



# THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

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Year 2015

Article 17

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4-13-2015

## Dancing with the Dark

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Class of 2017

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Atinizian, Lori A. (2015) "Dancing with the Dark," *The Mercury*: Year 2015, Article 17.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2015/iss1/17>

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# Dancing with the Dark

**Keywords**

creative writing, non-fiction

**Author Bio**

Lori Atinizian is a sophomore who plans to be a Film major with a double minor in Writing and English. She is a member of GBurgTV and Film Society. While she loves creative writing, she is also passionate about going to the movies, experimenting with her video camera, and spending long hours editing clips in solitude. Her favorite novels are Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Jane Eyre. She would like to thank her parents for giving her the opportunity to attend Gettysburg College. If it weren't for their continual support, her passions would have died young. She would also like to thank her friends for being her brightest stars in the darkest nights.

# Dancing with the Dark

Lori Atinizian

The bathroom. My sanctuary. *I'll wash my face and let it all drown.*

I look in the mirror, sixteen, a virgin to the world. I take my shirt off out of guilt, and fix my unaligned sports bra. I am shot. I remember the pain that consumed my body half an hour ago and proceed to lift my bra from the side, sliding it gently. My skin is discolored on both sides but still hidden by the useless piece of clothing that did not protect me from him. Bruises of all sizes and diverse shades of brown design my skin. *I'll remember this tomorrow morning. Then the morning after.*

The warm hand continued to press against my torso, as I lay frozen in my bed. I jolted every time the hand discovered the spot that has always been my childhood secret. Each time, he'd lose the spot again, and press along the side of my ribs once more to find that hidden spot. And again, another jolt.

"Stop moving so much," he whispered.

I laughed, trying to keep up with the charade. This *was* a charade after all. The shadows hid us well, wrapping us in a solitary shield. My brother snored in the opposite corner of the room. The hand pushed harder. Harder.

This bruise was from that big push. I still feel the thumb pressing against my skin, but I know it's finally over. But it's not over. It can't be. His thumb is still painted viciously on my body like an abstract paint splatter that a crazed artist whipped onto the canvas.

"You know you can't tickle me if you push that hard, right?"

But his thumb kept pushing; my words scampering off into nowhere. When the heat stopped pushing, it grazed across my chest instead, to find another spot on the other side of my body. Pushing and pushing, my frame falsely danced under the covers in discomfort. The hand mistook this for a positive response, and pressed harder. *Stop. Harder. Stop. Harder.*

I am thankful that the bruised circles can only be found underneath a few layers of clothing. All I need to do is not look in a mirror until they are fully healed. Until I can't feel them anymore. What hurts the most physically hurts the least. I try to wrap my head around it, but nothing. There's not an explanation. I'm struck with confusion. That couldn't have been

tickling. Not there. Right?

The hand tired and wished to return to its original project. This time, it crawled under my sports bra, reaching in places that have only ever been left untouched, and it lingered. The world was too big for the happenings in a bedroom in the attic. The hand deviously found its way below my torso, searching, exploring, and finding warmth in the most unnatural of places. The tips of his fingers slid around, waiting eagerly for another response. I didn't give it to him, but the fingers were too keen to give up.

Words developed like saliva, yet snoring proved to be the only sound in the room. *Why are you doing this? Please, just stop, and I'll forget everything you've been trying to do.* So much saliva ready to spit out, but silence. Silence. The words were desperate to leave; yet my body lay paralyzed in discomfort, until finally it collapsed under the tips of the fingers, and the charade took on a life all its own.

I am proud of my actions, or at least, the best of what I could do. When I was little, I would often pretend to be asleep so I could listen to what my family talked about. Sometimes, I would do it so my dad would carry me and put me to bed. True protection wraps his arms and gently takes my shoes off and then replaces his arms with a warm blanket.

I attempted to recall my childhood mischief. False sleep overcame me, and my eyelids slipped into darkness. Confusion gripped the hand and pulled it away, finally. The owner leaned over my body, checking my face for signs of life. I compelled my breath to flow deeper and louder to confirm his suspicions. *In what world would I ever have to even think about dealing with this?* Apparently, this world. The world in which a hand of my close, 35-year-old cousin familiarizes itself with my body.

Only when he stood up and left the room did I eventually feel some peace. Both sides of my body throbbed, each spot reminding me of Horror I never wanted to meet again. A minute after he left the room, I wanted to cry, but I was left with a dry face. I was allowed only five minutes of peace by the time the door reopened. I resumed my sleep-like state. The springs in the bed next to me squeezed together. *Sleep.* I waited. I naturally flipped to my left side away from his body, so I could lay with my eyes open to watch the shadows laugh at me. Their protective shield was only a means of keeping me in, fighting against me, preventing my escape. The shadows snickered instead. I stared as they pointed and called me *weak* and *wasted*.

A roar resonated by my side. Each inhale led to another roar. Soundlessly, I removed the worn blanket and fumbled my way to the door. The light in the hallway pierced my dilated eyes, and for a second, I was blind. I let my eyes adjust to the walls around me, the stairway that leads to the main floor, the door I left behind. My foot found the platform a step below, and the next platform, and the next platform, until I made it to the

bottom. I needed silence away from the dark, away from the hand, away from the person I've looked up to my whole life.

The bathroom. My sanctuary. *I'll wash my face and let it all drown.* My bra and shirt fall back into place, and I'm ready to move on from the night.

Instinctively, I walk toward the toilet. Everything needs to go behind me. Everything. But directly underneath, my foot steps in water. *Must be from the sink.* But that wouldn't make sense because I'm standing in front of the toilet. Something is wrong, but before I could think it's anything other than water, I look down; it's not water. *Is that what it's supposed to look like?* The shrimp scampi my chef cousin made for my family resists digestion, and I'm certain I'm about to vomit, but my body *still* refuses to cleanse itself of the night. My body becomes weak again, and I start to lose my balance. I catch myself on the countertop by the sink, trying to pull myself together. I pull toilet paper from the rack and look away as I wipe the thick substance from the sole of my foot.