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## a little shop.

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My forever dream is about a little shop. My first little shop was something play-acted with friends and my brothers. When we moved it out to the end of our driveway, we sold lemonade because it seemed a rite of passage. But I didn't want to stop there. I made bracelets and hair clips. Once, my friends and I mixed up what we called an air freshener out of powders found in my bathroom. It smelled quite nice, and we sold it in plastic sandwich bags, tied up with twist ties. I started selling at craft fairs when I was a teenager. It was only a rented table in a community centre, but it felt like a little shop to me.

Today, mostly what I make is words. But sometimes I like to bake. I can sew. I knit, a bit. I make photographs and zines, and I know you want to try my pizza. I love tea, and it's hard to get a good cup in this world that loves coffee. I want to do all of that. I don't want to choose. There's not nearly enough life to leave any of your loves behind.

in the late '90s, racks stacked on top of one another, and just a single heat press behind the counter. They still sell the same random collection of late century nostalgia: pop culture heat transfers and custom letters on T-shirts, bags, whatever you want. But it's a franchise now, with three stores in the Lower Mainland and more around the world. Little doesn't last long in Vancouver.

### SOME LITTLE SHOPS WORTH VISITING

El Siete Mares  
3131 W Sunset Blvd  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

I'm lucky because my friends live up the hill in Silver Lake, making this tiny taco place one of my first stops when I visit LA. A shack in the parking lot of the sit-down restaurant, they serve the basics--ceviche, Jarritos, chips and salsa--and you eat outside. The fish tacos are so good, sometimes we eat them for breakfast.

I Heart Bikes  
1507 Lower Water St  
Halifax, NS B3J 1S5

The boardwalk runs four kilometres from Casino Nova Scotia to the Halifax Seaport Farmer's Market, with dozens of shops and restaurants in between. But my favourites

were built like freestanding sheds, selling photographs, souvenirs, local music, or renting bikes. I Heart Bikes started in one of these small wooden structures, painted bright Maritime fishing village colours. They've grown so big, now they're renting their bikes out of a lime green shipping container.

Fan Tan Alley  
Victoria, BC V8W 1W3

Between Pandora Avenue and Fisgard Street in Victoria's Chinatown is Fan Tan Alley. Only six-foot wide (at one point, it narrows to 35 inches), it's Canada's most narrow street and something of a tourist attraction. But it's also a place where contemporary artists and old traditionalists mix. In such a small space, you can find almost anything: a barber, a cafe, a textile artist, a record shop, and a place to buy Doc Martens.

Cherry Bomb  
841 Granville St  
Vancouver, BC V6Z1K7

The store is on Granville Street now, but it used to be around the corner and upstairs. It was a closet when I was buying T-shirts there

Beast & Brine Local Provisions  
Fieldstone Bakery  
12823 Crescent Rd  
Surrey, BC V4P 1J8

The name made us stop. Beast & Brine is a deli with housemade charcuterie, local oils and salts on the shelves, sandwiches made fresh to go, and their own T-shirts for sale. They don't need a lot of space because Fieldstones Bakery is right next door, if a customer wanted to buy some black pig prosciutto, Salt Spring Island goat cheese, then a fresh loaf of bread to go with it all for a picnic on the beach down the road.

I keep coming back to a hot summer's day, walking down the street in Halifax, and passing two girls sitting on the steps outside their Victorian walkup. Not kids. College-aged girls. They were selling drinks on the sidewalk. There are no lawns in the city. There are no driveways. But these two had set up their lemonade stand just the way I remember setting up mine in the housing co-op where I grew up. They were selling what looked like lemonade and iced tea, in tall clear plastic cups so you could see the ice and something green. If I was doing the same, something green would certainly be fresh mint.

It's audacious, but it's the kind of audaciousness I can wrap my head around. The days of selling door-to-door are done. The internet hasn't panned out the way we wanted. Retail space is expensive. I'm too polite to stop you in the street. But if you can find me, I'm sure there's something here you'll love.

