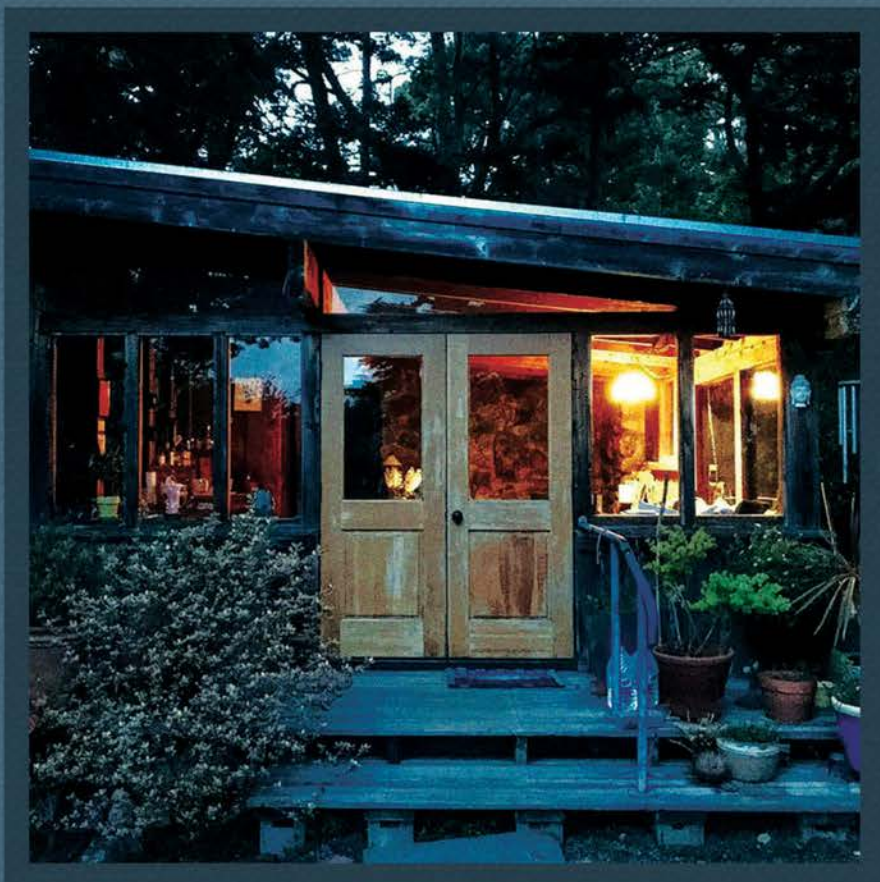


LIZ BELL YOUNG



let there be
HAVENS

AN INVITATION TO GENTLE HOSPITALITY

Some books stir your soul in ways you didn't know you needed. Their stories crack you open only to piece you back together more whole than before, tucking within more hope, more light, more *why*. This is one of those books, and Liz is one of those storytellers. These pages are a haven of their own.

KAILA LUNA, writer; executive editor of *Magnolia Journal*

With ancient and original ideas, and imagery celebrating the everyday sublime, this book will leave you feeling that you have everything you need to live well—starting today. It's a beautiful and compassionate take on not just how to live, but how to *be*. Original, uncategorizable, indispensable.

SOPHIE DOW DONELSON, author of *Uncommon Kitchens* and *Style Secrets: What Every Room Needs*; former editor in chief of *House Beautiful*

A few months ago, on a difficult afternoon, I closed my laptop and brought this beautiful book outside with me. The book and I settled under a tree on a cold, sunny fall day, and Young's warmhearted writing and lovely photographs revived and inspired me. Connection, beauty, hospitality, and creativity spring up from every page, and I found myself making a list in my head of all the women with whom I want to share this special book.

SHAUNA NIEQUIST, *New York Times* bestselling author of *I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet* and *Present Over Perfect*

As beautiful as it is touching, this book is what our overwhelmed and disconnected world needs—a reminder that we are worthy of being taken care of and that we deeply need true connection with one another. It's a call to return to the simplicity of creating warm homes and safe spaces that allow others to be vulnerable and feel supported. Liz's poetic and beautiful storytelling, paired with practical how-tos, recipes, and interactive surprises, makes *Let There Be Havens* a delightful page-turner. I highly recommend this to anyone who needs a lift to reawaken their gift of hospitality.

SARAH DUBBELDAM, founder and chief creative officer of *Darling* magazine and Darling Clothing

In *Let There Be Havens*, Liz Bell Young has probed a myriad of her own stirring life memories to write a deeply thoughtful collection of essays, each one of which stands on its own as a paean to the meaning of hospitality. I found myself relating to many of her personal stories and resonating with the emotional discovery that ties them all together—the Golden Rule of hospitality: to do unto others as you believe *they* want done unto them.

