



Cuppa

a marketing story

Preface

I consider myself a decent writer, and I decided to challenge myself by utilizing a different technique for determining elements of the plot to be used in this assignment. This process was started before the assignment was given.

The first thing I did was generate random list of nouns. A blind pull of 100 nouns was conducted from:

- <http://www.desiquintans.com/articles/noungenerator.php>
- <https://www.randomlists.com/nouns?dup=false&qty=50>

Many of the results were not nouns, so I removed all of the verbs and adverbs. Then I selectively edited the list for brevity, resulting in:

Arcade, Clothing, Fir, Soliloquy, Speaker, Thongs, Addiction, Ambulance, Bankbook, Deed, Medication, Remnant, Daughter, Rubric, Bakeware, Information, Niece, Raven, Verse, Eleventh, Enzyme, Mainland, Phenotype, Hand, Weather, Stone, Airplane, Arithmetic, Test, Division, Sofa, Canvas, Team, Roof, Seat, Control, Spring, Men, Plastic, Songs, Riddle, Motion, Thumb, Kitty, Fire, Chicken, Border, Mine, Town, Trucks

I began writing, again before the assignment was formally given. Strangely enough, and more than likely influenced at a subliminal level from lecture, a theme emerged that revolves around a common beverage.

This version of the story is free of the confines of the 7,000-word limit of the original assignment. The story was part of [Jeff B. Murray's](#) Marketing curriculum in the fall of 2019 MBA program at the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

I hope you enjoy it.

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David

Her breathing was shallow, and he could see her eyes darting back and forth behind her eyelids. Curled up on the sofa beneath a heavy down comforter, Maggie lie in repose as the morning sun struggled to break through the cold November drizzle. Cold, grey light filtered through the curtains and into the sparsely furnished room. Icy air crept through the window pane and down to the bare floor, wafting the faint smell of dust from the floorboards up towards Maggie's cozy respite.

In the distance, a raven was calling on the sun. The drizzle coagulated and slid across the dingy, single pane window. Pooling on the windowsill, the weather slowly coagulated and spilled onto the stone pathway below. The sound of early morning traffic was beginning to ripple through the sea of tranquility. There would be no sunshine today.

David quickly scribbled on the back of an envelope, leaving it on the table next to last night's *Cuppa*. It was out of place, lying in the vacant chasm of space between an old book of poetry, Maggie's medication, and the other *Cuppa*. Suppressing the urge to give Maggie a kiss on the cheek, so as not to wake her; he grabbed his coat, quietly slipping out the front door. The soft, subtle click of the worn-out latch kept the cold, damp air at bay.

Making his way down the concrete stairs, David watched a small airplane make its low approach over the harbor. His watch told him he would have time to stop for a cup of tea at Auntie's. He was thinking about Maggie again already, wondering when she would awake and find the envelope. He was passing under a group of fir trees when the breeze kicked up, soaking him in icy cold water. He cursed, shook his head like a dog, and tried for another pull on his cigarette. Glancing down, he saw the ember had taken a direct hit. He pitched it to the curb, pulled his collar tighter around his neck, put his head down, his hands in his pockets, and made for Auntie's kitchen.

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Auntie's was on the main drag, near the harbor, nestled between the vacant arcade and the only bank on the island. The smell of fire, fatmeat and bread hung in the air. A soft, orange glow spilling out of the windows made the place especially inviting this morning. This cold cut to the bone.

Auntie wouldn't open to the public for another half hour or so, but she had taken a liking to David and told him if the lights were aglow, he was welcome. He felt like an insider, like a member of a secret club. Many of the *Tazzetians* disliked, and did not trust David. He was from the mainland, and they were sure he was here on false pretense.

"Every day there's another test on this bloody island," he thought.

First it was getting to the island without arising suspicion from customs officers on either side. This meant changes in clothing and physical outward appearance to compliment the many months he had practiced the *Tazzetian* dialect in secret so he passed as a native speaker. He had to change his diet, giving up on the chicken and beef he so loved. He had to learn their drinking songs. He not only had to fit into their cultural rubric, he had to be fluid while in motion within it.

Nervous energy coursed through his veins in the first few interactions he had with the townspeople. To David, these people always came across as deceitful; using posture, inflection, and surreptitious language in an effort to control the conversation and elicit info from him. Now he found their antics amusing.

He was getting himself so worked up that he nearly walked into a parked ambulance as he crossed the street and walked into Auntie's.

The Perfect Cuppa

Auntie made her way to the kitchen to prepare the morning *Cuppa*. Carefully, she poured a liter of *Thala* dissolved in sacramental mead from a demijohn into a ceramic crock. She stirred the liquid with a small wooden spoon. Leaving the spoon in the crock, Auntie replaced the lid. The handle of the spoon rested between the rim of the crock and a small crescent specially formed into the lid.

After setting a large kettle to boil, Auntie went to the stockroom where she procured a huge scoop of dry *Cuppa* from its bin. Placing it into a wooden bowl, she made her way back to the counter where she prepared dry goods in the kitchen. Carefully measuring the *Cuppa* into small ceramic dishes that stacked neatly on top of one another, Auntie started thinking of Maggie and David.

“David was a nice catch, Maggie. The two of you should bond well. Soon enough you’ll be married and the cycle will be complete.”

