

## ROSE BREAD

*By Abigail Rhoear*

In front of him stretched the wide avenue full of bustle and social whirlpools, inviting the walker to immerse himself in its rich culture and inquire into the evolution of its history. But he didn't have time for minorities, he told himself as he hurried to Le Madame Rouge cafe, because he had more important things to think about.

Five or six years before, perhaps, he would have noticed the tiny violet flowers that grew in the middle of the adversity that the black asphalt and the grayish sidewalk offered them as home; in the elderly couple in love who shared laughter and whispers as if the years did not weigh on their shoulders and carried on their lips the youth of life; in the curious plush stuffed animals with bright eyes that were displayed in the window of a cozy gift shop; or, even, in the group of laughing children, whose ages, heights and skin colors were as varied as wild flowers in a forgotten field. In other times, perhaps, with less uneasiness in his chest and more grace in his mind, he would have noticed all this. But of that light and playful soul there remained only the dying vestiges of what it once was.

No, now he was a baleful man in a suit with a briefcase that weighed on him like a mountain, however empty it was, whose grace of life faded from his eyes with disturbing quickness as his lips murmured troubles and his hand translated them to paper with perfect preciseness. Ironically, as the number increased, his content decreased. He was nothing more than a walking body without consciousness of its surroundings, without admiration for beauty, with a number inscribed on his forehead that, although very visible, few would have the ability to capture.

Le Madame Rouge enjoyed a privileged position on the corner of one of the busiest avenues in New York. Hundreds of customers frequented its elegant interiors every day, whose walls were dressed in varnished light wood, with touches of dark metal, hanging planters of the same color and overflowing red roses filling every corner. Warm lights stretched beneath the dark mahogany counter, where succulent French delicacies were on display, from a glittering *croissant* to a soft *crème brûlée*, as well as the vinized sandwiches and *baguettes* covered in icing and raspberry jelly. For any mortal, the exuberant amount of varied coffee preparations would have been too much, but for a lover of the dark brew it would have been paradise. The golden chandeliers with hanging prisms illuminated the rest of the space, giving it a sophisticated aura, as if the old air of past centuries had been transported to that place with all integrity. The curious floor covering, with square black and white ceramics, interposed as if it were a chessboard, inspired an ethereal combination of the golden ages of rock with the times of the French Revolution.

The man with the briefcase saw himself enveloped in that atmosphere as soon as he crossed the glass doors, intoxicated to his lungs with the delicious aroma that threatened to numb his senses. It was his moment of glory. Only then did his old version break the surface from the bottom and wander inside him like a bird of prey that suddenly sees itself in freedom.

