

THE JOURNEY TO BIC IN PARIS

Reggio Calabria to Paris

I had planned my travel arrangements and informed Chanel that I would arrive in Paris in three weeks.

Beyond sharing that single piece of information, she remained discreet and reserved, a typical French woman. She asked nothing else.

The timing of my departure followed a very precise logic.

I was scheduled to receive my monthly pension of 351 euros, and with that money I would be able to leave. The real question was not whether I could go, but how.

I called a friend of mine who drove international trucks on a regular basis, and we agreed that he would give me a ride.

Before accepting, however, I needed to know what he was transporting. If the trailer happened to be loaded with livestock, I would have to deal with the smell.

Mother Gillette was never flexible on one point with her children: the problem is never inside the mind; it only exists in the actions that create solutions.

For accommodation, I had found a shared room just outside the city. It cost twelve euros a day.

The place was located near the final stop of the metro line, and transportation into the city would cost only three euros per day.

My stay would last no more than three days, not by choice but by planning.

By the time my truck-driver friend completed his delivery in Brussels, I would already be ready for the return journey, and this time I would not worry about what he happened to be carrying.

The day of departure finally arrived.

At two o'clock in the morning, my wife asked where I was going.

She saw me standing there with a trolley suitcase, dressed in ordinary clothes.

I told her that I had been given the opportunity to attend a job-related meeting, although I had no idea what role might be offered to me.

I expected that, given my qualifications, the highest position available would probably be warehouse worker.

I would not choose anything. I would simply accept it if I liked it.

Eugenio had parked the truck at the entrance to the road leading to my house.

As soon as I reached him, my first concern was discovering what he was transporting.

You won't believe it. The trailer was carrying plastic destined for BIC Belgium, where it would be used to manufacture pens.

Ahahahah.

During the thirty-two-hour journey from Reggio Calabria to Paris, we stopped only at highway service stations for fuel, food, and restroom breaks.

Meanwhile, Eugenio kept changing the tachograph documents. Every time he did so, a different driver's name appeared on the paperwork. It was always Eugenio behind the wheel. Yet the system recorded six different drivers.

That alone was enough to understand that I was inside a system that did not function properly, and that this was the only solution people had found to reduce costs.

Eventually we reached the outskirts of Paris.

Eugenio dropped me off near a metro station, the same station I would need to find again when it was time to return home.

He asked me where I was going.

I replied: "I'm going to meet some women."

He looked at me and said: "The power of sex."

Ferdinando