

The Messenger

Volume 1996
Issue 1 *The Messenger*, 1996

Article 6

1996

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Recommended Citation

Himes, Christopher (1996) "Enough Coffee Talk," *The Messenger*: Vol. 1996: Iss. 1, Article 6.
Available at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol1996/iss1/6>

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Enough Coffee Talk

Two leather jackets flew through the air, landing on vinyl benches opposite one another. Two packs of cigarettes, also briefly airborne, came to rest beside the display of assorted condiments. Their owners soon followed, throwing themselves into the booth.

Through thick clouds of smoke, the two friends gazed at the view adjacent to them. All the children at the school across the street played freely during recess. Every day they witnessed this mid-day break of the children in the lower school.

"People watch too many damn movies now, that's all I'm saying." George inhaled deeply from his black Russian cigarette.

Tito retorted. "Maybe some people enjoy taking in an occasional motion picture with a friend or date just to, you know, take in the cinematic experience."

"Bullshit!" George continued to puff away on his imported addiction. "People go to movies just so they don't have to talk to each other. Plain and simple, that's all it is, just a way to avoid conversation."

Tito let out a condescending laugh. "That is ridiculous, half of the people I know talk all the way through movies. The other half avoid social interaction altogether. How can you group all movie goers as inept conversationalists and social frauds?"

Cigarette in hand, George propped his hand on his temple and tried to look intelligent. His eyes probed Tito's. "My friend, all I am saying is that most people would like to avoid talking to one another for at least ninety minutes of every social outing."

A well-endowed waitress, Candi, smirked and asked them if they would like more coffee. They both accepted, as Tito antagonized his friend further.

"Your arguments are getting more ludicrous every time you open your mouth! What about the couple who goes to dinner for two hours, talking all the while, goes to a movie for a couple more, then does dessert and gin rummy at her house? Are you telling me that *they* are scared to speak to one another?"

George, emulating Harvey Keitel, wore his finest stare, lips crooked, left eyebrow cocked, right eye squinting. "And what, Tito, about the emotionally incapable dad who works too hard? Probably divorced, he sees the kids one weekend a month, doesn't even know how to act or what to say to the poor little things. What do you think he wants to do with his children? Go to a fucking movie, so he doesn't have to deal with them. 'Cause kids love movies so much, mom hears no complaints until that one Sunday night when the eldest, now about sixteen, asks 'why doesn't daddy ever do anything with us?' Then, he has to face the music!" Proud with his condensed sermon, George leaned back in his booth and sipped his coffee until his friend responded.

Tito smirked, as if to discard such a foolish thought, and wondered what to say. "Schmucks like that guy don't talk to their kids anyway, so that's a crappy example. I'm talking about the average Joe and Amy going out on the town. So they take in a flick; does that mean if they watch TV together that they can't cope with verbal interaction?"

"Yes." George's thoughts caught up to his mouth; then he continued. "But it really depends on what shows they watch."

"What!?" Tito nearly choked on his toast.

"You know. Like there are some people who are intelligent enough to appreciate a challenging show like all that shit on PBS or A&E, but most cats prefer to watch MTV or ESPN. They're the losers who, if they even leave the damn house, pay \$7.50 to escape."

Candi reappeared, offered more coffee, then poured it, and left.

Tito thought a moment, lit up a Marlboro with his brass Zippo. "I like to watch movies. I would watch them by myself. It really--"

"See. That's my point, you would watch them alone. Who are you avoiding then? Everyone! You would be avoiding everyone, so on what do you still disagree?" George lit a new Russian with the butt of his old one.

Exasperated, Tito lashed out. "Every time you open your mouth, nothing comes out. Why do I even talk to you about serious subject matter?" He was now shouting. "You don't even let me talk because you're scared I might say something you can't prove wrong. But I should know better, because you are always right!"

Candi came over, asked them to keep the noise down, coughed on the smoke, left the check, and vanished into the kitchen.

George, calmer now to offset his friend's temper, began softly. "Come on, Tito, I didn't mean to interrupt, but if you want an apology, you can fucking forget it. Now calm the fuck down." Tito obliged. "Now when I say people go just so the don't have to talk, I don't mean everyone. What I'm saying is that the number of people who go just so they can shut up and stop talking about the weather and boring shit like that is far more than the number of folks that go for intellectual enjoyment of the show. Fair enough?"

"Yeah." Tito glanced at his Ironman. "Look, we gotta get there early before they sell out. It's opening night, and if we miss it we'll have to see the late showing.

"I can't stay out late. I'm partially grounded. Let's go." They packed up their cigarettes in their bookbags and paid the \$2 check for their pair of bottomless cups.

As the door slammed behind them, Candi commented to a group of co-workers. "Those kids come in here every day after school, smoke like five packs of butts, guzzle coffee, and debate about the same stuff like a couple of intellectual wise guys. You know why? I'll tell you. Too many of those damn Tarantino movies."

--- *Christopher Himes*