Finished with her soliloquy, she thought of her late husband Lester. She remembered when fortune shone upon Lester and his brother Ian, Maggie’s father while they were out collecting rosehips for the *Cuppa*. She remembered the exact day Lester took her to the bank, paid the mortgage in full, and told the banker to give her possession of the deed. The two of them made a great team.

Cuppa was made from a combination of black tea sourced from the mainland, a combination of local herbs, rosehips, and a touch of resin known as *Thala*. Containing a powerful enzyme that boosts the body’s ability to metabolize oxytocin, *Thala* was the foundation of Nisabaianism.

Thala was residual trub left at the bottom of fermenters used by the priest class. The mead is decanted, the residual solids are scraped out, collected, and allowed to dry in the fermentation cellars for a period of three to five weeks. This resin, when dry is a mixture of yeast, herbs, and unfermented sugars. It is allowed to crystalize, and then is ground up and added to the *Cuppa* mix.

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Thala was originally distributed to the practitioners of Nisaba, who began to integrate it with their daily cup of tea.

Soon after its development, some twelve generations ago, *Cuppa* became so popular, it was fast becoming the preferred drink of the mainland. Its popularity was one of the main reasons the Nisabians were banished to the island. *Cuppa* was cutting into the bottom line of the merchant class, and the religious practices of the Nisabians were cutting into the bottom line of the church. Leaders from the church conspired with leaders of the merchant class to organize an anti-Nisaba campaign that turned the populous against them.

A witch hunt ensued, complete with the injudicious, barbaric treatment of Nisabian practitioners, and those suspected of being affiliated with them. This polarized the local citizenry, and caused the mainland to come to the brink of civil war. An agreement between the high priestess of the Nisabian practitioners and the king of the mainland saw the Nisabians banished to the island. With few exceptions, islanders were forbidden travel to the mainland, or conduct business transactions with its people.

Finished making portions of *Cuppa*, Auntie turned the flame down on the kettle. She made her way to the crock and placed a spoonful of the *Thala* mixture into a clean porcelain cup. Filling a small kettle with hot water from the larger, she added a measure of *Cuppa*, leaving the kettle next to the cup to steep.

Auntie made her way to the front, patiently waiting for the first customer of the day to arrive.

Auntie's

"Good morning David. Is it cold enough out there for you this morning?"

"Cold enough. And wet, Auntie. Makes me look forward to spring already."

He shuffled his boots against the mat, hung his coat on the tree, and inquired about the tea.

"Patience David, come and tell me you love me. Tell me how my niece is getting on, and then you can have your *Cuppa*."

David walked up to her place behind the counter. Smiling, he looked her in the eye.

"Always so modest, aren't you Auntie? As if you weren't lavished with sweet nothings and benevolence all day."

"Your flattery will get you nowhere lad. You look famished, weak, and tired. How about a little something to eat?"

"I'm fine Auntie. I don't want to give you the impression you can fatten me up for the kill so easily. I've heard the old fairy tales."

"I'll have enough of that, thank you. Come now, tell me how Maggie is getting along with the lack of sunshine, and this drizzle. I worry about that girl, you know."

"She's fine Auntie. She was wrapped up in a heavy comforter, and just dreaming away when I left this morning. She looked like she was having puppy dreams. Without the barking, of course. A little whimpering and some whining, but definitely no barking."

"Well, you don't know how bad she gets this time of year. All wrapped up in those texts and drawings of hers. One year, she forgot to feed herself for three days straight, only drinking *Cuppa*. The poor thing fainted when she finally answered me at the door! You need to watch out for these tendencies of hers, and keep an eye on her David."

"Maggie has done nothing out of the ordinary, Auntie. You know I would feel absolutely terrible if anything happens to that girl."

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"You don't want to suffer the rage and misgivings of her angry Aunt either. Now you go sit down somewhere and I'll have your *Cuppa* right out. I've got other things to do before the morning crews show up."

"Yes Auntie," he called out as he grabbed the morning paper off the counter. He made his way to his favorite booth overlooking the harbor. He made his way around the bar, admiring the way heavy wood furniture made him feel at home. He felt the chill starting to dissipate. The floorboard let out with a little groan as he pivoted his weight to his left foot and slid into the booth.

The cushion made a quiet and satisfying hiss as he took his seat. Yet, it didn't make strange squeaking or creaking sounds as he shifted his weight. Adjusting the tableware to his liking, he unfolded the paper and began scanning the headlines.

Instinctively, he reached into his top coat pocket. Wresting a cigarette from within, he struck a match and set it ablaze. Smoke rose up from the dead match. He could hear the paper burn as he took a drag.

The long roar of a ship's horn bellowed through the drizzle. He looked across the fog, barely making out the faint outlines of two craft hiding behind their running lights out in the harbor. The first line of many trucks was beginning to form, waiting to load and unload the shipments at the port. They disappeared for a moment when he blew smoke at the window.

He was comfortable in this booth where he could watch little tugboats pull huge barges to and from the docks.

He remembered the first time he had sat here. It was about four weeks ago when Maggie brought him here to meet her aunt. He was afraid she had heard the hissing sound the cushion made when he first took his seat. The embarrassing thought of Maggie thinking he passed wind was racing through his mind, and his ears slowly began to turn scarlet. He watched in angst as she cast a disparate glare in his direction.

