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## The Roasting Company

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## THE ROASTING COMPANY

ISABELLA LEÓN

She comes in every Sunday. Although she's never spoken to me for more than a few breaths, she always meets my gaze with a smile. The coffee shop we both love is small and unremarkable. The beans are always burnt, and the leather seats by the windows are always too hot. Every week the sun cooks her back, dotting new freckles with each passing minute. Her ice melts quickly in her glass, and her chair is uneven, causing her to rock methodically back and forth, rattling her drink to an unpleasing beat. Still, this is her peace.

The light washes over the community bookshelf, whose selection was once great, but has since dwindled to old dictionaries and romance novels with the covers torn. Ancient business cards cover the shelves' lining. Each time I stand near it I find Matthew Kelperis's card. It's printed on paper so old it's almost transparent; the smudge that was once a phone number is now an inky black stain. Kelperis died the year I was born. I hear her talk about him sometimes—"a loudmouth," she says with a smile, "but a damn good carpenter." She remembers him building the very bookshelf that I saw her pluck her current title from. A testament to his skills, and her age.

Her hair, once golden, has turned snow-white. Shoulders hunched, she peers over her coke-bottle glasses and pulls a book from her worn leather purse. The window heat has gotten to her, and she takes off her knit cardigan. The tag in the lining reads "Dorothy," but she goes by Dot—always has.

The spine of her novel is cracked, and the pages lie flat on the table, as is only the case when you've gotten to the good parts. Most days she just sits there. For her, time seems to pass more slowly than for the rest of the world.

I wonder where she is in her story. I hope right in the middle. I hope it's the good part.

Layout by Crisanta Wadhams.