Writing the Wrong

Waiting for the Train, this is what Happened...

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I am going to tell you a story. It was extremely humbling and a testament to the fact that I know nothing. I want to add that I always hesitate a bit when I write about these personal things because I have been accused of being preachy, giving lectures and so on. But I say with all sincerity, that is never my intention. I write these things because I want to share what I am learning about the world with people. And, alas, you are a captive audience. But I do still marvel at what happens to me--when I stop long enough to process it. I used to eschew this processing business because it reminded me of jogging in place and I would feel compelled to react to whatever it is I was attempting to process. At once. This usually ended bloody, either for me or the other person (s) involved

Back to the story. About five years ago I was waiting for the train to Grand Central Station. It was in White Plains, which is an urban hub masking itself as a suburb of New York City. A little boy, about the same age as my son, five, was jumping from seat to seat in the waiting room. He was disruptive, loud, and about to break his neck. His very young mother, maybe about twenty one, if that, watched him disinterestedly, rolling her eyes a few times and went back to her conversation with a friend. She was Hispanic, and wore a thick gold chain around her neck, with a rectangular name plaque. Her hair ,slick and curly was pulled back in a tight ponytail. She was overweight, and wore jeans that hugged her ample posterior, were low waisted and tight, creating the dreaded muffin top of fat that spills over the band of one's pants that most women despise. Her shirt was too small for her and rode up, revealing a slack belly. On her feet were unlaced black Adidas sneakers. She was the picture of the minority cliche--the kind that white male conservatives have nothing but contempt for, when they bother to notice them.



While watching her and her son's antics, I automatically came up with her story. She was barely twenty years old, which meant she had to have had the boy when she was a teenager--I of course assumed he was her son--and out of wedlock. She did not attend college, maybe she didn't even finish high school. I did not look down on her, in fact, I had no real opinion of her, I just assumed all these things about her and put her in a box.