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Flash Narrative

Coughfee

“This tastes funny...” I thought as I took a sip of my coffee. “This is my coffee right?” I looked down and read my name on the cup. “Maybe I grabbed someone else’s with the same name on accident...” I looked around at the other people in the dimmed, quiet coffee shop. Everyone was on their laptops writing novels or screenplays in hopes they would go somewhere. No one seemed as perplexed as I was. I even looked at the barista to make sure she wasn’t staring me down because she knew that I was dumb enough to take the wrong cup.

“But wait, if someone had the same name as me, wouldn’t someone have walked up to the counter by now? Wouldn’t they have checked with the barista wondering where their drink was? So this must be mine. This has to be my drink. It has my name on it and what I ordered... So why does it taste so weird?” I took another sip, but this one was worse, it tasted like someone boiled a cup of the Great Salt Lake to a dry powder and dumped it into my drink. It made me gag a little bit. I looked up and I saw the barista looking at me.

That’s when it hit me, I thought to myself: “I’ve been poisoned! The barista has poisoned my drink and was waiting for me to collapse! It all makes sense why my drink tastes this way. I can’t believe it! Why, oh why, would someone want to poison me?” “Wait, why would someone want to poison me? I have no quarrel with anyone. I barely even know the barista’s name! So no, I was not poisoned.”

“But why does my drink taste so foul? What if they used expired milk? Am I going to die because I’m drinking spoiled milk?” “No that can’t be so. Even if it is spoiled, I’ll probably only

get a little sick.” I walked up to the counter and inquired the barista, “Hey, my coffee tastes like a mule’s butt, I just want to make sure the milk you guys used isn’t expired or spoiled or anything.” The barista noted that it shouldn’t be, but that she would double check. She came back and told me: “The milk is fine, but if your coffee isn’t tasting right, I can remake it for you.” “That’ll be fine,” I said. “Cream and sugar?” Asked the barista. “Four of each,” I responded.

I took the initial sip and everything tasted fine, but it could probably have used more sugar. I walked over to the self-serve counter where they had all the different varieties of creams, sugars, and spices and I dumped a few pours of sugar into my drink. I tasted the drink once more and I started gagging, choking on my own coffee. I thought to myself: “Oh no, someone replaced the sugar with rat poison!” I kept coughing over and over again as the taste of burning lava was throbbing around my throat while constantly thinking: “I’m going to die at the hands of an anonymous mass coffee shop killer!”

My coughing started to settle down as the barista came over and asked if I was all right. “No! I am not all right! Someone replaced the sugar with rat poison! Or some kind of poison!” I said. The barista looked at me funny, walked over to the sugar, and attempted to hide her giggling. “This is salt,” she said. “You were pouring salt into your coffee and you must have choked while you were trying to swallow the salty beverage.” Realizing the mistake I had made and the commotion I’d caused, I felt extremely embarrassed. I realized that I shouldn’t let my anxiety run amuck but be more reasonable in my thinking. Then it hit me, “Why the hell does a coffee shop have salt in the first place?”