Maggie had decided to give him a hard time. She deliberately kept looking in different directions, twitching her nose, and making faces of thinly veiled contempt. She made him suffer for a good five minutes too. By this time David looked sunburned, and

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Maggie couldn't hold in her laughter anymore. She let out a long and superlative laugh, pausing to catch her breath two or three times before she could regain her composure and admit to her trickery.

The *Cuppa* and, in turn, a plate of bacon with a single home-made biscuit slammed on the table. The silverware rattled. David was startled out of his trip down memory lane.

"Here you are David, *Cuppa*, fat meat, and a biscuit. Quit daydreaming and eat your breakfast"

"Auntie, you shouldn't have," he protested.

"Enough of that. A man needs something to eat before he gets to work, and you already look like you've been hard at work down in the mine all day."

"That's why I love you Auntie. You're the best."

"I know, David. I work very hard to be the best, and the least you can do is tell me you appreciate me before I go back into that sweltering kitchen."

"Auntie, you are too modest my dear, and I don't deserve you" David said with a grin.

She swatted his shoulder with the towel she kept in her apron.

"You're an incorrigible cad, David" she said, as she turned away.

Auntie typically served *Cuppa* in a small stainless-steel kettle, and David thought it out of the ordinary she would serve it differently. Maybe she didn't want to fuss with a tray this morning, he thought.

The door opened, followed by a six-man crew that worked in the mine. Shuffling their boots on the mat, and hanging their coats in turn; they made their way to a table and called on Auntie.

"Auntie, love. Bring us some *Cuppa* before we catch cold."

"Just a minute, boys, I've got to fetch the kettles and I'll be right there."

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David wrapped his hand around the warm *Cuppa*, slowly bringing it towards his lips. Vapors from the steam swirled up and around the cup as he did so. The smell of the tea warmed and relaxed his spirit at the same time.

This would happen even if the *Cuppa* was cool, tepid, or stale. *Cuppa* had an earthy smell, with a touch of sweetness. Much like the faint, lingering smell of a wood rose one has passed by in the forest, *Cuppa* had a way of piercing through the senses.

David had never really cared for tea on the mainland. He preferred cider, or a thin mead in the morning. Maggie had introduced him to *Cuppa* on the mainland, and it instantly struck a chord deep within him. At times, he felt he was developing an addiction.

Auntie's *Cuppa* was a deep amber color, like that of a fine Märzen. At first taste it was almost malty and sweet, with a hint of bitterness like many ales. Second sips brought forth earthiness, mellowing out most the bitter, eliminating the malt, yet keeping a hint of the sweet. Subsequent tastings seemed to vary, but *Cuppa* was always nearly neutral at the end. A new *Cuppa* started the process all over again.

The background chatter increased as Auntie brought the men their *Cuppa* and began sorting out who was having what for breakfast.

David slowly chewed the fat and stared out over the harbor. His mind had shifted to the task at hand. Within an hour he would be at the mine, picking up where he left off. He found himself in a predicament, however. He had to take detailed notes of his activities in the mine, or he would forget them by the time he returned the next day.

He had tried to decipher where this newfound forgetfulness stemmed from, and the closest thing he could figure was that he was smitten with Maggie. He found himself thinking of her more, and more when he wasn't with her.

He pulled a small notebook out of his pocket and flipped to the first blank page. Placing his weathered thumb on that spot, he rolled yesterday's notes into view.

There were two pages of dates and fuel counts for vehicles, inventories of various components, the number of workers in a division at a certain time. A small, worn remnant of canvas slipped from behind the cover of the notebook, landing between his

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nearly empty *Cuppa* and the plate. Using his index finger to mark the spot, he turned the book on its face, and set it upon the table. He picked up the canvas, unfolded it and read the words written in copperplate fashion.

Capable of kindness and cruelty, I take victims when I sour. I can be on your side or wrong you. I bring gifts though you already have me.

“Another bloody test,” he grumbled halfheartedly, reaching to finish his *Cuppa* and looking over the harbor.

Mulling the numbers and the canvas over for a few minutes, it suddenly dawned on David where the riddle came from. He was helping Casey clean out a dusty corner of an office in the mine that hadn’t been used in years. It was stifling in the small, dark room among the desks, chairs, bookshelves, and filing cabinets covered in thirty years of dust and grime.

After misplacing his father’s bankbook in an old drawer given to a younger cousin many years ago, David was in the habit of thoroughly inspecting furniture bound for parts unknown, and this is why he found it underneath the ink blotter of the main desk drawer.

Carefully folding the canvas again, and using it as a bookmark, David tried putting the pieces together.

Maggie

She was close to understanding the connection. She could feel the answer, but she couldn't explain it. It refused to render. Maggie and David were walking along the cliffs, a warm breeze creeping up from the south. The dull roar of the surf below was rhythmic, and soothing. Maggie was having difficulty focusing on the details of the environment around her. They began to pick up their pace as the shadows turned warm, velvety, and violet. Soon they were running. They were running at a frantic pace, and getting nowhere.

Suddenly they came upon a dilapidated house overlooking the harbor. The roof used to be thatched, the walls used to be white, and shutters used to adorn the windows. The chimney had fallen down many years ago. Tall grass and a small tree arose from the pile of bricks it left in the yard.

The next thing she knew, Maggie was inside. There were drawings, texts, and loose papers scattered everywhere. Large book cases filled with curios and scientific instruments lined the walls.

