

Beneath a Sheltering Sky

ate... it's been called many things... destiny, kismet or even luck. Call it what you will, but there is no denying it that most notably, in the presence of vintage doorknobs with holes for a skeleton key. The years have been good to my place. The few wrinkles, or rather, cracks that extend across its warm-colored walls show its gentle age.

For weeks I have been unpacking my life's belongings from cardboard boxes. Like playing an oversized board game, I place an emptied box where each piece of furniture will go. Every object tells me a story. Every frame holds a memory. With each day it comes closer to looking like the home I imagined. I love it. I love all of its idiosyncrasies and flaws. I love the feeling I have when I walk through its weathered door. I love that I can fall right to sleep never feeling scared. It's

walked away not knowing where my inside told me to wait. And so, I did. I almost took the other, but something another in hopes of finding a place. I shall of a home. I had been looking at discovering that bare but beautiful earlier in the evening, before the other side. I knew... I wanted to be standing on its archways and hardwood floors and in the shadows, I caught a glimpse of once, I imagined, a beautiful home. illuminated the skeleton of what was empty, dark room. The street light the adjacent window that framed an While standing there, I peered inside when I found myself on a doorstep. me one evening several weeks ago

60-second walk (I timed it). And if I lean my body to the left and stretch, I can see the ocean from the bedroom window. Better yet, I can even hear and smell the salty ocean breeze. It's a perfect beach cottage - small and cozy, but with lots of character. Remnants of a bygone era live on, but there is no denying it that most notably, in the presence of vintage doorknobs with holes for a skeleton key. The years have been good to my place. The few wrinkles, or rather, cracks that extend across its warm-colored walls show its gentle age.

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path would lead me. Little did I know it would only be steps away. It was a sign, literally, that stopped me. A small, nearly inconspicuous, sign with just a phone number. Although it was getting late, I decided to call. To my surprise a woman answered and agreed to come over and show me the place. So, here we are back at the doorstep. And here I am anxiously waiting for her to open the door to let me in. With the flick of a switch, the dark room came to life. It glowed with possibility. Flashes of my life, inside its walls, played before me like a slideshow. A surge of silly excitement came over me. This was it. Yes! This was my home. It's near the beach, just a

my shelter. My nook. My home. During a recent afternoon walk, while exploring the surrounding area, I happened upon another "home" - The Covenant House. Like many others, I was familiar with its name, but didn't really know what it was. Its unassuming building sits among the structures of Fort Lauderdale Beach. I wondered what was beyond its doors. Founded in 1985 in Fort

children in need... is now a neighbor to me and my home. Ever since that afternoon, I have wondered about the lost children. How will they find their way to the Covenant House? But, the thing that stands out most in my mind is the thought of what it must be like to not have a home. For more information on the Covenant House Florida, call 954.561.5559 or visit www.covenanthousefl.org.

Lauderdale, Covenant House provides help to homeless, runaway, and throwaway youth. Throwaway, I had to read this twice. How could a child be thrown away? I kept reading. Food, clothing and shelter for a night is given freely with no questions asked, no strings attached for any hurting or homeless youth who knocks on its door. What about the other nights? I read on. Once a youth, decides to stay, the staff begins the hard, day-to-day work of building a plan for the future. Promising, yes, but there are no guarantees. Hurting, Homeless, Throwaway. These words are attached to children. Not that this problem was a revelation to me, but to read it, to have it there in print, made it all the more real. And, this place... a place devoted to



Photo by Tahethia Mladica

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