

Book Review: *Coffee and Cake*

Author: Julia I. Meyers

For me, *Coffee and Cake* provided both the intimacy of a highly-personal memoir and the cliff-hanging plot twists of a good old-fashioned mystery. As a 72-year-old greybeard with 7 grandkids, all from a common lineage, my familiarity with the subject of the book was non-existent, as was what I thought would be my interest. “Birth parents”? “Adoptees”? The decision of a 28-year-old mother to “selflessly sever a part of herself as a gift to strangers”? This was unplowed ground.

A combination of sparkling writing and the storyline of an immigrant adoptee who had achieved American citizenship and a doctorate in archeology, only to discover that *what* she was wasn’t nearly as important as *who* she was, kept me turning the pages.

Her search for her birth mother, then father, led her back to her native Germany, and a private detective-like effort at international sleuthing that ultimately led her to that woman who had selflessly severed a part of herself, and given Julia a life that she herself could not have provided.

That discovery was just the beginning. Would her adoptive parents fret over her need to find those who had provided life itself? Would there be siblings? Would her birth mother’s new husband accept this stranger from America? Should her two mothers meet? The opportunity for loving interaction was tempered throughout by the very real potential for familial discord on both sides of the ocean.

If a single word were necessary to describe *Coffee and Cake*, that word for me would be *authentic*. The sensitivity exhibited throughout the book extended as well to me, the reader, as I was led into this very personal element of her life gently, honestly, and completely.

Michael Sheehan

Author of *Dogs in the Hot Moon*