A large wooden table lie in the middle of the single room. Maggie found herself sorting through the papers on the table. There were hundreds of drawings on parchment and vellum alike of Merkabah's, flowers of life, mandalas, and more. Strange, illegible scripts accompanied some of the drawings. A raven began calling in the distance.

Maggie noticed her fingers felt greasy. She rubbed her left index finger against her thumb, confirming they were coated in something slick. She looked down at the table and saw the documents were covered in something oily. Panic set deep within her chest when she saw the ink on the papers smearing as she touched the documents.

Looking across the table, she saw an oil lamp had been knocked on its side. Lamp oil had spread across the table, and it was soaking through the documents. The calling of the raven drew closer. Maggie panicked as she watched the documents degrade between her fingers.

The raven called again.

A sudden thought crept through Maggie's mind.

Why was she in a panic over some documents in a house she had never seen before? Where is the raven? Where is David? What had been happening for the last two days?

She realized she was in a dream.

The dream slowly began to fall apart. Maggie tried to return to the table, but found herself on top of the cliffs. She started running in a vain attempt to find David. The raven called again and the dream was gone.

She was awake now, but her eyes remained closed. Sensing she was at home, warm, and wrapped in a down comforter, Maggie tried to recollect the dream. She was sweating. Vague sentiments of the cliffs, David, and the drawings were all she could remember. Try as she might, she could not completely remember the dream.

Outside, she could hear a raven cawing.

"Damn raven," she said to an empty room.

"I almost had it. I was so close."

She thought of David, her work, and her plan.

Opening her eyes, she was greeted by the wood planks on the ceiling. The ambient light in the room told her it was cold and grey outside. She pulled the blanket tighter, and rolled over on her side, letting out a sigh. Stretching her legs, and arching her back, Maggie slowly, and somewhat resentfully let herself become awake.

Suddenly, and without warning a small calico cat jumped onto Maggie's belly. She rubbed its head as it began kneading the comforter and purring.

"Oh, kitty. You little monster. Did nobody pet and love on my little Kaddiska this morning?"

Entertaining the whims of Kaddiska for a few minutes, Maggie finally decided it was enough. If she let her make a nest on top of the comforter, she would go back to sleep and she would lose all productivity for the morning. She shooed the cat onto the

floor. Kaddiska looked at her in disgust, sauntering off to the kitchen to nibble on the kibble Maggie left for her in the corner.

She sat up, swinging her legs off of the couch and placing her feet on the floor. She took a moment, getting her bearing, and taking a few deep breaths. Claspng her hands and placing her arms in front of her, she stretched again. Hands still clasped, she brought her arms up over her head, reaching for the ceiling. Maggie took a deep breath, and paused. Releasing her hands, she slowly brought her arms down to a neutral position as she exhaled.

Her eyes came to rest on the coffee table. An envelope lie close to her leftover *Cuppa* from last night. Reaching forward, she plucked the envelope from the table. David had left her a little poem.

*Ever adrift, and you found me
I hate to leave thee in fleeting dreams
Guide me, in work to do on your behalf
Geometry, arithmetic, alchemy
Although I'm not sure where I fit into your math
Mystical, and magic bond me with you down this path*

Maggie smiled at David's childish sentiment and attempt at verse. Finding herself with a powerful thirst, she poured his *Cuppa* into hers and drank slowly. Within a few minutes, a warm and comforting sensation began to radiate from her core. A few moments later, a relaxing wave of comfort settled in. She was content here, wrapped up on her sofa, preparing to face the day.

Maggie was to be the next High Priestess. She had but one more task to complete to attain the order, but it was not easy. In fact, it was so difficult, she found herself drained of energy at the end of the day.

She struggled to maintain outward appearances when in public. Banal conversations became difficult for Maggie. The small talk she had to endure every time she went to purchase something, or happened by an old acquaintance was especially painful. She

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could hardly form words into speech at times, and thought she must sound like a drunken fool.

In sharp contrast, however, there were times throughout the day, a sudden giddiness would frequently arise from within, making it hard to do her research. When this feeling presented itself in public, she found there was no end to her charisma and charm. She would delight in meaningless conversation, and could light up a whole room. Scarcely two weeks ago, using ten-dollar words, and adding color and excitement to a conversation with Auntie concerning the benefit of using plastic spatulas to scrape bakeware had captivated an entire lunch crowd for the better part of half an hour.

She had been hard at work for over a year. At times she felt as if she was going to lose her best ally in this quest, her patience. She would make small gains here and there, and then nothing. For weeks, months at a time, she would see little to no results in her work. Conversations with Auntie sometimes helped Maggie to regain her resolve. At other times she felt even more distracted than before seeking Auntie's advice.

Suddenly, and without warning, her luck changed three short months ago. Maggie was getting close. She could feel it. In fact, she could almost taste it.

Ian, Lester & The Rabbit

Many years ago, Angie's father was out collecting wild rose hips with his brother for the *cuppa*. Her uncle stumbled over a rabbit burrow at some point, falling down, and nearly breaking his leg. Crying out in pain, he summoned her father to come to his aid.

"Lester, what's the matter?"

"I tripped over a burrow and might have broke my bloody ankle."

"What?"

"You see that big, [expletive] hole next to your left foot?"

"Oh, that burrow. Boy, that thing's in the perfect spot isn't it? Well camouflaged, and fit to trip a big oaf like yourself."

"[Expletive] you Ian."

"You want me to see if that little bugger's still in there?"

