

## A Wandering Coffee Lover

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It wasn't until college that I learned that "coffee wakes you up". I did not know that about coffee before, despite having enjoyed it from a young age, perhaps since I was three. My grandmother introduced me to its world. We would sneak downstairs and brew a delicious cup to pair with sweet bread for breakfast, while my mom was getting ready. There, hidden together, it felt like sharing a secret.

It may be surprising that I got this far without knowing this fact, but it's true. I remember the exact moment I stumbled upon this knowledge. A friend saw me dozing off during a Friday-afternoon class and invited me to drink something afterwards. On our way, she told me, "Let's get you a coffee, you'll feel more awake". As a coffee-lover, I naturally accepted, but the beverage's connection to my drowsiness remained unclear. My friend's patient explanation transformed my experience of the world. She could not believe that I, given all the coffee I drank, would be unaware of its effects. But I was immune. Maybe my body had become resistant to the rousing effects of coffee. I could drink seven cups a day and keep going like it was nothing. Nevertheless, there was no going back: a secret from the universe had been revealed to me.

Until that moment I had cultivated a close relationship with coffee because I liked the taste, because it reminded me of my grandma, because I simply liked the experience of *going for a coffee*. Visiting cafés gave me inner peace. One of my favorite habits was working from cafés and enjoying their particular drinks. That is how I arrived at a café named *La Tenggara*. At the time I found it, I was still in college, living with roommates. For the first time, I was making adult decisions, alone in the world. *La Tenggara* became my safe space. I made the resolution to try their whole menu, to buy each drink at least once, trying something different in each visit. I could not

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make it. *La Tenggara* closed during the pandemic. When I heard of the closure, I was devastated. The world was already crumbling down around me, and my safe space existed no more.

After the lockdown, I searched for a new favorite café. I still have not found one that fills the gap left by *La Tenggara*, although I have visited other marvelous places. At some cafés, I love *one* drink in particular (I highly recommend foamy coffee milkshakes); there are others where I prefer their stylish design and decoration, and others for spending time with people I love.

My love of coffee took me to a state famous for its coffee production, Veracruz. I visited the traditional spots, I tasted all of it. There was live music and I was happy, because life, in the sea, is tastier ("*en el mar, la vida es más sabrosa*"), and so is coffee. I even went to the town of Coatepec, where the air smells like coffee. There, I felt at home, as I tried the various preparations. I wondered what would it be like if my grandma was with me. What would she think about drinking coffee next to the sea? Would she sing to Agustín Lara's songs or would she sing her traditional *Querreque* from Hidalgo? Would she like the coffee ice cream or would she rather have a *cafecito de olla*?

Since then, I have discovered many other cafés, but I do not know if one of them is my *favorite* one, as *La Tenggara* used to be. I still do not associate coffee with waking up. I take it because I like it, because it reminds me of those secret mornings. It means having a moment for myself, but I can also connect with others around cups of coffee. Someday, coffee might rouse me, but until then, I can use it for dreaming. Losing my favorite café in a time of stillness gave me an impulse to go out: I think it turned me into a wandering coffee-lover.

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