

Eunoia Review

beautiful thinking

Coffee

Posted on [February 5, 2017](#) by [perfectsublimemasters](#)

My ex-husband Joseph and I had our first date in early September of 2013 at a lakeside coffee shop. He ordered a large cup to go, and I got juice or sparkling water. We walked around the lake and talked easily. I don't remember most of the conversation, but I remember him saying, more than once, that he didn't know why he got such a large coffee. What I don't remember is telling him that I get nervous when I drink coffee or that when I was young my mom sometimes needed me to pass her a cup to get out of bed, but I imagine I said one or the other or both.

I thought it was first-date jitters that made him repeat such a mundane thing about the coffee, and with his bright blue eyes, attentive talk, and accommodating manner, I was complimented.

It was perfect weather for a walk, about 80 degrees. I wore a sleeveless A-line dress and ballerina flats. He wore jeans and a long-sleeve shirt, to hide his tattoos from me, he later said.

Over the next week we spent many hours together, and he told me two things: that he planned to quit drinking coffee and that he loved me.

It was my memory of the way he said the coffee thing that later, after our separation, made me think I must have said something about my mom or me and coffee on the date. He said it like he thought it would please me.

In an email, he referred to it as "the great coffee experiment" and said with pride a week later, "I used to get headaches without it, but now that's gone." I was impressed with his decisiveness and let him know. He went from a cup or more a day to maybe a cup a month. I know because he would tell me. "Someone brought bagels and coffee to school, so I had half a cup," he'd say.

I didn't think much of it at the time.

The I-love-you part struck me as odd so early on. I asked him if he had fallen in love with other women so quickly, and he said no. That week I said to a friend, "He used the L word," in a tone that conveyed that I didn't know what to make of it. She told me of a couple who married two weeks after meeting and stayed together until the wife died more than twenty years later.

By the next week I was in love with him. Within four months we were married.

Essentially it all ended a year later when he went into two days of back-to-back rages, yelling and cursing and

chasing me from room to room hot on my back in anger, driving me out of our home in fear.

In the days that followed, he sent me more than one text saying he was sorry for what he did those two days. He also sent me texts saying that after I left he spent time thinking about why he did it and he had come to the conclusion that he couldn't help but boil over when it came to me because I was so critical of him and his choices. He explained his reasoning further in a phone call. He said that he now realized that during our marriage he had outbursts of bottled up anger because all along I had been making him feel bad for doing things like drinking coffee.

Pamela Woolford writes fiction, memoir, and literary journalism. She has authored more than 100 pieces published in *Poets & Writers Magazine*, the fiction anthology *Amazing Graces* (Paycock Press, 2012), and extensively in *The Baltimore Sun*, among other publications. "Coffee" is an excerpt from her current project, a multidiscipline memoir called *Meditations on a Marriage*, which is a book (represented by the Carol Mann Agency) with an accompanying short film, a film about a dance about a book about emotional abuse. Woolford was a 2016 Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards finalist and longlisted for the 2016 Fish Publishing Short Memoir Contest for excerpts from the project. She is a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award winner for fiction, a recipient of a citation from the Maryland House of Delegates for her journalism, and was a 2014 Rick DeMarinis Short Story Contest semifinalist at *Cutthroat, A Journal of the Arts*. Two of her short stories are nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize, one by novelist and Pushcart Prize editor Mark Wisniewski. More about her work can be found at: <https://about.me/pamelawoolford>.

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