DANNY MEYER, author of *Setting the Table: The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business*; New York City restaurateur; and founder and executive chairman of the Union Square Hospitality Group

Early on in my career, Liz taught me one of the most important truths about creating hospitable spaces: it's more impactful to make people feel seen and known than to seek perfection. People remember how you make them feel—not how much money you spend. This book is a testament to that genuine intentionality.

JENNY BUKOVEC, award-winning hospitality designer, featured in *Architectural Digest*, *Vogue*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*

I am not a natural haven maker, so on a practical level this book has given me confidence and much-appreciated tools. But what draws me back again and again stirs beneath the surface of Young's writing. Her designs are not merely designs, her daydreams not just a few stolen hours of enjoyment. She connects us with a deeper world that's easy to miss in the hustle of everyday life, a world I want to stay in—with her—as long as I can.

ANNA MITCHAEAL, author of *They Will Tell You the World Is Yours*

Liz made a book into an actual haven. As soon as I opened it, I found her spirit of hospitality embodied in the pages. This book invites the reader first to be seen, known, and valued. Then it woos you to do the same for others.

CHUCK MINGO, pastor and author of *Living Undivided: Loving Courageously for Racial Healing and Justice*

How do you judge a book, if not by its cover? Even more truly, if not by its title? Deeper still, if not by its author? This work captures the longing of a mother's heart to welcome readers to their beloved place at the table. Feast on chapters infused with love, conviction, and desire. What we need more of in this world are homes filled with intention and deep, joy-filled, sacrificial love. Liz serves a timely meal between these pages. Read slow, read true. And know this: you were made for home.

ENIOLA ABIOYE, musical artist and author

Whether planning and building her dream home or accepting, at a time of great stress, a piece of chocolate from a "stranger-neighbor," Liz Bell Young shows us both how to recognize and how to create the havens, with their love and calm, we so need to sustain each of us in this challenging and frenetic world. *Let There Be Havens*, with its exquisite prose and striking photographs, is itself a haven, a place we can go to again and again for respite, guidance, and renewal.

ELLIOT RUCHOWITZ-ROBERTS, author of *White Fire: Poems*; coauthor of *Bowing to Receive the Mountain: Essays by Lin Jensen/Poems by Elliot Roberts*

Let There Be Havens is the book I've needed the last few years and didn't know it until I opened the first page. With breathtaking visuals, heartfelt wisdom, and a touch of sweetness through recipes, Liz has created a guide to crafting spaces of love and tranquility, making this book an indispensable companion for anyone seeking to create a life full of sanctuaries and connection. The book itself is a haven I will excitedly revisit many times over.

AMANDA SUDANO RAMIREZ, musical artist and songwriter, Johnnyswim

Liz writes beautifully and profoundly. But more importantly, she's right. Our world needs more havens. This book helps you envision a changed world, one haven at a time.

RUSSELL TOWNER, president of LEE Furniture Industries

It is a rare and precious gift to dream and create with an artist who has an ear so finely tuned to the whisper of the unspoken but deeply felt desires buried in our bones that she can, without a word, simply know what you need and then create a space for you to experience it. This is the magic of creating alongside Liz. With grit and poetry, Liz sees right into the soul of a place, a person, a space. Just like everything she creates, this beautiful book will awaken hearts, unveil new dreams, and empower us all to be haven makers in our own lives.

JENNIE DVORJAK CHACÓN, writer and director of *Awaited*; cofounder and pastor of Woman Camp

Whenever I read this book, my heart soaks up its gentle beauty and light, and my shoulders drop three inches. I let my breath out. And I find myself easing back into my chair, back into that sense of safety that only comes with the spirit of abundance. Liz has composed this living lullaby of a book according to the same code by which she lives: there is enough daily margin for each of us, there is more than enough to share, and as we do, our own cups of joy are doubled to overflowing.

CHARIS DIETZ, author; writing professor at Baylor University; former senior editor of *Magnolia Journal*



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LIZ BELL YOUNG



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PART 1

In the Beginning

- 2 What I Want to Be
- 9 Pick Up a Placeholder
- 10 On Your Doorstep
- 18 Beaming
- 20 Italy Comes with War and Chocolate
- 25 Hospitality with What You Have
- 30 **RECIPE:** Coffee off the Stove, Apples, and Parm
- 33 All Is Quiet in the Highlands
- 34 **HOW TO:** Make a Guest Space
- 36 Sibyl Gave Me a Bicycle
- 39 Not the Saviors Here
- 40 Two People in the Grocery Store
- 43 Dad Gave It Away
- 44 **HOW TO:** Make Hospitality Bags
- 46 Returning What's Been Lost
- 48 **RECIPE:** Little Cakes

