Arc and the Sediment

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Gretta wakes to sunburned skin, chilled flesh. The laptop is hibernating. The dictionary is stretched open; she puts it back in her pack. She stands up too quickly, waits for the blackness to subside. Finally she is hungry—fiercely hungry, fourth-month hungry if she were pregnant, which, thank god, she is not.

She will finish her work, which will travel from brain cell to keyboard to hard drive to cell phone to satellite to her boss’s wireless-equipped gray-taupe cubicle, not excessively beyond her deadline. Not long after that she will find her way back to civilization, back to food, and deliver the eagle-bone whistle to Lance. The thing, after all, is rightfully his. She wants to show him that she knows it; she wants to acknowledge its importance. She wants also to release herself of it and leave in his hands its brokenness. But first, she will get dressed, then…. Then.

Then she will work some more. Maybe even take something up on the side—waitress again, if she has to.

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The impervious brassiere, that modern-day successor to yesteryear’s corset, was patented in November 1914 by New York debutante Mary Phelps “Polly” Jacob. The elastic “freedom fighter,” as it has been called by some, was fashioned in haste, and with the assistance of the lady’s French maid Marie and her needle, out of two silk pocket handkerchiefs, pink ribbon, and thread. The women couldn’t have known that the
The Arc and the Sediment

prototype bra, designed to flatten the bust against the chest, would come to represent the very antithesis of women’s pneumatic fight for freedom.

Despite riots and bra burnings taking place at campuses across the nation, the Dilbert financial page has posted a recommendation to buy Maidenform. “Why?” the stock analysts ask. “Because breast implants are up 40% in the last two years. New breasts=new bras.”