

Excerpt from from a short story called "*The Parisian*"

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I pulled my jacket tighter as I arrived at the doorway of a local butcher. There, above the darkened shop, was an apartment. In the window, the red scarf placed gently over her lamp set an invitation. It also sent a message to all those who felt the need to inquire about her current standing.

I pulled my jacket closer, hating myself with every breath. I pressed the button to call her and waited. The intercom crackled, and her sensual voice whispered through the speaker.

"Yes?"

I could smell her perfume from here, and my heart swelled with joy before filling with sadness.

"It's me," I said, my voice crackling as if one day I knew she would turn me away.

The fear of which kept me waiting longer between visits, hoping she too would miss me like I missed her. There was a loud buzz before the latch on the door pulled back. I swung the door open and then gently closed it behind me.

Once inside, I ascended the steps towards her apartment. At the top of the landing, I turned to stare at her door.

Number 4.

It was both the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen and the most depressing. I sighed, resigning myself to the permanency of my decision, and leaned forward.

I knocked.

"It's open," a voice called from within. I paced my hand on the doorknob and turned, it gave way easily.

I slowly drew the door open, and there she sat in her brown leather chair, her legs crossed and smoking a long thin cigarette.

"It's been a while since I've seen you," she said, smoke rising from within her chest as she spoke.

I smiled at her, not knowing what to say. Her statement sounded like both an inquiry and a scolding.

"Sit," she said, motioning towards her bed, "would you like a drink?"

I shook my head.

"No, thanks."

She reached over to the lamp and cut it off, signaling to other passerby's that she was currently indisposed.