

## **Coffee Stains**

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Published in *Oak Tree Review*, a Spring Arbor University literary journal that publishes fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction.

Coffee stains on mahogany wood,  
Faded brown remnants of  
Good conversation and laughs.  
You always gave me coffee even though  
You said I was too young.  
I didn't really care for the taste,  
But I liked our visits,  
So I drank anyway.  
Your eyes would always twinkle  
As you told me stories of your time in the military,  
Wisdom spewing from your lips like  
Sugary creamer into my soul.

You were happy,  
But that ceased abruptly when  
The love of your life  
Left you behind for  
A better land and took your joy with her.

“I was on the base for two years. Never shot anyone, though,” you began one afternoon  
as I sipped my slightly burnt coffee, loaded with too much cream to disguise the bitter tang. I sat

looking at your crinkled face, your subtly sad eyes told many stories that your lips could barely stand to say.

“This one time, though, I snuk up behind my buddy and pressed the barrel of my gun right up against his back. He about soiled his pants,” you chuckled to yourself, recalling the incident; but your eyes glazed over as your mind whisked you away to another place in the past.

And your countenance fell.

“I don't know how I survived,” you confessed, “I couldn't stand to be away from her. Not for that long.” We were both silent for a moment as we remembered my grandma, who had passed away a month ago that day.

You grunted, as if suddenly coming to some conclusion. “I hated the draft.” You hated war. You hated violence.

You spoke again. “I was so relieved when I finally came home. Came home to her. It feels like just yesterday.”

You paused and I tensed up, anticipating what was to come.

Your eyes transformed into pools of blue. “But I can't believe she's gone,” you said, “I miss her. I lost my loved one. My Dear...”

A vision of my deceased grandmother flashes in my mind. She's in the casket, her fair, ghostly white hands folded atop her funeral gown. She looks ironically beautiful. A hollow chamber of bones without a spirit.

*My sickly grandfather stands feebly by the mahogany box. Raging rivers flow.*

*He wants to kiss her lips. Those cold, lifeless lips. But he can't, so he talks to her instead.*

*Sweet nicknames coo from his mouth, and the rivers flow harder.*

“Oh, I wish I were there with her now. Shoulda just had a double funeral. She goes, I go,” You sobbed.

My own eyes became misty at such a raw statement.

“I have nothing left to live for,” you groaned, “nothing. It's all gone. I have nothing—*geen*,” You muttered in your native tongue—Dutch.

I worked up the courage to speak. “But you have us—your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren...”

“It’s not enough.”

Coffee stains on mahogany wood,

Faded brown remnants of you.