Tealuxe

Mallory Hellman

NSU University School

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“Isn't that hysterical?!” She widens her eyes to an almost comical degree.

“I know! I can't believe she walked that far just to go to the bathroom. I mean, that's a long way to walk.”

And now the third woman chimes in. She, unlike the others, seems not to think that Bathroom Girl's exploits are “hysterical.”

“I walked into CVS yesterday, and they didn't let me into the bathroom,” she says.

“Then you must not have looked too desperate. She did.” Woman 1 again. “When she told me about it, her eyebrows were, like, all furled and stuff. I can just picture her walking around the neighborhood looking for a bathroom.” She tenderly rubs a very pregnant abdomen housed in a clingy lycra pullover. “I mean, she left her house, her knitting, her journal, just to freakin' pee.” Laughter.

“That was like the time I had that party and people were in all the bathrooms in my house and for some reason I walked to the park,” says Younger Blonde Woman with Tattoo on Calf. “Maybe I was drunk, or – ”

Pregnant Woman interjects, emphatically slamming her petite teacup on the unsteady little table. “You know, I'd like to give you the key to my house so you can just come in any time – sit down, use the couch. It'll be quiet; the cat'll be asleep. I wish more people used my house. There's actually this place right near the Y that makes keys. I'll get two copies of mine the next time I go.”

The woman with the calf tattoo thanks Pregnant
and asks if there is another "key place" in the area, but pays no attention to the response. She instead busies herself suggestively sipping her chilled, fruity tea beverage in the direction of the pierced college student behind the counter.

"My legs are feeling better. You know, the most random things get sore when you're pregnant." More laughter. This time, even the reticent Woman 3 joins the festivities.

"My friend's nephew works in this place called Waterworks on Newbury Street," she says, peering timidly from behind an enormous cup (more like a bowl) of steaming Earl Gray. "It was really an experience going there because there was this woman in capris and knee-highs. Anyway, they have, like, top-of-the-line bathroom tiles and stuff... typical Newbury Street, right? But the woman's shoes reminded me of this place around here where you can buy boots with fire on them and stuff."

This prompts Calf Tattoo nearly to choke on her swig of tea in what turns out to be an incongruous recollection of a place called Victor Hugo's. "It reminds me of, did you guys ever read The Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler when you were a kid? It was about kids who lived in a library or whatever and they took money out of the fountain at night to use on the vending machines but this Hugo's place is, like, an old book store."

Evidently, there are three stories, indicated by increasingly frantic hand gestures at progressively higher levels.

"...and it goes on forever and they have, like, every category."

Pregnant acknowledges the waitress, who has come by with a swanky chrome teapot. "I don't think we ordered that."

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A fat woman in spectacles two tables away raises her hand, revealing herself the guilty party.  
“Oh, pardon me.” The waitress is gone.  
“How is your tea?” Pregnant is again addressing the small town of Audience, population: 2.  
“It's amazing.”  
“Mine is awesome.”  
There is some confusion as to what the sign on the door says, and its message reminds Calf Tattoo (who has proven to have truly bizarre concept association) of Eric.  
“I just can't believe you two know him. I have pictures of him with, like, my grandmother.”  
Pregnant slowly gathers a disgusted smirk. The quiet third woman, up to this point still worn out from her story about Waterworks, now braces herself for the impending diatribe.  
“Eric is one of the most aloof people I know. He's so into being a musician. He's so, like, deep. I mean, I can respect him, but – like, okay, he had my friend Layla for a while and she was really a catch (but then again, so was he...)”  
Apparently, as understanding as Layla was of Eric’s need to be a musician and be on the road and write songs, she was not considerate of his creative need to sleep with other women. Shortly after they broke up, she began getting these horrible migraines and her doctors were forced to put her on steroids.  
“...and now she TOTALLY looks like a man. I mean, she's still pretty hot and everything, if you ignore the whole man thing.” Quiet Woman is suddenly curious. “Now she's with Peter Searcy?”  
Pregnant: “Do you recognize that name? He's kinda famous, like a lesser-known Bono type. I don't know him as well as my sister's husband does, but anyway, he's so sweet and they both love
basketball. I saw Layla at this awesome outdoor bar recently.”

Tattoo is ecstatic. God knows what she just remembered. “Like the Tattered Cover?!”

“Oh! The Tattered Cover! I remember that place!”

All: “SUNDAY BRUNCH!”

Pregnant woman snorts. “Yes. I went to that. And of all things I ate a liver sandwich.”

“Remember the guy who used to own that place? The cute little blonde guy?”

Quiet peers at her watch. “Well, I really should go, or I'll be late to pick up my cute little blonde guy from preschool.”

With a Herculean effort, Pregnant is out of her chair. Calf Tattoo takes one last sip (the way she does it, it looks more like a drag) of her cool fruitiness and is up. Quiet is nearly at the doorframe already, heading out toward the greenish Nissan fortuitously parked right in front of the building. Pregnant follows after taking a flyer about an upcoming tea bar-related event for those whose social calendars are filled with community luauas and singles' nights at local delis or whatever. Calf Tattoo lingers at the counter, asking utterly useless questions about tea and its capacity to be smoked (“I mean, it looks like you could. It's just dried leaves and stuff. Have you tried?”). Upon closer inspection, the student behind the counter is probably half a decade younger than she is, but she has stopped caring. She wants to know if a job at a tea place allows him to meet girls. For the first time, the exact design of the tattoo is revealed, as Calf lifts the leg of her capris slightly. It is a hugely gaudy heart, wreathed in roses. Under its pointed bottom is a tiny, cursive inscription: “Eric.”