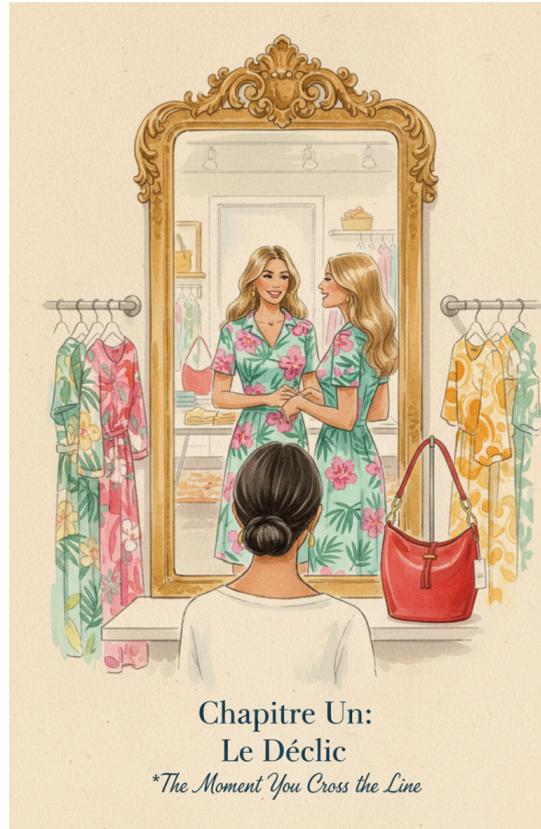


CHAPITRE UN

Le Décllic

The Moment You Cross the Line



Madam,

There is a bridge one crosses to reach this island — the span over the Intracoastal where the continent quietly releases you. I have come to see our salon at Coligny as another such crossing, though the distance here is not measured in meters.

In my years producing runway shows, I learned that every successful presentation has an invisible architecture. There is *l'atelier* — the calm backstage where everything is prepared in silence. There is *le défilé* — the procession itself, with its rhythm and

reveal. And there is *le dénouement* — the finale, where everything resolves into meaning.

The fitting room holds this same architecture, compressed into a single encounter.

A woman enters. Often she is already apologizing — for her timing, for “simply looking,” for not yet knowing what she desires. This is very American, I have noticed, this need to explain oneself. On the runways where I worked, one learns to read the room before acting. The audience tells you everything if you know how to listen.

And so I listen. I watch. I do not rush toward her with suggestions. In the high-pressure environment of a live event, I learned that panic is contagious — but *elegance is calm*. I establish what I think of as the Calm Center. A single point of stillness that the entire experience can orbit around.

She touches a sleeve. The Daphne in botanical, perhaps — hibiscus against seafoam, as though someone painted a garden onto silk. She considers a print. The Barrington in coral catches her eye, its French weave structured and assured. And if she permits herself to try something on, I wait for what I have learned to recognize.

Le dé clic.

The click. The shift. The moment something falls into place.

It happens in the eyes first. One moment she is assessing the garment with the mind:

Is this my color? Does the silhouette suit? What will others think?

The next moment — and one can see it arrive like light changing on water — she is no longer examining the dress. She is meeting *herself*.

On the runway, I learned to engineer transitions so tightly that gaps never appear.

The show must feel like one unbroken, inevitable spell from start to finish.

L'enchaînement — the seamless linking. Dead air is where the magic dies.

In the fitting room, I work the same way. I do not let uncertainty linger. I do not leave her alone with her doubts too long. But neither do I fill the silence with chatter. There is a rhythm to this — *l'allure*, we call it in production. The pacing and attitude that allows the room to breathe.

Jean-Pierre speaks often of his mission: “to make every woman feel beautiful.” But *la beauté*, I have learned, is not a gift one gives. It is a recognition one witnesses. The Italians have a phrase — *bella figura* — which means not merely to look beautiful but

to *carry* oneself with that inner certainty. This is what I watch for: the moment a woman stops performing and begins simply *being*.

The women who come to our island understand refinement. They have navigated careers and families and complexities that would exhaust lesser spirits. They take houses in Sea Pines or pass winters in Palmetto Dunes not from necessity but from an earned appreciation for *la douceur de vivre* — the sweetness of living well. Yet even these accomplished women will hesitate at the fitting room threshold, as though requiring permission to appear as luminous as they feel within.

I know this hesitation. I have walked European runways where the lights were blinding and every eye in the room was judging. I have hosted fashion galas where a single misstep could unravel hours of preparation. What I learned is this: confidence is not the absence of fear. It is the presence of *calm*. A calm so steady that it becomes contagious.

This is what I offer in the fitting room. Not flattery. Not sales technique. Simply the calm presence of someone who has seen thousands of women stand before mirrors, and who knows — with certainty born of experience — that the right piece exists for everyone.

Coco Chanel, with her usual precision, observed that elegance is refusal — knowing what to leave aside. I would add only this: before one can refuse, one must first believe one deserves to choose. The crossing I witness in my mirror is a woman remembering her right to choose beautifully.

Some women cross immediately. They have been waiting — perhaps without knowing — for precisely this Barrington in precisely this coral, and when they see it, they laugh. Not from surprise but from recognition, as one laughs when meeting an old friend unexpectedly.

Others circle slowly, try several silhouettes — the structured Barrington, then the flowing Daphne, perhaps the Alexandra Top with the Jackie Pants — and depart with nothing, which is entirely *comme il faut*. The experience has planted *une graine* — a seed. The crossing does not always occur on the first visit.

But when it does — when her posture softens into assurance, when she stops asking *Est-ce que ça va?* and simply *knows* — then my work has commenced. Not concluded. Commenced. Because the dress she carries home is merely the opening phrase of a longer conversation.

In the productions I orchestrated, we spoke of *le frisson* — that collective thrill when everything aligns and the audience gasps as one. In the fitting room, I work to create that same *frisson* for an audience of one.

You.

À bientôt,

Margot

...