

The Man in the Corner

by Erin Bradley

The glass doors frame his body, covered in an oversized, dirty black jacket and weighted down by a bloated laptop case. His matted gray hair hides his eyes as he grabs his free cup of coffee and does it up with cream and raw sugar. The looks from customers begin at nine a.m. as they feed their addictions with fancy drinks, extra shots, and extra syrups because what's fifty more cents to them anyway? They don't wonder what went wrong. They have places to be in their SUVs and besides, they think they know his story: drug addict, alcoholic, no family, no friends. A crazy. One woman once said she'd just bet he stole that computer. Others ignore the dirt and the stink. They notice the flicker of the stock market tumbles on the glowing screen of his laptop, and they get curious. Like Paul Venti Light Foam Coffee Misto and Doug Grande Wet cappuccino with an Extra Shot and One Raw Sugar and Jeff Venti Americano with Whatever Syrup Looks Good all craning their necks and sometimes wanting to do something like pass a gift card over to him but not quite asking what his story is. I wonder what will happen the day he doesn't come in. When it's 12:45 and I'm off work and going home for the day and I haven't seen him. When I'll have to spend the night wondering if he'll be there the next day, smiling and thanking me for his coffee. When that day comes, my co-workers won't ask, "Hey, where's your dad?" because none of them know and I can't think of how to tell them.