"[Expletive] you Ian. Help me up."

"No, no Lester. Let me see if the little [expletive]'s home first."

Ian crouched down on his hands and knees, peering into the burrow. He slammed his palm on the ground three times in quick succession, pretending to knock on the door.

"You there. Bloody Rabbit. Is anybody home?"

He slammed his palm on the ground three more times.

"I say. You there. Bloody Rabbit. Your negligence has cost my brother Lester the use of his leg. According to the judicious laws of the Island you're going to have to pay for that."

Ian pretended to hear something scurrying within the burrow. He motioned for Lester to be quiet.

"[Expletive] you Ian. You [expletive] [expletive]."

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Ian had secretly palmed a small coin while making a show about getting the negligent rabbit to answer the door. He reached into the hole, grabbing a handful of dirt and rocks. Dramatically retrieving his hand from the burrow, Ian stood up and turned towards a very angry Lester.

"The misses came to the door, but has only this to offer you in condolence of your malady."

Ian held out a clenched fist, small bits of dirt falling between his fingers.

"Ian, you [expletive] [expletive]. Help me up for *SPIRIT*'s sake. Quit [expletive]ing around."

"Not until you accept this poor creature's remittance. He is but a poor little bunny, without insurance, and with little money to make a proper remittance.

"[Expletive] [expletive]er. Fine. [Expletive.]"

Lester reached toward Ian with his left hand, palm up, ready to receive his just compensation.

Ian placed his fist over Lester's outreached hand, and opening his fingers let the dirt, the small coin, and bits of rock fall into Lester's palm.

Lester closed his hand, bringing it closer to his face for observation. Lester opened his left hand, and began pawing through the pay dirt with his right index finger. Suddenly, Lester stopped.

His face turned pale. His eyes grew wide, and he fell silent.

Lester pawed at the dirt in his palm again.

He looked at Ian in disgust.

"You [expletive] [expletive]ing [expletive]er! Why the [expletive] are we out here onna far side of the island picking rosehips, me nearly breaking my [expletive] leg, when we could have paid some other knucklehead to do it while we sat at Lucy's drinking *cuppa*?"

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"Nobody is going to come all the way out here and do this for less than the price of a single *cuppa*, Lester."

"I may be married to Lucy, but she sure as [expletive] doesn't charge that much for a *cuppa*."

"You must've knocked the sense out of that big, ugly face of yours when you fell down Lester."

"I'll knock some [expletive]ing sense into you Ian. A man has a right to his own fortune, sure enough. But he ain't got no right to hoard it from his own family. All of us are struggling to make ends meet, lucky to have a few coins left at the end of the week. Yet my brother Ian goes traipsing around the wild side of the island like a common peasant, all the while he has a gold nugget in pocket."

"What the [expletive] are you talking about Lester?"

"I saw you take that piece of gold from your pocket and pretend to grab it from the burrow."

"Gold? Hardly."

"I palmed a small copper coin."

"I don't even own any gold."

Lester held out his left hand.

Next to the copper coin was a gold nugget, roughly the size of Lester's thumbnail.

Ian was silent. The look of amusement had drained from his face, he was now dumbfounded.

"What the [expletive] is this then, Ian?"

"Lester, I ..."

"Reach back in that 'ole and see if poor Mister Bloody Bunny has anymore."

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Ian turned back to the burrow, stuck his arm in it, and grabbed another handful of debris. He turned back towards Lester and slowly opened his fist. Lester pawed through the dirt, and to their amazement lie another small nugget of gold.

The two brothers briefly smiled at each other.

A stern look grew upon Lester's face. He cupped his empty hand to his ear and looked over his shoulder. He turned his head, looking the other way. Then, he stared at Ian, motioning for him to come closer.

"We've got to keep this a secret, or it will be our ruin."

"Lester, you overestimate the greed in people."

"Shut your mouth Ian, and listen to your poor, injured, and angry older brother."

"We've got to head back with the rosehips we've collected, and pretend all that happened here today was the breaking of my ankle. Neither one of us is to mention this to anyone until we can come up with a story we can sell to Leon, the jeweler. Once he confirms this as gold, we can begin to hatch a plan to turn this into a mine."

Ian reluctantly agreed. He took a look at Lester's ankle, gathered his things, and the two of them hobbled down towards town.

Six months later, Ian and Lester had arranged with the Island Council to begin mining for gold on the wild side of the mountain. The mine was to benefit the inhabitants of the island. Gold has no prejudice against masters. Gold would ensure trade with the mainland, allowing commerce to take place between their borders. The Islanders no longer trusted the Mainlanders, and didn't care to rejoin them in any political sense. The Mainlanders now had a healthy distrust of the Islanders, and agreed to limited trade.

Ian bequeathed his small benefaction from the mine to Angie upon his death. Lester had done the same for Lucy many years earlier. Lucy still ran the public house, being called Auntie after the brothers' fortune smiled upon the island so many years ago. Auntie had never taken an interest in Lester's work at the mine, choosing instead to

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serve Islanders at the public house, as "it was in her nature to nurture, and not to spend her days in a hole."

Reflections & Meditations

Maggie put the *Cuppa* and the envelope back on the table. Leaning back, she closed her eyes, picturing the Vesica Piscis in her mind's eye. Comprised simply of two equal circles, the Vesica Piscis refers to the almond shaped ellipse where the circles intersect. One of the foundations of sacred geometry, the circular Vesica Piscis contains geometric relationships containing a plethora of polygons.

