

Over Coffee

Life is the scam a man on the internet once lured me into. There's no shortcut with a free money route. There's no genie in a bottle. There's no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It's all just a coverup. The only real treasure is found in the work done.

That's what runs in my mind while I enter Café Lux, taking my usual seat across the room near the window. My laptop slams onto the table followed by my open bag, spilling overdue assignments. Pen finding purchase in my hand, I begin to write up notes from my previous lectures. Multiple red alerts scream at me from my desktop, making me fight with the headache it causes, to depart from me.

Not long after dishing out my papers, a hot Café latte squeezes into the mix. Entering the accounting details of customers into the data system and assignment research flood my headspace. Trailing close behind are two cups, unknowingly providing the energy I need. Half conscious, half drowning in the workload, I will my latte stuffed body to complete at least half of it. That way I can leave before they close the café and have to chase me out of it.

Incomplete work and the seat by the window soon become my only companions. Another being my usual sweet, hot drink that bullies my mind and body to function. The ringtone of my phone distracts me, resulting in being silenced. Although the incessant flashing of faces lights up the screen. Switching it off, I promise to call my family and friends once I've finished my work. I make that promise everyday for two weeks.

The twentieth of May, a man sits on my table. He has smiling, kind eyes and a bright smile that's as contagious as the plague. We nod and smile at each other in greeting. He speaks no words to me as he opens the two books he brought with him. A few highlighters and a stack of napkins reside in the small space left on the table. A glistening glass of water soon joins in. Ignoring my mess and the little space I've left him, he underlines a sentence in one book and writes in the other which I presume is a journal.

It's been a week and I abhor this man. Everyday at the same time I arrive, I find him sitting at my table. Usual smile plastered on, he greets me whilst I hurl my abused body on the chair. I nod and flash a sad attempt of a smile. Diving back into the usual routine, I try to ignore this silent invader. Yet his presences begs for my attention.

I do not know how to get rid of this man. When I hide his chair, he just stands there. When I leave no space on the table, he uses his lap instead. Even when I fake spilling my latte twice by accident, he helps me clean up the mess. Nevertheless he does something unexpectedly nice for me. Be it ordering me a small meal, or organising my papers. He even hands me a five dollar note when I leave the café, and despite my refusal he always insists with that infuriatingly radiant, quiet smile of his. Equally he too refuses all of my kind gestures although I stubbornly insist as well. I do not know what bothers me most. His insufferable quiet journaling or his suffocating patience and kindness.

Then came the week from hell. Lecturers give me the last warnings on late submissions. My boss riots on my unfinished workloads and my family breathe down my neck about sacrificing myself to it all. I just want to drown in the poisonous elixir of my latte. Fortunately, a miniature explosion entangled with a trail of smoke, erupts from the coffee machine the moment I make my order.

Frustrated wells of water pour down my face. Head pressed down on the keyboard, I let frustration and stress tear through me. I'm not sure how long I sat there breaking apart. I'm not sure how my roommate came and took me home. I only know that my strange coloniser sympathetically patted

my hand, laid his glass of water next to it and added a folded piece of paper too. I only remember watching him stand up, smile assuringly at me and walking out of the café.

Now at home drenched in self pity, I remember the little note. I rummage through my bag, find it and drill over it's words. Something like shock and heartache slither into me as I read.

“ Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I start to pray again and soon enough my life begins to change. Within a dedicated week at home, I complete all my tasks. My lecturers note all my assignments as complete and my boss gives me time to go on holiday. In this free time I spend it with my loved ones and gain healthier lifestyle habits. Still my peculiar friend's note is ever stained on my brain.

A fortnight of peace and joy, I return to the café. Excited to thank this silent kind stranger of mine, I enter the café grinning from ear to ear. However, a pool of disappointment springs up in me when I see our unoccupied table. Dismissing his absence in thoughts of him just being elsewhere for once, I sit down and order my usual latte. Yet to my surprise the waiter delivers a glass of water with a folded napkin underneath.

Life is human nature to depend on oneself or a thing. Just like I depended on my own wits and a silly cup of coffee. I realise how foolish it all is as I unfold the napkin and relish it's contents. This time with tears of joy overwhelming me. With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.