# Worshipping the Bean at the Golden Cup Café

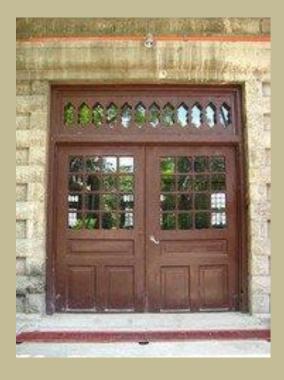
By Anne J. Fotheringham





# The Quest

Parka-clad, Fur-trimmed, Wallowing Like a drunken bear, Stumbling over Dirty snow banks Without finesse, Heavy-shod feet Slipping, Sliding On ice-covered streets, Mumbling to myself, Damning the weather, Cursing the cold, Miserable and shivering, I plod onwards, A hint of warm, Coffee-scented air Teasing my frozen nose. I raise my head, Spy my destination And scuttle, slip, slide Until I reach Nirvana. A warm café rescues me From this Arctic day.



# The Siren's Call

You know you want to, want to open my frosted glass doors, push down on the so-called antique brass handle, step into my warmth, and inhale the seductive aroma of the roasted bean. You can't resist it. try as you might. You take two steps away only to be jostled by someone exiting with a paper cup full of tantalizing elixir. Step inside. It waits for you, brewed with love by the beautiful barista who thinks of her lover's caress as she ladles thick cream onto steaming cups and showers them with shavings of delight. Take this cup from her, sit down at the tiny table meant for two but barely big enough for one, Only sipping is permitted. Let the hot fluid roll around your mouth, across your tongue, awaking every taste bud with its touch. Sit and enjoy this little piece of heaven, this ambrosia we cherish as we greet each new day.



#### The Barista's Song

"Sin, sister, I whisper. "Go ahead and sin, sister." You stand there in your drab coat, flat shoes, a touch of pink at your throat that belies your holy state. You finger that purse strap as if it were a rosary. Yes, say a prayer, sister. Come worship at the altar of The Bean. Rich, dark,

its essence surrounds your soul with hints of vanilla, cinnamon, promises of chocolate, steaming milk, lascivious cream. Sin, sister, sin away. Indulge in captivating cappuccino, luscious latte. Let your tongue savor the delights of mocha and spice. Let your trembling hands cradle that cup of comfort. Dip deep with the biscotti and experience the melt-in-your-mouth joys of forbidden food. Take that step now, sister. It's your turn. Don't disappoint me. Don't waver." Silently, you mouth your choice, then blurt it out: "French vanilla cappuccino with cream and chocolate shavings." "YES," I cry. "Thank you, sister. Thank you for sinning. Have a great day."



#### **Time Stealers**

Two precious women, each unique and yet not so, sit sipping the fancy elixir and dishing their friends. I wish for your designer suits, your leather shoes, your Lexus in the parking lot. I wish for the hours you will take to sit here while time passes, time I cannot spare. I stand here in this lineup, laden down by purse and briefcase, sweating in my winter coat, hoping my armpits won't betray me if I take my jacket off at work. The line inches forward and I am stalled in front of fancy pastries that dare me to indulge. The two ladies in the corner nibble at biscotti and chew on their friends' reputationsfine food for a morning's kaffeeklatsch. Finally I pay for my coffee and negotiate the doorway, balancing coffee and my life in two inadequate hands. While I answer phones and run the photocopier, those two women will be running down the entire female population of their social set, While I, who have the need for time, time to write and do and be, will be stuck here at this desk. I shake my head and make a note to self: "Buy an extra lottery ticket tonight."



#### **Cold Cups**

She sits silently in front of cold cups, her coffee long gone, the light of afternoon dying outside the window.

She taps away at a laptop, mindless of the people passing with their heavy trays. She will keep her seat until closing, then go, who knows where? Does she walk the street at night? Does she have a home? Each day I see her here, tapping away, no matter how early I arrive.