Maggie focused on the image as it began to rotate in the space behind her eyes. The circles began to divide from a single point within the Vesica Piscis. Two new circles emerged, intersecting the parent circles at a 90-degree angle. Still in rotation, the cycle continued, new circles doubling in number with each iteration. Soon Maggie was looking at the Flower of Life.

She began to think of David.

She remembered her mother telling her the importance of wisely choosing someone to bond with. She recalled the many times she had failed to make a meaningful connection, let alone a successful bond. Maggie thought about the process it took for her to find David. She didn't know it was David at the time. Her rigorous studies of ancient texts only showed her where and when to look, what to look for, and how to initiate contact.

The texts spoke of qualities that made the best bonding pairs, the rituals involved in successful pair bonding, and of the different bonding archetypes.

The *Tazzetians* were once genetically the same as the people of Physin. After the eleventh generation, things had changed a little. Those banished to the island were becoming a separate phenotype. The *Tazzetians* were, on average about five centimeters shorter and tended to lack large, definitive earlobes. Hazel was the predominant eye color, and their hair trended towards shades of brown, with an occasional instance of auburn. *Tazzetians* had developed extraordinary olfactory senses compared their *Physinnian* counterparts.

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

The texts had led Maggie to Physin, under the pretense of negotiating a new trade agreement. Her status in the *Tazzetian* government afforded her the privilege of travelling anywhere within the mainland's borders as long as she remained innocuous. Under these pretenses she travelled to the province of Utrecht, where descendants of the original *Tazzetians* were thought to live in the town of Tallgrass before the banishment.

Through careful examination and reconciliation of Island records dating back to the banishment, Maggie had deduced there were a few members of the Wrangler family who were believers that had somehow escaped the purge. Upon her arrival to Tallgrass, Maggie introduced herself as the daughter of a wealthy merchant from the capital city of Kataphysin when she checked into the hotel. The townspeople were friendly enough, and she gave them no reason to suspect she was not who she presented herself to be.

Maggie spent two days frequenting common, public areas in Tallgrass observing the townsfolk and hoping to chance across the mention of Wrangler. She was to leave on the morning of the fifth day, and could feel her patience running thin. Tallgrass was not very exciting, its most fanciful building being the old church, and the most popular form of entertainment being telling lies over mugs of cider at the public house. She did not much care for their food or drink, and she had to prepare and consume her *Cuppa* in secret. To make matters worse, her heightened sense of smell was constantly being offended. She saw, nor heard any mention of the Wrangler family.

Maggie was of the third bonding archetype and paired best with the eighth. She carefully made introductions to nearly everyone she met in town, stealthily testing the men in an effort to superficially gauge their bonding archetype. Although Maggie was a beautiful stranger and had drawn the interest of many men, none of them were a match by surname, let alone archetype. Growing weary of feigning interest in the dull, and boring conversations that were *Physinnian* custom, Maggie decided to have lunch at her hotel.

The hotel was nothing special, but it did have a room where groups of families could order food and drink. She made her way past the front desk that was absent its clerk,

the somber silence of the building and the clicking of her heels on the floor doing her patience no favor.

Nobody was behind the bar as she expected. She sat in quiet repose at a table gazing around the room and feeling sorry for herself. Sitting with her back to the wall, Maggie kept watch for someone to cater to her growing hunger. A few moments later she could hear someone coming down the corridor. Detecting juniper and tobacco, Maggie sensed it was a man.

To her surprise, this man was about her age, had a chiseled face, and carried himself with an air of confidence. Approaching her table, a wry grin on his visage, he inquired "Good afternoon ma'am how may I be of service to you on this fine afternoon, so full of promise and potential?"

"It's about time," Maggie said sternly.

"I thought I was going to have to start serving myself. Do you treat all of your guests this way? Make them sit and wait, dying of thirst and starving to death?"

"I'm terribly sorry Ma'am. I stole the clerk from her post for a few moments, not thinking one of our guests might want to enjoy a late lunch. I've kept you unnecessarily waiting and am offering but a flimsy excuse for my actions."

She gazed into his eyes, yet spoke harshly. "I'm both parched and famished. Have you any fare better than the public house has to offer?"

Returning her gaze, and refusing to act defensively, the young man replied, "Yes ma'am. Here at The Wayward Inn we take pride in catering to the special food and drink requests of our guests. Let's begin with something to quench that powerful thirst of yours."

"Would the young lady prefer a cool glass of water, coffee, tea, a nice white wine, a quaffable mug of cider, or a measure of spirits?"

Aware of her previous misgiving and switching her tone to reflect her best effeminate charm Maggie told him, "It's too early in the day for spirits, but a cool glass of water to start sounds delicious."

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

"One cool glass of water coming right up ma'am. Would you prefer water with lemon and cucumber, or plain? Is there anything else the young lady may fancy?"

"Lemon and cucumber for the moment, thank you sir."

"I'll be back in a flash," he said, before gracefully turning and making his way behind the bar.

He reached for a water glass hanging from a rack toward the back corner by the cash register. Polishing it quickly with fresh linen, he inquired "And what brings you to our beautiful province this afternoon?"

"I'm here conducting research on an estranged branch of my family."

Filling the glass from a large water pitcher filled with ice, cucumber, and lemon, the young man returned to her table, linen over hand, presenting Maggie with the glass.

