Coffee Habit

by Megpie71

Summary

"I'm concerned about your coffee habit..."

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

Cloud blinked at the name on the cup. This was the fourth time today he'd seen a cup with "Zack" on it handed to him.

"It's the same guy," Yuffie said.

"What?" Cloud asked, his hands going through the motions of setting up Zack's 'caramel flat white' automatically.

"It's the same guy every time," Yuffie said, a touch impatiently. "That guy with the spiky black hair, over there. In the purple top."

Cloud peeked over the top of the coffee maker, spotted the customer in question, and nodded. He sort-of recognised the guy - not surprising, since he'd already given him three coffees so far today. Good looking guy.

"Caramel flat white for Zack," he called. The guy started forward, and took his coffee with a charming smile, and a "thanks". Polite of him, Cloud supposed, but nothing outstanding. He turned back to the orders waiting, and got back to work.

"I think he has a crush on you," Yuffie said, twenty minutes later after a sudden rush had cleared.

"What?"
"That Zack guy. He keeps coming in here, buying the same damn coffee, and he smiles at you every single time he picks it up."

Cloud gave her a sceptical look. "Yuffie. Lots of customers smile."

"Not all of them try to catch your eye." Yuffie prodded him with a forefinger, as he moved through the routines of cleaning up his station. "How long's it been between boyfriends, anyway?"

"None of your business," Cloud retorted. And it wasn't. It may have been six months since he and Wedge decided they were better off single than with each other, but that wasn't Yuffie's concern.

Yuffie shrugged, and moved back to the register to serve the next customer. "I think he likes you," Yuffie repeated, as she handed over the next order.

"Maybe he keeps coming back to see you, ever thought of that?" Cloud retorted as he tapped coffee grounds into the compost bin.

Yuffie shook her head, and moved back to serve another customer. "Naah, he's not my type," she said.

The topic was dropped for now, as another rush of customers came in. Cloud was kept busy putting together lattes, cappuccinos, flat whites, long blacks, espressos, and the occasional tea or hot chocolate order that showed up. Not long now until the end of the day, and they could close up the shop, mop the floors, put the chairs on the tables and go home.

The next day, Cloud was back at work, and an order for a caramel flat white for "Zack" came through again. He looked over the coffee machine. Yup, same guy. Tifa, who was working register and cold bar service today, hadn't commented on it, so presumably Yuffie hadn't seen fit to gossip. Cloud shrugged, filled the order, and handed it over to the guy. Another charming smile. Another "thanks].

This happened twice more in the course of the day, and by the fourth time "Zack" was showing up to get his coffee, Tifa had noticed as well.

"You have an admirer," she pointed out.

"Or the coffee does," Cloud said, not admitting anything as he made up the fourth caramel flat white for the day. It was a unique order, he'd grant the guy that much.

Tifa slapped him on the upper arm. "Cloud, there are three other coffee shops on this stretch of road alone. Why does he keep coming back here?"

"Unique blend of beans?"

"Bullshit, and you know it." Tifa folded her arms and scowled at him. "Say something to him. Give him an opening to work with."

"What, like you do with all the guys who want to talk to your tits?" Cloud riposted, before turning to the pickup area. "Caramel flat white for Zack."

Zack came up to the counter to pick up his drink. "Thanks," he said, once more. Still had a charming smile.

"No problem," Cloud replied. For some reason he was blushing. He turned back to the list of orders, and lost himself once more in the flow of business.
The next day, Zack was back again. Still ordering a caramel flat white every time, and still ordering multiple drinks each day.

"Just so you know," Cloud said, handing over Zack's fourth coffee for the day, "your fifth onward are all going to be decaf."

Zack grinned at him. "Decaf?"

Cloud nodded. "I'm concerned about your coffee habit. Drinking that much caffeine can't be good for you," he said.

"You'd be surprised," Zack said, taking his coffee and heading out.

Cloud looked over at Yuffie, who'd firstly been updated on all the gossip by Tifa, and secondly had been needling Cloud about this all day. "So?"

"I think you're in with a chance," she said. "Ask him out on a date."

Cloud glared at her. "I think you're jumping to conclusions."

"If I were jumping to conclusions," Yuffie shot back, "I'd be planning your wedding. You'd look cute in a dress!"

Cloud wound up thankful for the rush of customers who cut off her speculations before she could elaborate further.

Zack was back the next day as well. Vincent, who was working counter today, must have been briefed by Yuffie and Tifa, because Cloud caught him scowling in Zack's direction. It wasn't that Vincent had any idea of dating Cloud himself - Vincent's relationship with Cid was solid, and wasn't budging any time soon - but he tended to treat Cloud like a younger brother (or a nephew or something like that) and was rather protective of him.

"What's with the goth guy?" Zack asked as he picked up his second caramel flat white.

"Vincent won't hurt you," Cloud said.

"Nice to know. Get the feeling I should be glad he's not on barista, or I'd be getting my decaf a lot earlier in the day."

Cloud shrugged, and turned back to the orders.

Fridays were Cloud's day for working counter and cold bar - Barret, the owner, came in on Fridays and did the barista stuff. So when Zack showed up for his first coffee of the day, Cloud was greeted by a huge smile (which definitely impressed him - Zack's first coffee of the day was at about seven in the morning; most of the rest of the clientele were zombies), the expected request for a caramel flat white, and a further request: Cloud's phone number.

Cloud raised his eyebrows at that one, but decided to comply - up to a point. He caught a glimpse of Zack entering the first couple of digits into his phone around the steady flow of orders he was taking, and grinned to himself.

"Wha's goin' on there?" Barret asked once things had died down a little, and Cloud got a moment to restock the display fridge.

Cloud just shrugged. "Regular customer," he said.
"Most regular customers don't ask the staff for their phone numbers," Barret responded. "So, what's goin' on there?"

Cloud blushed. "He's been coming in all week, buys four coffees a day, and according to Yuffie and Tifa, he's interested in me. He seems nice enough, I figure one date won't hurt. If he turns out to be a jerk, he'll be getting decaf from then on in."

Barret laughed. "Sounds like you got a plan, anyway."

Zack continued to come back for the rest of his coffees for the day, and each time, Cloud gave him the next two digits of his phone number on the side of the cup. Each time, Zack entered them into his phone, and gave Cloud a huge, cheerful, charming smile. When the final coffee of the day came along, however, the smile turned to a slight frown, as Zack looked over the numbers on the cup, added them to the numbers on his phone, and did a quick count. As Cloud had planned, Zack was one number short. Now to see what happened next.

Zack looked over at Cloud, standing behind the register, looked at his phone, and then grinned. He drained his coffee, and headed back to the register.

"Looks like I'll have to order another drink," he said to Cloud, grinning.

"Just remember, next order is decaf," Cloud said, grinning back. "So, decaf caramel flat white?" he asked, pen poised over the side of the cup.

"Nah," Zack said. "I figure by now you know my coffee order, so I should find out yours. So what are you having?"

Cloud laughed, and looked over at Barret. "Okay if I take my break a bit early?"

End Notes

Taken from a prompt found on Tumblr. My first time at writing a modern-day coffee shop AU, so let me know whether I got things right. (All feedback is good feedback as far as I'm concerned).

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