Perhaps, one day I will read her book. She'll be world famous and I'll regret not getting to know her, not filling one of those cold cups with friendship. Or perhaps, she's just lonely and shy, and plays solitaire all day to make the sadness go away.



## **Coffee Date**

At a coffee shop table, two people sit, sipping lattes between laughter.

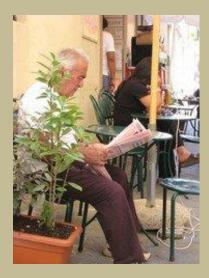
"He's cute, sounds smart. Maybe he's be a good date for the Museum Ball," thinks the grey business suit. Her hand fiddling with the gold charm dangling from her throat, she works hard to lure him into her web.

"Looks cute, hope she's not too smart. Maybe I'll get laid," thinks the gold shirt and chinos. Leaning forward, he works hard at being sensitive and a good listener, hoping to score.



#### **Coffee Shop Showoff**

Look at my fancy cell phone, shiny shoes, designer leather coat. I am rich. I am successful. I flash my titanium laptop with its 17-inch super screen. I shout into my cell phone and tap the keyboard of my tablet with the authority of God God drives to work in a Honda Civic, five years old with two holes in the rear panel. He's off to his job at the appliance store. But first, a coffee at the Golden Cup. He slips into the parking lot hoping no one will recognize his face. Safely parked in the back row, he scuttles, then strides and, as he nears the shopping mall door, in full character he prances inside, skirts the local bag lady and her nemesis the security guard, enters the café and waits for all to know he is here. Important in his own eyes, he interprets others' cold shoulders as jealousy and smiles to himself. He reads his Wall Street Journal and sips his double double chocolate latte allongé a la creme. Later, he will sweep out, sneak off to his aging car, speed down the highway to his job, and spend his day selling refrigerators to people like me.



## Waiting game

Not wanted in the café, not suitably dressed, not part of the trendy crowd, the old man nurses a steaming cup. He fingers through a foreign newspaper, its alien language out of place in this café. He waits and sips, holding his table against all comers, ignores the busboy who wipes his table twice. Slowly, the morning crowd thins. Still he sits. "waiting for a friend," he says. He orders another cup of brewed pleasure and reads, while the busboys chatter and the baristas clean their machines. He's been waiting for a long time. Every day, I see him there. Where is his friend? I wonder. The old man turns a page and sips onward. I shrug and go my way. Perhaps his friend will come tomorrow.



#### Look out world

The ladies of a certain age gather at the coffee shop, bemoan their boring days with spouses who have retired to La-Z-Boy heaven.

For these ladies of a certain age the future holds nothing but complaints and "what ifs," a string of mutters and huge sighs.

I will not accept that. I have waited for this time, this new life after career and motherhood.

Do. Act. Seek. I urge my friends to put down the coffee cups and go out to meet the day.

Be very afraid world The ladies of a certain age are coming out to play!



# **Lonely Latte**

Warm coffee-scented morning where whispered newspapers rustle while the music plays. Strangers melded into a tableau straight out of tourist brochuressip their favorite brew. Your chair is empty now. I share this table with my coffee cup, my pen, this scrap of paper. No hand reaches for mine, no smile greets me. Another workday, a mindless voyage to the weekly pay cheque, begins as I pay my bill and leave. I step out, leave the café's coffee-scented cocoon, and shiver in the sudden chill. I race to my car and turn up the heater. Driving to my office, my feet are warm, as are my hands. Inside my chest, I nurse an iceberg, Where once fire and passion carried me through snowstorms from hell. And yet, each morning, I return to The Golden Cup, same table, same latte, hoping for a glimpse of your empty cup.

# About Anne J. Fotheringham:



Anne J. Fotheringham is a Montreal-based writer and editor, who has published a children's book, fiction, short stories, poetry and non-fiction. A career communications professional, she is a graduate of McGill University and Seton Hill University in Pittsburgh.

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