"How interesting," he replied, "have you found what you were looking for?"

"I'm not sure yet, but I think I'm onto something," she said, waiting for him to set the glass on the table.

"My name is David, by the way, and aside from ensuring you are fully satiated with food and drink this afternoon; I will gladly help you any way I can. My family has lived here for as long as anyone can remember. My father owns this inn, and two others like it. Now, what might the lady prefer to eat this afternoon?"

Maggie tried in vain to suppress her underlying excitement as she spoke, her emotion shining through her words.

"It's so nice to meet you David, my name's Maggie. I'm sorry for being cross just now, but I get testy when I'm hungry."

"No need to apologize Maggie, I shouldn't have kept you waiting so long. Any idea what you want for lunch this afternoon?"

"Might you have something that used to swim on the menu? I'm tired of mutton and stews."

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

"Maggie, you're in luck this afternoon. I just returned from the river with a mess of brook trout. That's why I needed help from the clerk. Would this please the lady?"

"Only if they are pan seared and garnished with butter, lemon, and chives."

"Of course. That's the only way I, *excuse me*, I mean, *we* prepare brook trout for mysterious young ladies from out of town conducting research on estranged family members. Would you care for roasted red potatoes and a bit of fresh garden salad to accompany your freshly caught fish?"

"That would be perfect, with a bit of vinaigrette on the greens of course."

"Of course," he replied.

"Oh, and more of this lovely, cool water if you don't mind."

"Yes ma'am," he said, placing a small silver hand bell on the table. "Should you need anything in the meantime, give me a ring."

Maggie beamed.

"Thank you, David," she said as he filled her water glass from the pitcher.

"You're quite welcome milady," David said as he returned her glass. He was struck by her sudden change in attitude and demeanor.

Maggie sipped her water. She felt giddy. Her thoughts quickly swirling around, fleeting, and revolving around one topic. This could be the one. He seemed to be of the eighth archetype. She could tell that he had an adventurous spirit by the way he had fun pretending to be a waiter at a fine restaurant, even though he worked for his father at a small inn in a rural province. He was certainly good looking and polite enough. Maybe she was reading too much into their encounter. Perhaps she was seeing something that wasn't there.

She felt a sudden urge to have some *Cuppa*. It was an unspoken rule that if she got caught with the *Cuppa* there would be serious repercussions. She always kept a small packet of *Cuppa* in her handbag, cleverly hidden in the space between the lining and the leather, in case of such an emergency. She was certain she could ask David for a cup of

tea and surreptitiously switch the packet with whatever common tea they served at the inn.

Her consciousness threw a sharp injection into the gears of her excitement, causing her to have a beguiling, and somber moment. She was playing with fire, and might well burn down the island if she wasn't careful. And for what? A passing fancy, a cheap thrill, a brief moment of passion with a stranger in a foreign land? If she were found out, she would be likely be killed. Worse yet, she could be forced to go in hiding and live in exile, away from the Island and the people she loved so much. She felt beads of sweat forming on the back of her neck. Her breath was shallow.

Realizing she was entering a state of panic, Maggie paused, and closed her eyes. She took a deep, centering breath and reflected on the reason she was there in the first place. She was on the hunt. She knew her prey. She was in the habitat her prey lived in. Now that she had spotted her prey, she was filled with adrenaline, which caused excitement. She needed to calm down, and channel her excitement into methodical, deliberate action. Slowly opening her eyes, Maggie continued her breathing technique, calming her nerves, and formulating a plan.

There was a dull roar coming out of the kitchen. The smell of rosemary, garlic, butter, bread, and fish hung in the air. Maggie patiently waited for a momentary pause in the natural rhythms of food preparation. When the moment came, she rang the bell.

David entered the room wearing an apron, smelling richly of homemade cooking, and smiling.

"You rang, miss Maggie?"

"I did. Do you have any hot tea stashed away in your kitchen?"

"Certainly. Would you prefer breakfast, green, jasmine, orange pekoe, or Earl Grey?"

"Jasmine, but separate from the water. I prefer the ritual of making my own tea."

"We don't serve our tea any other way, ma'am. One tea service coming up, would the young lady care for milk, cream, lemon, or sugar?"

"No thank you, I'm sweet enough."

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

"You most certainly are, ma'am," David said cheerfully. "Be right back."

He promptly returned with a small, well worn, wooden tray. Neatly arranged, from left to right, were a small porcelain teapot decorated in the English style, a matching tea cup and saucer, a small porcelain dish filled with loose tea, a fresh linen napkin with a silver tea spoon, and a small plate with the customary sweet bread. The tea smelled wonderful to Maggie, smelling so sweet it nearly rivaled the jasmine bushes that grew on the south side of the island. Finally, a welcome departure from the banal food and drink Maggie had encountered thus far.

Gingerly picking up the teaspoon, Maggie looked deep into his eyes, "Thank you so much David, this looks absolutely wonderful."

"You're welcome Maggie, your lunch will be ready shortly," he said, returning her gaze with another warm smile.

"Before you run away, might you tell me your surname? I would hate to charm a distant relative only to be disappointed and distraught later on down the road."

"Certainly. I am of the Wrangler family. Purveyors of fine temporary lodging arrangements in the province for over fifteen generations."

"Oh, that's perfect! I am of no relation to the Wrangler family," Maggie said, purposefully letting her enthusiasm spill through the inflection in what she said.

