

The Perils of Coffee

by *Natasha Ryan*

Most people don't consider going out for coffee with someone dangerous. You set up a date, pick a place, buy that Irish Cream or espresso and usually open up to your companion a bit—couple secrets, insights, and a certain minimum of dialogue. This is where the peril begins.

Telling anyone anything real about yourself is always a tad of a risky proposition regardless, but this is more intimate. Private table in public surroundings, conversation as long as the time it takes to indulge in that liquid luxury.

Let's say I invited you to partake in this ritual with me. Invariably it is for one of the following reasons: I find you intriguing and would like to get to know you better or we haven't talked in a while and I'm curious about what you've been up to. Nice, formal stimulation for a rendez-vous but, a friendly chat is all I desire from you.

If this takes you by surprise let me add a boundary to things. I'm not usually after anything physical, or further manipulation. Essentially, I can draw all I need from you in this one session. You'll leave with your body fully intact, it's only your mind and experience that I crave.

Of course, I can't completely rob you of these. They won't go home in my bag or brain instead of yours.

I once tried to explain this to someone. Sorting it out in his own mind he likened the encounter to taking out a library book. I borrow you for reading material. My card or device being my coffee. Your thoughts through your lips to your coffee to my coffee to my lips and a speedy trip to my essence. Thanks for the vision.

To put all this in perspective, let's say I accompany about an average of two of these interesting people out a week. Assuming I was pretty bland to begin with imagine all the creative data I have managed to collect over time. It is similar to continually adding ingredients to flour until you end up with chocolate chip cookies. The theory works for me, but maybe now you're wondering why this is dangerous.

I suppose to your overall health, it's not. But think again. You leave our little date and realize you've learned minute if not negligible amounts about me. Fine, I already mentioned I wasn't that fascinating to begin with, but, you have left me with a great deal of easily acquired information. A portion of your life's mental savings. I've now obtained a fragment of your personality and selected parts of it to add to my own. These parts are no longer unique to you alone. I have part ownership and you received nothing in return (you probably paid for your own coffee too). Copying a classmate's homework on a grander scale.

Don't take this as a harangue to terminate these outings because that's not my intention. Quitting or saving yourself is impossible for the social caffeine junkie. Just keep in mind that once you open yourself up to others you might not be able to close, and over coffee, nothing is sacred.

Keep a close watch on your mental valuables because often that's all you've got.

In the end, along with all the other indulgences we've been warned against, even good old reliable coffee and conversation isn't safe anymore.

Intellectual Development

Whispering breezes
speak of loneliness
as I attempt repossession
of a life long passed on.

At one interval
in my confusing life
I was indeed happy—
to a certain degree.

I must attempt to understand
the intellectual concept
behind curiosity.

Why are we
and what makes us interested
in the welfare
of others?

I guess
compassionate contemplation
is an inborn characteristic
inherited at all levels
from humans to humans.

It is interesting to note:
some animals are wise enough
to imitate this
to a certain degree
according to
things I have witnessed.

Todd Goyetche

