

My Peaceful Place: A Collection of Stories and Pictures to Comfort and Heal

Renee Heiss

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An enjoyable short story and image collection, My Peaceful Place reminds us that no obstacle is too big to overcome with the right mindset.

My Peaceful Place: A Collection of Stories and Pictures to Comfort and Heal by Renee Heiss is a compassionate, introspective approach to inspirational literature.

Billed as a means for those who are isolated (such as hospital patients) to dwell on positivity and beauty during dark times, *My Peaceful Place* is a collection of short stories and natural, calming images. From a lonely florist traveling to Italy to connect with her lineage in “Spello Flower Festival” to a woman journaling about her grandson who has recently been deployed to the Middle East in “Morning Tea,” each piece is intended as a reminder that no matter how difficult or painful life can get, the situation will always get better.

In addition to natural images included as points of reference for each piece (for example, an image of a red barn flanked by snow for “The Old Red Barn” and a vivid collection of rain boots with flowers growing out of them for “The Rainbow Boots”), other calming images are also included, interspersed throughout the text.

The encouragement to introspection is a common theme throughout. Images are meant to evoke a familiar sense of calm, but the text, through highly relatable stories and inspirational passages, also fosters a sense of reflection, urging the audience to ruminate on the positive aspects of their lives.

At a concise 140 pages, *My Peaceful Place* is a quick read, meant to be a point of reference for inspiration. Unlike many short story collections, each piece is wholly different from the last, with a unifying theme of positivity connecting the group. For example, protagonists April, May, and June in “The Bridal Path” deal with rejection, loss, and, ultimately, redemption in the face of a brutal breakup while Solomon, Sarah, Maybelle, and Mack try to escape the bondage of slavery in “The Blue Shutters.”

Heiss’s writing style is easy to parse, light and uncluttered without too much detail. Plots are accessible, both straightforward and uncomplicated. The objective of providing an uplifting, satisfying series is reached.

The design of *My Peaceful Place* is a success, with images prompting feelings of calm and reflection. The stories lend themselves to being read over and over, different interpretations materializing with each read. Images also aid the book’s delightful brightness, making it hard to put the collection down.

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AMANDA ADAMS (August 26, 2017)

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