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EUGÈNE ATGET: *WHAT VANISHES*

The city is empty most mornings at dawn when you climb rue du Maure and pass the Left Bank quays, blue and black horizon banked with backlit clouds and only weary whores on their way to bed noticing your pleasure as you walk. Just putting all dead weight down is pleasure, leveling your tripod atop three ridged, black stones, where for you, *grand-père*, they stay still if you ask them, curious *cocottes* who pose bone-tired standing with their shoes in their hands. One has a foxtail wrap about her throat, her eyes a brilliant gash of mascara. Knocked now to rubble the ragmen sift culling planks for shanties, so much of ancient Paris is gone, crumbled stonework and splintered joists, crannies pigeons shit or roost, though you photograph these things no one knew they wanted for the Bibliothèque Nationale, facades of the city rimming up around each plate layered like the shafts that cut through Troy. Rue du Dragon lights up in sectioned squares like playing cards tossed on the carpet, behind the slender man peddling tasselled lamps, woven baskets, and bright Tunis cloth. His friend the organ grinder who resembles a wolf asks you to photograph his singing, dwarf-like bride. As the good light starts to go, you stand before one doorway to photograph a mother and her son, so old and grown alike they could be widowed sisters, peering out behind warped glass. Ghosts' breath of his ancestors fixing him in time, you focus on florets of frost and sky glazing this tailor's window, tipping from the liquid in your tray, these curious faces that come steaming from the bath into stillness and the red light of your room.