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I don't need a lot of space. Just a little shop. Not a bakery or a gallery or a cafe or a bookstore, but all of them at once. An ever-changing shop. Like a food truck, except what we sell changes, instead of the location. People won't know what we're going to make next. Part of the fun is guessing. It'll be a grand opening every month. We'll throw a party, like a gala for the opening of a gallery. We'll have a bon voyage sale at the end, to clear out the products for the next idea. Ideas will repeat a lot, I'm sure. We have favourites, too. Some ideas, the best ideas, will become staples, and people will miss them when they're gone. Instead of bringing back the McRib, we'll bring back peach ice cream every August. You can't get it any other time, and you'll crave it all year. You'll tell your friends; you'll tell Twitter. The anticipation will build, and as soon as we open up our ice cream shop, a line of people is waiting. When summer is over, so is the ice

have to change it out faster. When we get tired of running a café, we'll do a month of sitting on our butts and writing. When the weather is beautiful, and we need to be outside, we'll grow herbs and sell pots. When we're stuck inside because it's too damn cold, we'll work on our lasagne recipe. (We make the pasta, too.) We'll make one big quilt over the course of a month and do it in the middle of the shop where everyone can see. You'll add a line of your own stitches. If you don't know how, I can teach you.

We'll make a zine at the end of every incarnation, with our recipes and what we learned, what sold and what didn't, and the best stories from the shop. You can buy the zines on our website, along with prints and patterns. Instead of a shop blog, we have a zine, and you can pick one up for free. Buy a subscription, and you'll get the zine, plus something else we made that month. Buy a subscription, and get the bread zine, as well

window box. There's a bright striped awning above, like a French cafe. Inside, we have a rack of homemade zines. Pick one up and browse. They're cheap, most people end up buying one when they only came in to browse. You can buy the prints on the walls. Come back next week when we're teaching basic mending. I'm behind the counter hand-sewing something right now. We have a kitchen in the back, and cookies are baking. They'll be ready in a minute.

as a free loaf.

If you want my oatmeal chocolate chip cookies, though, you have to come to the house. Because our little shop is like a tiny house. Like a garage. Doors opened wide in the summer, but we can close it up when it gets cold during the winter. A side door to the kitchen where you can buy ice cream, and pick up a takeaway lasagne, and order your Sunday bread delivery.

A little shop is the only way I could think to gather up all my disparate interests and do something real with them. This world wants you to pick a major, a career. It looks at you funny if you don't have a short answer to the question, "What do you do for a living?" I do a lot of things. Sit down, I'll put the kettle on, and tell you all about it. My little shop is an empty studio for my constant experimenting. We'll plan the season the way a theatre does. At the beginning of the year, we'll brainstorm what we're thinking about, what we're reading about, what we

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## Each month, each season, there will be a new name on the door.

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cream.

Like a pop-up shop, and it's different every time. Each month, each season, there will be a new name on the door. Cameron House Press isn't going anywhere. We'll still make zines. But you can't have the same name for a pizza place and a teahouse, a knitting group and an ice cream shop. A lifetime of dreaming of my little shop has meant a lifetime of imagining business cards and words painted on window. That's part of what I love making. That's my art, too. I write fiction, and I've written my little shop into stories when I couldn't write it into my own world. Creating identities, giving things titles and names, drawing logos is all part of my enjoyment about small business.

My little shop is only an idea. But it's an idea that lives. It's an idea that is always changing because we're always changing. Sometimes, we'll get excited about bread and keep baking all winter. Sometimes, the people won't love what we love, and we'll

want to try, make sure there's a good balance of food and goods, with a lot of events and workshops mixed in. The more we try, maybe the more people will try us. You come for the open mic night, but you stay because you love our concept, our aesthetic, our oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. You love our little shop. Because we change every season, we pick up new customers all the time. Oh, I thought this was a yarn store, but now they're making pizza. And who doesn't love pizza, honestly? When I was young, and even when I was too old, I couldn't picture what I would end up doing with my life. It looked like art, but it never quite looked like a job. It was probably going to be something so far away from what I ever imagined. Or it'll be exactly what I've been planning my whole life. It'll be a tiny shop. A narrow space on a side street, not too busy, but somewhere people walk and ride past. We have a bike rack out front. Herbs in the

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