



Autumn Leaves

A STORY BY KAYTI PESCHKE

As I left the house I grabbed the essentials; phone, bag, keys and most importantly a little zip pouch which contained my sketchbook and pencils. I had been sketching all my life and I would never go anywhere without them. As a child I enjoyed creating a make-believe world filled with pixies and magical critters. As a teenager I filled journals with album artwork of my favourite bands which I'd spend hours carefully copying and my school book covers were covered in doodles of their logos. And now? I love capturing the world around me, the city's scenery and the people I encounter on my journeys throughout it.

A favourite pastime is to head to the lovely cafe that overlooks the square, a prized people-watching spot to indulge in my sketching passion. Picking up a well-worn pencil and letting it flow naturally over the paper is pure escapism to me and the perfect break from all of life's little niggles. When I sketch I feel free, my mind clears and I think of nothing. Each time I set out with

my sketchbook I have no idea what I'll end up drawing that day, which is a truly thrilling prospect. There are always surprises and chance meetings with people, fantastic chats with strangers whose faces and stories often make their way into the doodles.

I make a beeline for my favourite spot in the cafe, a bright booth by the window. It was a sunny but chilly autumn day, my favourite kind. As the bell above the door rang I noticed a mother and her young daughter entering, wearing cute matching raincoats. They plonked their rucksacks down and shuffled into the booth next to mine. The little girl was about 8 or 9 years old and bursting with giddiness. She very carefully delved into her bag and slowly produced a selection of beautifully coloured autumn leaves. She then laid them out across the table, clearly proud of her vibrant bounty. As I watched the delightful pair I sipped on my tea and imagined what fun they had been having in the park, kicking their way



through the fallen leaves and picking out their favourites as mementos.

I picked up my pencil and opened the book to a fresh page. I drew absent-mindedly and a scene began to come to life - the little girl emerged, yellow mac, hood up, surrounded by falling leaves and holding her favourite one in her hand with her smile beaming from the page. As I sketched I became lost in my own drawing, but glanced up to see the little girl staring at the paper, intrigued at the fast movement of my pencil, although she couldn't see what I was drawing and didn't realise she was the subject of my scribbles. We caught each other's eyes and smiled, at which point she became shy and ducked back down into the booth, peeking out stealthily every now and then. Her mum and I giggled at her display and chatted about the joys of the changing seasons as we enjoyed our hot brews. I finished my sketch and decided it was time to head home, so started packing away my pencils, but as I went to put away my sketchbook I decided better of it, and carefully tore out the day's page.

As I passed the booth next door I

stopped and handed the little girl my sketch. "I drew this for you, to remember your day!" Her eyes lit up and she exclaimed "It's me!". She held it up for her mum to see, whose smile shone as she turned to me and silently mouthed "thank you". They huddled up to look at my sketch together and as I walked away I could hear the little girl ask "Mummy, can I be an artist when I grow up?" to which her Mum replied "Of course my little acorn, you can be anything you want to be. Let's do some drawing when we get home".

I smiled as I stepped out into the street, wrapping my scarf an extra loop around me in the blustery breeze. On my way home I took a detour through the park, purposefully wading my way through the crunchy leaves. It was joyous! I laughed as I realised not only had I inspired someone that day, but the little girl had inspired me too! I picked up a bright vermilion leaf as my souvenir, slipping it into the gap in my sketchbook left by the torn out page and then kicked my way through the autumn leaves the whole way home.

