

A Morning Mocha in Unfamiliar Surroundings

“Are you hanging out or taking this to go?” Barista 1 asks as I pay for my \$4.75 iced mocha. “Oh, I’ll be here for a while,” I respond.

Barista 1 proceeds to ring me up as Barista 2 starts to make my iced mocha. Barista 1 has wavy brown hair styled into a middle part that sits about an inch under his collar bone. He has a well-groomed mustache and beard which both stay close to his face. I failed to take note of his attire, but from what I remember it was the type of artsy clothing that you would expect a man with wavy brown middle-parted past-collarbone-length hair to sport. Barista 2 has a less interesting description: bald white male with a longer reddish-brown beard and bright blue eyes. They both stand behind a four-foot wooden bar cluttered with at least four different types of coffee machines.

After paying, I walk to the only vacant area in the shop where four stools are lined up against the left wall in front of the door. I seat myself closest to the bar as Barista 2 hands me my drink: a clear glass with ice floating in a dark brown pool of espresso seated on top of a layer of lighter colored creamy chocolate milk. I mix the two shades of brown until they find a compromise and take a sip allowing the bitterness of the coffee and sweetness of the milk to dance in perfect harmony on my taste buds.

The walls in front of and behind me are covered with pieces of art, a scientific chart showing the anatomy and morphology of the coffee plant, and a map showing the distribution of coffee in the first and second centuries. I awkwardly turn myself away from the wall to look into the open space.

A large window of glass with the words “Redhawk Coffee” leaves the store on exhibit for the outside world. Natural lighting pours in assisted by eight large bulb lights hanging from the ceiling. One young adult sits at each of the three tables in front of the glass storefront, all working on their sticker-covered laptops. I am definitely on a college campus. Two identical white, circular tables are set with one behind the other running parallel to the third long table which sits on the right wall. Each white table is surrounded by a red chair, a brown chair, and a short white stool adding to the quirky un-uniform feel of the shop.

Relaxed lo-fi beats play as background music to Barista 1's conversations with friends and patrons who stand near the bar. His topics range from Netflix murder documentaries to the "fucking asshole" Tom Brady who "aggressively makes out with his son" to coffee beans that the shop has from El Salvador which are "so symmetrical it's sexy."

The scene stays in this same comforting rhythm with students studying and baristas babbling as I take the final sip of my mocha. The chalkboard above the door tells me to have a nice day, and I walk through to the other side of the glass, no longer participating in Redhawk Coffee's display.