Contents

PART 2

Breaking Ground

- 52 Land
- 73 Practice Landings
- 74 Tents, Carts, Conversations—and All the Havens in Between
- 80 To Start: 11 × 17
- 89 Then: Index Cards
- 90 Rolls of Paper and Sacrificial Content
- 94 Create Little Scenes
- 99 **HOW TO:** Make Kits
- 104 Put It All on the Table
- 108 **HOW TO:** Feed Five Hundred Women in the Woods
- 112 **RECIPE:** Honey Butter in Jars
- 114 In the Middle of It
- 117 Giving People Their Safe
- 119 Elbow Grease
- 120 **HOW TO:** Work Up a Good Sweat
- 123 Bowls and Chairs and Pockets
- 126 Garages Work Too
- 128 Let People Wander
- 130 Gravel, Because It Sounds Beautiful
- 134 Place Mats
- 136 **RECIPE:** Aperol Spritz and Wood Chips

PART 3
Coming Home

- 140 Runaway Bunnies
148 To Build a House
153 Epsom Salts at the Gas Station
156 Broken Eggs
160 When You Lose Someone
164 **RECIPE:** Giovanna's Milk
166 Opening Early
170 **RECIPE:** Sage-Orange Focaccia with Honey, Black Pepper,
and Rosemary Olive Oil
174 Daydreaming
176 **HOW TO:** Make Friends and Dinner
182 Brides
186 Holy Bins
189 Let There Be Havens

191 Acknowledgments





PART 1

in the
BEGINNING

What I Want to Be

WE WERE ALL HUNCHED AROUND A TABLE, a bunch of young art school students with riotous hearts. The room was perched at the top of a tall school building over the crowds and carts and fumes of Chicago.

Our professor had a name like Rosemary or Rosary; I can't remember anymore. But what I remember is the question she asked: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

I knew she wasn't being rhetorical or condescending, and I must have known she wouldn't let us off the hook. She folded her wrinkled hands together, looked us all in the eyes, and waited.

Some of us looked down at our own fluttering hands, our empty laps, then finally at each other—maybe for someone to preapprove or cheer for whatever dream was roaring inside of us.

A few students seemed more eager to answer than others. Maybe they had a response on the tip of their tongues, had practiced it with parents or peers. One student said something about a cinematic masterpiece, another about the next great novel, another about Los Angeles and turning the tide. Brave things—the things we were at that tall city school to learn how to create—the things we'd pined for or promised ourselves would be worth it.

As those dreams were spoken out loud by the classmates around me, I felt my insides cracking. I knew what I was going to say because I couldn't possibly say anything else—because nothing else would have been the truth. I was the last one to speak.

"I want to be a mother." I exhaled. And dropped off the face of the earth.

The professor caught my eye as I was falling. And I stayed with her for a second, while the space in the room after I spoke didn't get filled by affirmations or further questions. I thought, *I am supposed to be here because, more than anything, I want to be an artist, make books. I am wasting everything. What is wrong with me?*

But I did want to write books. I *do* want to. I dream endlessly about sheaves of paper, collections of words and stories. I've made paper-clipped and hand-sewn books since I was a child and imagined the rest of my life as a writer, a novelist, a woman with a pen. But there, at that point in my life, I was getting knotted up and lost—in melancholy, in heaviness. The stories I was writing were tanking my heart, and I worried they would tank others' hearts too. I didn't want it anymore. I had slid in sideways and now felt stuck in a hole that was not good for others, not good for me.

I want to pick apples off trees and dream in full sun. I want to tuck children into bed. I want to help people when they're sad, tell them I understand, hand them something beautiful to wrap their hands around. I want to fix things and tidy things and put out placemats for dinner. I want to stack firewood and sweep porches and row boats. Bake a cake or two. Love an entire family both inside our home and outside of it.

I still want to write books and tell stories, but I've finally figured out why: as a way to take care.



I believe we need to mother this world back into light—to lift one another out of the darker edges and back into this gift-song of existence, one by one. Because if we aren't nourished, we wilt and fight for scraps. If we aren't held and guided and steadied, we eventually crumble. If we don't have safe spaces to release our burdens and share our brilliant dreams, we turn to things that were never meant to hold them.

We need people, places, and experiences that bring us home, feed our hopes, rock us to sleep, then wish us well in the morning as we go back into the world and find others who need what we were just given.

Some of us have never experienced havens for ourselves, but we long for them. Maybe we want our lives to be different—gentler, more at peace, more genuinely connected to others—but haven't figured out how to get there.

We can all get there.

None of us is disqualified from this effort or starting too late. None of us has fallen too far off the path to be able to step back in. You have what it takes to take care of others. You are worth being taken care of yourself.


That day in school, after I had admitted to my class what I wanted to become, the professor of roses left me a note. She scrawled it on top of one of my short stories but stapled over it, so I had to pry off the metal to see. In that tiny space, she wrote, "I want to be a mother too."

I wonder if at some point we all wander into the same place, longing to shelter and be sheltered, to love and be loved, to make havens and live inside them.

I believe so.







HAVENS ARE PEOPLE WHO SHELTER US,
PLACES THAT HOLD US,
EXPERIENCES THAT LIFT US UP.