

A Breath of Tranquility

by

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At the end of an alluring one way street, a pleasant set of old fashioned buildings patiently await a sign of spirit. Two of them, having been transformed into white apartment buildings, stand hugging a lone brick structure in the center. Vibrant green vines manipulate the authority of the delicate building as they creep up the sides. Although threatened, the fragile voice does not lose hope, for it offers a captivating serenity like no other.

Not far away, an intimidating oak tree makes an attempt at concealing a wooden sign suspended over the entryway of the intriguing brick building. The hand carved sign reads "Cornerstone," with an out- of- place pineapple above it. The welcome is joined by two proud flags, which peacefully wave, loosely draped from an outside window near the entrance. Horizontal stripes of red, white, blue, and the word "OPEN" in bold black print on one flag broadcast the eager start of yet another day. The other, a café color, dynamically illustrates a steaming cup of espresso coffee. As a swift breeze whisks by, no hesitation is made on the decision to enter the coffee shop.

The beckoning portal opens, revealing a secret warmth. Perhaps the fragile voice's patient wait proved successful, for a curious stranger is instantaneously drawn in. The foreigner soon becomes hidden, entangled in the morning commotion of the regulars. Amidst this cheerful frenzy, two long time friends reunite, initiating a rapid exchange of stories from their too-quickly retired weekend. Each bubbles with excitement from the memories made, while continuing to look forward into the new week. Their bodies fill

with warmth as they indulge in two arousing lattés. The intricately prepared drinks mirror the majestic aura of the shop.

An anxious man lingers before the counter, ready to order his usual 8 a.m. hazelnut coffee and peaches 'n cream danish. With an unfailing grin, the experienced waitress senses his rush and quickly rings him up, knowing that attempting to offer him a new flavor of coffee would do no good; hazelnut is his favorite. The waitress' arm routinely reaches into the refrigerated cooler beside her, snatching one of the many homemade danishes on display. As the man thanks the woman and retreats with coffee and danish in hand, he passes a mystifying staircase- a forbidden passageway leading to the owners' living quarters. The odd- placed staircase connects an initial entry room to an advanced chamber where a charming concoction of miss-matched tables and chairs stand eager for use. The exposed normality of the situation prompts the assumption of a personal dwelling, which has unexpectedly been opened to a cluster of strangers.

A tense doctor scuttles in, making herself invisible as she plops down on a small corner table. Although a heaping pile of responsibility accompanies her, it carries no power over the submissive mocha. Radiating above, authentic green shades cover dim lights on the antique brick walls, creating a relaxed atmosphere. Soft music echoes in the background, ironically playing a song titled, "Rescue Me." Indeed, in the strong sense of homeliness, if one did not hold onto reality, a person could get lost.

Remnants of a newly eaten lunch lie scattered on a table where a cluster of enthusiastic women converse. A mood of friendliness is contagious in the warm atmosphere. After an abrupt end to their intense discussion (half an hour sure does go by fast), the women quickly realize that even in the midst of an insuring coffee shop, their

lives will continue to move forth- facing many challenges. The unlikely soldiers find themselves strengthened by their solid bond of fellowship, and faithfully depart, smiling as the waitress wishes them a great day. Then, as if unaware of her humbleness, the devout waitress scurries back to the women's scattered mess and dutifully cleans it up. Across from her a lone yellow chair sits, exposed to all. The relievant appears very out of place without a body to cover it, at a table with only blue and red chairs. Fixated on the brick wall alongside the deserted table and chairs, a grouping of enchanted paintings boast of a local artist's splendid ability. The celestial jewels capture an essence of beauty within an untimely nutshell.

All too quickly, a shuttering tap on the windowsill breaks the stilling silence, drawing the attention away from the pockets of color to an unsuspecting cottage window. Through choked vines, outside the window an unusual knight glistens, engaged in a peculiar act of chivalry. Without a soul to impress, the knight modestly replaces the fallen flag in the wire window casing back to its appropriate spot. Beaming, the flag returns to its original state of glory, swiftly luring the humble hero into the engaging coffee shop. Once in, there is no sign of gallantry. Not a word of the soundless act is spoken of to the waitress as the silent hero orders.

In a town famous for its heritage, the old bricks of this building have anchored down much history. Beginning as an affluent bakery, being transformed into a modest home and then later an entrancing getaway, the dainty coffee shop is rightfully named "Cornerstone." Sustaining a delightful tradition, word of the charming discovery spreads as the newcomer, once a foreigner, jubilantly returns home, mesmerized by the coffee shop's hypnotic spell.