

Caffeinated

Jeannie Bruenning



PROLOGUE

If I hear my name one more time, I'm going to scream! Please, call me anything but my real name. Maybe Karen or Rachael or Phyllis... yes, that's it! I'm changing my name to Phyllis. Jenn no longer exists.

“Anyone seen Jenn?”

“No, she's disappeared.”

Yes, Jenn has disappeared. I'm gone, out of sight--out of mind. I'll just sit here with my eyes closed, and they will never find me. It works for kids. But I haven't disappeared. I'm in the back room of yet one more coffee shop getting ready to open, sitting on a stool among 16 cartons of 32 ounce hot cups #573. Seriously, who decided we needed 1500, 32 ounce hot cups for a store that's never served one drink before? These are going to last us a year!

“Jenn! Where are you? The driver wants to know where to put the 20 tables and 80 chairs? Anyone seen Jenn?”

Well, I say he can stick the tables and chairs wherever he pleases. I can't face another delivery driver after this morning's insanity. Imagine pulling up to a store with almost a ton of green coffee beans and expecting us to unload the truck. Imagine 32 fifty-pound bags of coffee on a truck with no back lift, not even a hand truck! How did he think we would get it off the truck? God, how did I get into this again? I said I was finished. I had opened my last store, and promised myself I'd never do it again.

“OK, now I’m nervous, no one has seen her? Jenn?”

“Check the patio.”

Whew! Yes, check the patio, maybe I’m out there enjoying a glass of wine or better yet, a Tequila Gimlet. Wouldn’t that be a lovely way to open a store? Gimlets for everyone! That would be magical. Wake up idiot, you know they’ll eventually find you. Unless--I can devise an escape plan. I get it... I know everyone is excited about getting the new store ready to open. Frankly, I am, too; or at least I was, but I’m exhausted. I can’t answer one more question or accept one more delivery.

I have to escape. I know, I’ll sneak out the back door, hop into my car, and take off! They’d see me peel off and come running out, chasing me down as I pull out of the parking lot and onto PCH 1. But I wouldn’t stop. I’d keep going until I found a beach and drive straight into the ocean. I doubt even that would stop them. As the car is filling up with salty water, I’d hear them yelling, “Jenn, before you drown, where do we put the grinder?” Sometimes the responsibility of managing another café feels like a life sentence. Unfortunately, it’s my life sentence. Crazier yet, I chose it. Someday, I’ll be found beside a coffee roaster in some coffee shop, slumped over, having taken my final breath, my heart giving out as I pour my last scoop of green beans into the hopper.

“Hey, Jenn, there you are!”

Busted.

The Perfect Cup

The freshest beans + filtered water = the perfect Inkwell Cup

2 level tablespoons for each six ounces of water.
Spread the grounds evenly in the coffee filter.
Water, preferably filtered, between 195 and 205 degrees.

Only brew once, grounds should never be reused.

