

Mocha Wars

BY ROB COOK

I should have ordered a nonfat decaf latte.
But here I sit drinking a large
whole-milk triple-shot mocha
with extra whipped cream,
savoring the sweet taste of defiance,
basking in the warmth of the carcinogenic sun.

A few feet away a small boy
is storming the walls of a castle,
cleverly disguised as a bench.
He runs at it again and again
with squeals of delight,
punctuated by the occasional
protests of his mother
telling him to behave.
He ignores her.
I drink my mocha.
The boy is winning the battle.
The voice of authority is
no match for his exuberance,
not today.

But on another day years ago,
another boy was storming a similar castle
when the battering rams finally
breached the walls of his young mind.
Despite the loss he fights on to this day,
though the struggle is now contained
inside the walls.
And at some point,
running became exercise,
squealing became childish,
and the simple act
of deciding what to drink
became a proxy battle
in a cold war between
submission and rebellion.