

Students at a corner table at the Café Les Tops discuss Socialism. They share a big bowl of oatmeal and smartly choreographed tealeaf eyes. A whistling purple-haired teen in an Army fatigue jacket slips a peppershaker into pocket. The opening door admits a flock of chatty customers, maybe birdwatchers, missionaries or archers.

Marie tends the espresso machine as if her baby's fate depended on its huffs of magic sledge. She imagines skipping along a refined flour beach, picking up golden croissants and loving the silent snap of them. She's interested in the young bearded chap sitting at the end of the counter who uses and spills too much sugar. She works in an occasional smile amid the serving frenzy. A cinnamon cruller stick leaps off her tray, marches along the checkered floor then scooped up into a drab olive hollow.

Marie puts down the cigarette and stretches arms in the air, hands seeking the tin ceiling like lonely albino jungle vines. Her breasts are hydrangeas. Sweetie's eyes bulge as her nipples do when the A/C kicks in. His five-dollar bill misses its gratuity mark and flutters across the counter landing on her orthopedic shoes. Scooping it up, she slips the wing into her cleavage just to surprise and doesn't she purse her darling lips waiting for his jaw to drop before deftly placing a letter she's been working on for weeks into his monogrammed shirt pocket.

Marie at the Throttle

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