"In that case madame, I encourage you to continue with your charms upon my return, as I find myself quite smitten by them."

David turned towards the kitchen, taking a few steps before suddenly turning around and approaching Maggie again. She smiled inquisitively as he approached.

"Young lady, the truth is I am finding myself unable to resist your charm and I think I'm becoming rather smitten with you."

"Touché," Maggie said wryly.

A look of surprise jumped across David's face, his eyes growing wide underneath the now exaggerated arch in his eyebrows. Turning about sharply, David cried out "The fish! I'm about to burn the fish," as he took large strides towards the kitchen.

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

Maggie laughed, calling out "We can't have that now," when it was too late.

She waited for a moment once David had left the room. Gently lifting the delicate lid off of the teapot, she placed half a teaspoon of the wonderfully appealing jasmine tea into the void. Swiftly replacing the lid to minimize the loss of heat, Maggie looked around the room, carefully listening and sensing the air for anyone's presence.

Maggie retrieved her handbag from the chair next to her, unwinding the small, leather thongs that secured it shut. She removed a few things, and began feeling around for the entrance to the secret spot where she kept her *Cuppa*. A few moments later, she removed a small, brown envelope from her handbag. Placing it in her lap, she replaced the items she had removed, and set her handbag back in the chair next to her. She looked around the room again, carefully opening the envelope under the cover of her position at the table.

Certain that the coast was clear, Maggie quickly lifted the lid off of the teapot, emptying the contents of the envelope therein. Placing the envelope in her lap with her left hand, she stirred the pot with the silver tea spoon in her right hand. She returned the envelope to the depths of her handbag after completing the ritual.

Patiently, Maggie waited for her *Cuppa* to steep, and for David to return.

Soon enough, she was rewarded when David returned with yet another well worn, wooden tray laden with the lunch she had ordered. He presented her with tray, ensuring it met her approval before he attempted to place it on the table.

"Your lunch, madame."

"It looks absolutely lovely," she said, staring into his eyes and attempting to move the tea service out of the way in her periphery.

"I trust everything is fine with the tea service?"

"The tea service appears to be much finer than I expected, however ..."

"Is there something madame requires, that this humble servant has not provided?"

Maggie smiled, using all of her charm and countenance.

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

"Please, set the tray down and have lunch with me. I haven't had a decent conversation in days, and you strike my fancy as a great conversationalist."

"As you wish madame, but first, may I excuse myself to retrieve my own lunch from the kitchen? I will be gone but a moment."

"Certainly," Anne said, irradiating charm and happiness through her demure smile.

Maggie stirred the pot again. She could feel the redness in her cheeks.

David soon returned with his own tray, a mirror image of the one he had prepared for Maggie. Deftly, he took a seat directly opposite her, carefully setting his tray on the table so as not to disturb hers.

Seeing that he had placed a cup and saucer on his tray, Maggie asked David if he would join her in having a cup of tea.

"If it pleases the lady, I would love to partake in a cup or two of afternoon tea. Shall I pour?"

"No, no. It would be my pleasure," Maggie said in a quiet, demure manner.

David placed his cup and saucer before the tray containing the tea service, placing it next to Maggie's. Maggie poured the tea with a deft, deliberate manner that pleasantly surprised him. The sweet aroma of the jasmine tea seemed to brighten the ambiance in the room.

"I see you have done this before," David remarked.

"Once or twice," Maggie said as she returned the teapot to the tray.

Raising her teacup towards him, she proposed a toast.

"Here's to charming a handsome stranger in a faraway land!"

"And here's to being charmed by a beautiful woman, full of mystique and intrigue!"

They touched teacups, raised their little fingers in fine, upscale fashion and sipped the *Cuppa*.

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

"This tea is amazing Maggie," David soon exclaimed. "I've never been particularly fond of tea, but this tea tastes different than any other I've had. I could drink this all day."

Aware of his acting abilities, Maggie replied "You're trying too hard David. It's decent tea, but it's not the best in the world."

Somewhat taken aback, David apologized for seeming too forward, and they began to enjoy their food.

For the next hour and half, they proceeded to engage in the stimulating conversation Maggie had hoped for. They talked about their likes and dislikes, David's family history, the history of Tallgrass, and of past romances. They charmed one another, David eventually dropping the fancy waiter routine, lowering his defenses and being himself. They drank three pots of *Cuppa*, Maggie insisting David simply add hot water and a little more jasmine tea to the teapot to preserve the flavor. Fortunately, he never questioned her, and did as she asked.

"David, I had an absolutely lovely time this afternoon. It's just what I needed today. I hope we can do it again sometime."

"Perhaps you would care to join me for dinner this evening," he replied.

"I was hoping you would say that. You were right earlier, you know."

"I was? About what?"

"I am fully satiated and may very well need to rest before dinner," Maggie said with an air of melancholy.

In his best Errol Flynn (Clark Gable?) impression, David gingerly held her hands in his, bringing them together in front of their faces and saying ever so sweetly, "In that case my dear, go now, and rest. Don't concern yourself with anything else. Not the bill, not your distant relatives, nor the wicked ways of the world. Save your strength my dear, and I shall come to your rescue this evening when the time is right."

Cuppa: A Marketing Story

Maggie smiled, bid David a good afternoon, gathered her things and departed for her room. She had a new air of confidence about her now. He had fallen right into her trap.