

Coming to America

Cream colored buildings outskirt a long, dark road. The sweet smell of gelato fills the air, and lifts up to a bubblegum tinted sky. People travel in huddled groups, talking and laughing in sharp french accents, and everything seemed right in the world until-

Ring Ring. The shriek of the phone quickly pulled Linda Baker back to reality. She shoved her sketchbook into her desk, and snatched the phone off of its hollister. "Hello, this is Linda Baker from Happy Helpers Hospital. How may I help you?" She asked politely.

As soon as the person stated their business, Linda hung up and sighed, spinning in her chair. Was this all that was to become of her days? Sitting in a stuffy office, taking calls and organizing papers?

Her parents had always had this plan: Graduate high school, go to college, and get a job at a hospital. Eventually, they expected her to become a doctor, and work full time. "You'll have such a nice, wealthy lifestyle!" Her mother had encouraged. "You'll bring honor to the family name!" Added her father. And being her younger, sixteen year old self, she had listened happily to their reasoning, but now she was twenty one years old and thought much differently.

Linda wanted to be an artist. She wanted to feel inspired by her pieces, feel the excitement of brush against canvas, the rapidness of pencil against paper! But instead she was stuck, like fly caught in a spider's web; struggling to escape.

Linda's thoughts were abruptly interrupted by loud shouting voices. *Angry* voices. Linda quickly stood up and leaned toward the door to listen. After all, it wasn't very often that something interesting happened at the clinic. But little did she know, her day was about to get a *lot* more interesting.

"The professor will need a place to stay in order to complete his studies!" One voice boomed. Linda quickly matched it to her boss; Dr. Hadley. "He will have to stay in the local hotel!" The other voice responded. The voice sounded like a girl, a young woman perhaps. "I called the hotel yesterday, and their booked because of Valentines Day preparations!" Dr. Hadley responded swiftly. "Perhaps our young Paris professor will have to spend the night in the clinic." *Paris.* Linda leaned away from the door, thinking fast. Paris France? Surely not. *But what if?* Perhaps the professor could teach her of the lifestyle people lived, the food they ate, the *art* they made. Right then and there, Linda made a life-changing decision. She opened the door, and to Dr. Hadley's utmost surprise, she said "He can stay with me."

As soon as Dr. Eric came into the clinic, Linda knew she was pleased with her choice. He was a tall, slim man, with dark brown curls, and blazing green eyes. All of a sudden, Linda couldn't think straight. Her mind was spinning and her heart racing. He seemed so familiar. "Um..have I met you before...?" Linda asked uncertainly. Dr. Eric

chuckled, and to Linda's surprise engulfed her in a single armed bear hug. "Linda! Good to see you! Don't you remember me? We went to the same college!"

Linda stepped back. Same college? Surely not. *Unless...* Understanding washed over Linda like a waterfall. "Jean?" Jean Eric had been a friend of Linda's when she was in college studying nursing, and had been in many of her classes. Jean nodded, and smiled. "I moved to Paris after graduation, and became a professor." Linda nodded, but couldn't find any words. It felt strange to see an old friend. All she could muster was "Come with me to the car."

After a long ride to her apartment complex, Linda and Jean finally arrived. Jean had told a bunch of stories from his life in Paris, and even though Linda commented only a few times the whole ride, she was intrigued by his stories of cool summer nights, and sweet sticky gelato.

Once inside, Linda started making dinner, while Jean continued talking. At first she was quiet, and listening to his stories, but eventually *she* began telling the stories.

After dinner they stayed up listening to old Elvis Presley albums, and spent the rest of the evening trading funny stories.

It was by far the best night of Linda's life.

It had been three weeks since Jean had come from Paris. Every morning he would come with Linda to work, and continue his long studies with Dr. Hadley. Linda would sit behind the front counter, and wait.

And wait.

And wait some more.

Until Jean was finished for the day. Then, they would settle into Linda's bright yellow Volkswagen, and drive back to the apartment complex.

Linda enjoyed her time with Jean, in fact she had never felt more happy in her life. But with them having to work 6 days a week, they only *really* spent time with each other on Saturdays, which to Linda just wasn't enough. She was developing a new perspective of him, and was hoping he felt the same about her. So when he asked if she wanted to come live with him Paris, she couldn't say yes fast enough.

One month later

Linda slid the last paint brush into her suitcase and zipped it. The *final thing*. A month ago when the love of her life had asked her to move to Paris with him to pursue her dreams of becoming an artist, she hadn't hesitated, but now she was having second thoughts. Linda traced a finger down the crack in the wall, and laughed at the memory of her old cat putting it there. Jean walked through the door, and placed a hand on Linda's shoulder "We have to leave for the airport soon, but you can have a few more minutes if you want." She shook her head. "I'm ready now." And she stepped out the door, prepared for her new life.