

# Coffee Foam

*by* John Olson

We entered the castle at dawn. The dim light feebly illumined an array of antiques and medieval weapons. Bats dangled from the high vaulted ceiling, enfolded in membranous wings. What were once chandeliers radiating light were encrusted with webs and the ancient wax of long dead candles. Our flashlights dazzled the walls. There were peacocks and angels, cherubs and robed women playing dulcimers. Reptiles skittered by. The strange predications of their skin displayed bright, iridescent colors and scales. A tall man in a black leather jacket, sunglasses, white cane, long shaggy hair and beard descended in a rickety elevator and introduced himself as Count von Zinzendorf, the legendary barista of Café Radis, who had long since retired and now spent his days reading old volumes in braille and feeding and stroking his reptiles. "How did you do it?" I asked. "How did you make those amazing coffee foam designs. Each one so unique, so spectacular, and you, a man who has been blind from birth." "I feel a stirring in my blood," he said in a voice so velvety it seemed itself to be the stuff of coffee foam. "I nimbly accept the toss of ocean waves. I feel the universe throbbing in my bones. I weigh the noise of my brain. As the world turns, I hear the calliope of our journey make its music in my wrists and fingers. My hands become birds, deft as the swallows that swoop the meadows of summer. And then the images come. I feel them as my hands trace their character and shape in the beverage. Would you like some coffee now?" He asked. I was breathless. "Yes, I would love some." We entered the room where he kept a number of espresso machines and samovars and jars full of tea. He produced two lattes and went to work, his hands quick as a magician's making birds appear and disappear. "All my nerves shout summer when I do this," he said. "I feel the glow of a thousand mornings and the deep peace of a Montana night, all simultaneously. Because this is the essence of coffee. It is morning and night in a single beverage." When he finished, I looked at the images on the surfaces of the latte. In one

was the face of a beautiful woman. In the other, was mine own face. Years later I married that woman whose face floated momentarily in that magnificent mug. Her name was Evelyn Lovelace, and she was a barista at the Café Mousse.

