

Caffeine Dreams

Michael Bettendorf

The last time we spoke, you were red-eyed and soaring high. I tried to bring you back down to Earth because I had something to say, but I don't remember what it was anymore. You smoked cigarettes while we walked around campus. I puffed a cigar. Something cheap from a gas station. Something fruity. I wish I could remember what it was.

Scratch all that.

The last time we spoke, was in a dream. I heard your laugh and cried. I woke up, melancholy and nostalgic for our conversations over coffee. Something our moms used to do. Do you remember?

You used to take your coffee with flavored creamer, no sugar. Then again, so did I, but that was then and now I only want it black. I wonder if your tastes would have changed too. Maybe developed is the better word. Chocolate coffee and coconut cream was your favorite combination. We used to slam that shit by the gallons and play Super Nintendo.

Do you know I still can't finish our game? The save file is exactly how we left it almost a decade ago. Every now and then I load it up and remember how you stayed at my house for days after graduation so we could beat it. We still only have one dungeon left.

I wish I could remember what we talked about, but memories can't be trusted and it probably doesn't matter anyway.

That's not fair.

Whatever we talked about mattered, in some way, in that moment. But we only get to talk in dreams now and cannot control the frequency. If I could, I'd tune my brain to your frequency so we could finish that talk. So why don't you haunt me instead, in my caffeine dreams. I'll turn the coffee pot on and wait.

Michael Bettendorf earned an English degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2012. Currently, he mentors children in Language Arts for the Lincoln Public School district and consumes books, comics, and podcasts. He is busy juggling a couple of novels and a podcast he swears he'll record one day. He lives in Lincoln with his wife, where he tries to convince the world that Nebraska is too strange to be a flyover state.