



**Segue**  
Wiley Davis

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**Categorie(s):**

**Tag(s):** segue "wiley davis" "short story" coffee dreams "literary fiction"

He didn't want to be comfortable but he had no reason to be standing outside in that storm. It was a dry storm but storms in Phoenix are brutish. The air fills with dust, particles so small they get deep inside your lungs where it is difficult to cough them out. Heat lightning flashes sideways during these storms and the skin bristles because of it.

In the cafeteria the window bowed with each gust. Jim watched the steam curl up from his coffee and flinched slightly as the window shook. He sat very close to the window. It was a circular room and he sat at the periphery. Most people sat in the center but Jim preferred the periphery. Especially on days like these.

Today he was not the only person sitting alone. Four tables away, also next to the window, a girl sat staring at the storm. She did not have the pretense of coffee or tea. He thought about walking over to her table to see what she was about. He would say something like, "Hey, the least you could do is have a cup of coffee in front of you so that the others won't think you're strange."

Perhaps she would say, "It doesn't particularly concern me."

"The people?"

"The storm."

"Why should it concern you?"

"Because I'm here, behind this glass, where it's comfortable."

"Do you want to be uncomfortable?"

"Of course not. I just wish that I had no choice."

"And this doesn't concern you?"

"Not at the moment. Why were you sitting over there by yourself?"

"I was thinking about South America."

"Are you a geography major?"

"No. Someday I will ride a motorcycle to South America and I like to think about that when the storms blow in."

"Does that concern you?"

"Does what concern me?"

"The way that you sit in here when the storms blow in?"

"Not at the moment. I'm just biding time."

"I am very sorry to hear that."

His coffee continued to steam and he took a careful sip. It was almost cool enough to taste. The window shook again and outside on the circular lawn he watched as a blue and white plywood election sign rolled past, corner to corner to corner. It was moving fast and it looked heavy. He tried to think about trail-worn Kawasaki's and not about the money he had wasted and the people he had let down. One of these days, he

thought, something foolish will happen. He wished someone would come up to him at the table and say, "Why are you sitting here alone, staring out at the storm?"

And he would say, "Because I am missing the things I would most like to do and because I am afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"I am afraid of letting my dreams get away."

"So you sit here alone to keep hold of your dreams?"

"I sit here alone hoping they will smell blood and try to keep hold of me."

"I do not think dreams are that predatory."

"Nor do I."

The coffee no longer steamed and he drank most of it. In the center of the room sat a new crowd. A girl with long blond hair was leaning in very close and making assertive gestures while her friend expressed shock. Someone had turned on the wall-mounted television and two people sat staring at it, expertly guiding macaroni into their mouths without missing.

The window no longer shook and there was no trace of the blue sign outside on the lawn. He finished his coffee and noticed that the girl four tables away had already left.

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