



Lamphear/ Rose

followed. The coffee shop struggled until it thrived and forty years later Rose was still tending to the entrance bell ring six days a week from sun up to sun down. Her husband dead and neither of her children possessed an ounce of desire in taking over the place.

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Thanks, Rose groaned internally. She looked over and examined Tanner's green eyes and well-groomed blonde curls. Sure, she admitted to herself, I'd fuck wouldn't tell him thank you afterward.

The man walked to the far side of the room and picked a coffee mug off the display net. He flipped it over, looking at the price tag, presumably. Tanner's observance of the ened, milk to roux.

"Tanner," Rose said, "If he tries to take off with that mug, chase him down. "

ÒThatÕs a good idea.Ó

The shop never stopped reeking of burned coffee grinds and spoiled milk. T breathed in deep and the morningÕs espresso grinds, molding in a nearby garbage can shoot through his bloodstream. Rose caught something in his eyes that flickered so br couldnÕt name it.

ÒRose Park,Ó he said, ÒWeird name. Why is this place called Rose Park?Ó

ÒThatÕs a funny story.Ó

ÒYeah,Ó he coughed into an open palm, ÒI bet it is.Ó

ÒWell, my parentÕs moved here when I was two. My nameÕs Rose Parker an happened to move to a place called Rose Park. I liked the coincidence enough to raise and name this place Rose ParkÕs Coffee and Tea. Rose Park for short.Ó

ÒThis is Long Beach.Ó

ÒWhat?Ó

ÒYou said this place is called Rose Park,Ó he waved his arms at the street c storefront, ÒThis is Long Beach.Ó

ÒLong Beach is the city. Rose Park is the neighborhood.Ó

ÒNeighborhood?Ó

ÒLots of areas have neighborhood names. Wrigley Park. The Arts District. W Belmont Shore.Ó

He shook his head. ÒOnly fancy places get special names. I live in Long Beach.

Rose knew, instinctually, that when he said ÔfancyÕ he meant ÔwhiteÕ. Happily

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ÒGimme a hot chocolate,Ó he said, reaching for his wallet.

ÒYou want an espresso shot in that?Ó

His eyes narrowed and his mouth crinkled into an incredulous frown. ÒNo,Ó he s

ÒI love espresso in hot chocolate,Ó she told him.

ÒOh, I certainly believe that.Ó

A few moments later Rose handed him a hot chocolate one size larger than he

He stayed in the lobby, eyeing the pastry case for a few minutes before leaving.

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Winter swept in a month later. Rose wore scarfs and mittens as soon as the ter

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ÒI donÕt blame you for doing this, you know. I keep hearing about how my ge
ruined this country. Tanked the housing market, destroyed unions. And Reagan, Jesus
ally vote for that cowboy twice?Ó

His hand shot off the counter. He thrust the gun forward, gripped on both sides,
rel mere inches from RoseÕs right eye.

ÒDid I ask for your fucking life story?Ó he screamed. ÒShut the fuck up and
register.Ó

The room contract around his voice. Rose felt the walls coming in as she looked
dark mouth at the barrel of the gun. An entry into the abyss, the farthest of far away plæ
large enough to fall through and never look back. Rose harbored no silly illusions about

stead she held onto it like a houseplant, a secret child. She watered and fed it felt it slip
her fingers like hot sand.

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Tanner stood over a newspaper a week later, two days before he'd leave for
never return.

ÒWoah,Ó he said, stabbing a finger into the front page, ÒRose, come here.Ó

She looked at him from the register but didn't move. ÒWhat?Ó

He held up the newspaper and pointed to a small, blurry photograph. ÒI think th
guy who was here a while back, the one you told me to stop staring at.Ó

Properly interested, Rose walked over re s,otsaereas.reindeed the.resame.rerew