model, one who had even appeared on magazine covers.

Karl visited me and delivered the latest gossip from the Château de Labarthe. Vincent had seduced the daughter of an unmarried woman who lived on a neighboring farm. It also came out that he had been sleeping with Catherine's sister for years. Catherine's *maman* had a chat with him in Versailles, and Vincent fled to Amsterdam.

By the end of December, Louise and Tom had left for Beirut and I was packing to go to Stockholm. Ann, the Scottish artist, had stayed with a family in Stocksund, a suburb of Stockholm, before coming to Paris. She heard that they had fired their maid for bringing a young man into her room and were looking for a replacement. I asked her to write to the family and suggest me. On the last day of the year, Ann received a telegram saying that the maid's job was mine if I went immediately to Stockholm. The pay would be 250 kronor (fifty dollars) a month plus room and board.

* * *

NOTES

15 *her mother's mother had been born there* My grandmother was mistaken about her own grandmother's origins in Toulouse. According to the records, it was her grandfather who emigrated from France, but he is listed as being from Paris, not Toulouse. There is, however, a family connection to Toulouse. Rebecca, the sister of my grandmother's grandmother, married a French-Canadian named Jefferson Toulouse, whose family seems to have originated in Toulouse and to have assumed the name of that city when they emigrated to Canada around 1800. The original family name was probably Raymond, a common name among the early nobility of Languedoc, such as Raymond of Toulouse, Raymond Roger and Raymond II of Trencavel, viscounts of Carcassonne, and Raymond-Roger, count of Foix, poet and patron of troubadours.

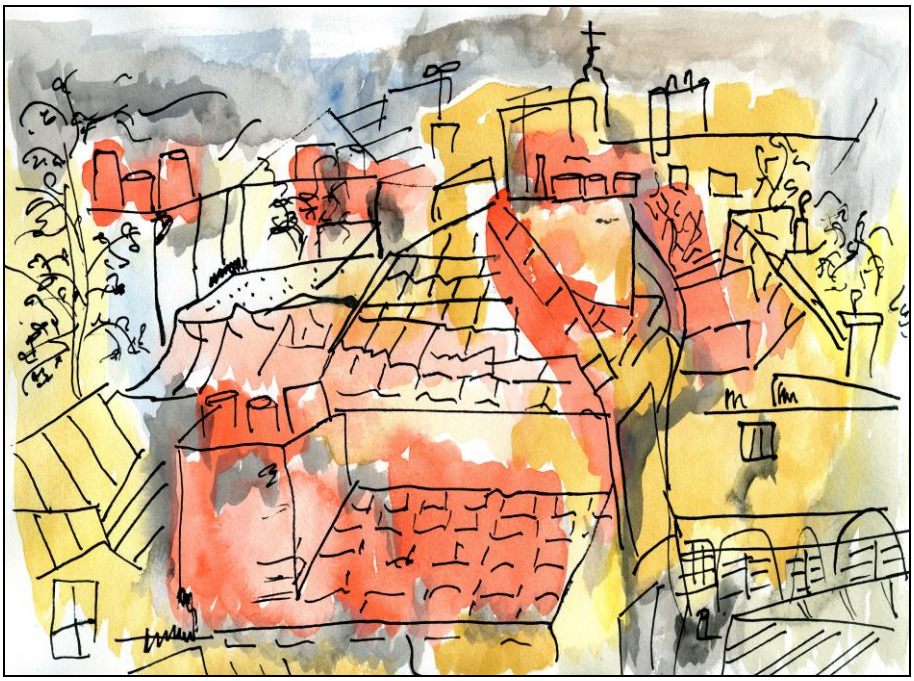
16 *Albigensian Crusade* After Pope Innocent III proclaimed the Albigensian Crusade, nobles from Paris and northern France, led by Simon de Monfort, went south to join the fight. Supporters of the Cathars in Languedoc were led by Count Raymond VI of Toulouse. The website of the commune of Puylaurens says that crusaders occupied their town for nine years. And that when the lord of Puylaurens reoccupied the town in 1220, a horde of Cathars followed him. In 1229, the Count of Toulouse and other nobles of Languedoc ceded their territories to King Louis IX of France after the crusaders had laid waste to the countryside surrounding Toulouse. That was the end of the independent County of Toulouse. The conclusion of the crusade did not stop the Catholic Church's persecution of the Cathars, however, mostly through the Inquisition and mainly in Toulouse, Albi, and Carcassonne. One of the Church's final acts against the Cathars was to burn nearly 300 of them to death in 1244 after they surrendered but refused to recant at the end of a yearlong siege of their stronghold at Montségur, near the Pyrenees. Centuries later, the Puritans cited the Albigensians as one of the heretical groups that had kept pure Christianity alive in the face of Roman Catholic corruption.

29 *lived without bathrooms or inside toilets* The basic comforts found in the housing stock of the Île de France in 1960 are discussed in *Survival Strategies: Paris and New York: Report on the Conference on Two World Cities: Paris and New York, Paris, May 1978* (Transaction Publishers, 1979), p. 82.

33 *Madeleine was the waitress at Les Cinq Billards* The evidence is a note (No. 70) by the artist Daniel Spoerri in his book *Topographie anectodée du hasard*. The book contains a drawing he made in October 1961 of all the items on the table in his room at the Hôtel de Carcassonne, with a description of each object. Two of the objects were a twist of black thread on a piece of star-shaped cardboard and a needle. Spoerri writes that he bought them at a newsstand, then

went into Les Cinq Billards café, where he met a girl from the neighborhood, Annie, who used the items to sew a missing button onto his flies. That reminded the waitress, Madeleine, of a time in the Auvergne when she had sewed two buttons on a patron's flies and that it had been hard not to touch him, which they had gotten a kick out of.

Spoerri's original note reads: *Bobine, qui n'en est pas une, mais une étoile en carton, de fil noir, acheté il y a quelques jours chez le marchand de journaux, ainsi qu'une aiguille. Dans le café Les Cinq Billards où je me suis rendu après cet achat, j'ai rencontré Annie, une jeune femme du quartier : me voyant avec ces deux objets, elle s'est proposé pour coudre mon bouton de braguette manquant ; elle se livra aussitôt à cette opération, sur les lieux, ce qui rappela à Madeleine la serveuse, qu'un jour, en Auvergne, elle avait cousu deux boutons de braguette à un client, et que c'était difficile à faire sans toucher, et qu'on avait bien rigolé.*



Paris rooftops, watercolor-and-ink drawing based on my 1962 original