



# THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

---

Year 2007

Article 11

---

1-1-2007

## Margarita Night

Anna Chilton  
Gettysburg College  
Class of 2007

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

**Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.**

---

Chilton, Anna (2015) "Margarita Night," *The Mercury*: Year 2007, Article 11.  
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2007/iss1/11>

This open access fiction is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact [cupola@gettysburg.edu](mailto:cupola@gettysburg.edu).

---

# Margarita Night

**Keywords**

creative writing, fiction

**Author Bio**

Anna Chilton is a senior Environmental Studies major and Writing minor. At eight years old Anna made her first attempt at writing her great novel. She hopes that life will continue to inspire her in the right direction. Anna thanks: her family for keeping her grounded while encouraging her dreams, her Fire Department for being her rock and her first love, and all her friends for adding their threads of color to her life.

## Margarita Night

"Do you have anything in leather?"

Carmen gave a start and pressed a hand to her heart, letting out her breath. "Get out of my store."

A slow masculine chuckle danced in the air and warmed the room. Carmen was glaring, her hand still pressed to her chest. She had been daydreaming and didn't notice the sucking gasp as the front door opened and pulled the fragrant atmosphere past her nose. She didn't feel the feathering of her loose hair on her cheek as the warm mountain air rushed into the boutique challenging the artificial arctic inside, nor the sleigh bell jangle which followed the door sealing itself shut again. She had been too preoccupied re-living the past 48 hours of her life, and now this. Well, at least he wasn't anything that she couldn't deal with. After all, she was Carmen Fairchild.

Her voice rose along with her eyebrow and her chin, she drew herself up into the picture of authoritarian dignity, "I said, get OUT of my store!"

"Aww, come off it, Carmen! I know there's a naughty side somewhere in that goody-two-shoes life of yours. Or at least, that's what I'm hoping..."

Carmen giggled, her façade immediately toppled by the shoe scuffing bullshit of her old friend, "Charlie! Cut it out, you're lucky my boss isn't here."

Charlie tried immediately to look as if his life was in danger, striking a pose that Carmen knew was coming before she'd finished her sentence. She had known Charlie since before college, way back in high school when everyone in their small class was convinced they had everyone else all figured out. Her friendship with Charlie had caused school-wide ripples of disbelief. What was the straight-laced straight-A Carmen Fairchild doing with Charlie Landon? Everyone knew he was trouble, he was the reason that half the school knew what pot was and where to get it. He was disruptive, he was rude, and he was also famously lazy. Or at least that was the quickest and easiest way to classify Charlie, or 'Lando' as he was known.

That nickname came out of no where, coined by another of their half-delinquent friends. It had grown from there to be the only name by which anyone knew Charlie, even if those people had never met him. Just to mention the name 'Lando' conjured up some legendary figure that used to roam the hallways of their old alma mater. Carmen was the only one who ever called him Charlie and when she did no one knew who she meant. Their peers had decided that the only acceptable explanation, the only one that could mesh with the labels chosen for them, was that Carmen had befriended Charlie as a pet project. When she was done with him he might not be so hopeless. After all, she was Carmen Fairchild. She was the good girl.

Carmen unconsciously rolled her eyes thinking back on all of that. Typical, she thought, I wonder what they would think of me now? The 'good girl' who...she couldn't even think about that now since Charlie had continued his feigned drama and was now attempting to hide in a rack of clothes.

"Charlie, do you know how much those sweaters cost?"

"Nope," was the muffled reply from the pair of eyes that poked out from inside the ring of hangers.

"Well, let's just say you should save your money for Margarita Night. I want to go tonight after work."

Charlie's eyes lit up and he disappeared for a few seconds as he fought his way

back out of the sweaters. When he stood in front of her again static had swept his hair into an enormous cow-lick, "I've only known you to volunteer for Margarita Night once before. Something must be up."

Carmen wrestled with a smile for a moment as the comical image of her best friend in front of her was suddenly eclipsed by memories of the past two days. I need to get a hold of myself today, she thought as she spoke. "I just need a drink."

"Or five."

"Charlie!"

"Ok ok, how's Lacy?"

"You should know. She went to your house last week to buy from your sister. She came home with an ounce, already floating and she stank."

"Ahh, yeah, Sal got a good crop this last time. It was good enough stuff though that she shouldn't have smelled that bad."

"Ugh, you know that stuff pinches inside my nose," Carmen inadvertently wrinkled hers at the thought; "I don't like it. She was blazed and giggling like an idiot."

"I know, I know, but there are worse things Lacy could be doing," Carmen stiffened at these words but Charlie didn't notice, "Right, I need to go be a landscaper for the day, see you at six then?"

The sleigh bells jangled their silvery notes into the stagnant July air as Charlie left the boutique. She looked at the strap of bells; the mark of a town which spent its days either wishing it was three feet under powder or digging its way out when the wish came true in December. Carmen sighed as she watched him go. Telling Charlie was going to be the hardest part of the whole thing, but she needed him right now, and he needed to know. Carmen couldn't lie to Charlie, just as she knew he couldn't lie to her. It was the kind of trust that came after years of knowing a person. It was something that not many in that town could understand, just like the way no one could understand their friendship in the first place. The real reason for their friendship, the reason that no one in the social mind-trap that was their High School could figure out, was the fact that Charlie and Carmen enjoyed each other's company, plain and simple. The two of them got along for no particular reason, although they both suspected that Charlie helped loosen Carmen up a little and Carmen was one of the few people who actually took 'Lando' as something other than a joke. That's why he was Charlie to her - she knew the person, not the legend. They had gotten one thing right, though, back in high school, Carmen mused as she steadied her mind, the 'good girl' Carmen Fairchild, was going places.

Looking at me, one wouldn't suspect a thing, she thought. It was a Tuesday; she had been early enough to open the shop before the regular customers arrived. Her ensemble, as always, the perfect balance of flirty and tasteful, and she was smiling.

God, life is funny.

Natalie arrived an hour and three customers after Charlie left, "I am SO sorry, my alarm didn't go off!"

Carmen laughed, "No worries darlin', it hasn't been busy. Marilyn, um, your mom already called and I covered. She's coming in later."

"Oh good, checking up on us, I suppose," Natalie rolled her eyes, "you'd think she would relax at this point."

Carmen looked up from behind the counter, "Well, it is her business and I haven't been working here that long. I dunno."

Natalie rolled her eyes again and sighed. Then she did this peculiar thing that

she did when she moved from place to place. From a complete standstill Natalie would summon her energy, gather herself up, and with a heave carry her hunched body to her next destination. She really looked as if she was lugging an invisible sack over her shoulder but all she did was walk, or more accurately hunch her way about. For now she hunched her way with some effort into the back room. Carmen's gaze followed her familiar slump and continued to stare at the printed sign on the door as it closed behind Natalie; 'EMPLOYEES ONLY' it read. Her eyes fixed on that point for no particular reason, the black block capitals blurring into a massive smudge as her thoughts pulled her consciousness elsewhere.

She was only slightly aware of Natalie's small sounds behind the door, rustlings coming through the grating and nudging at Carmen's mind. First the clatter of syringes and insulin from her purse into the mini fridge, then a cough, one she had had since Carmen met her two months before, finally her heavy footed dumping as she hunched her small body down into the basement to double-check the opening routine that Carmen had been taught a month ago. Entranced by her inner meanderings Carmen's hazelnut eyes began to water. She hadn't blinked in well over thirty seconds. When dry pinpricks began to torture her eyes, Carmen got a hold of herself and was smiling again when Natalie emerged.

The day crawled by for Carmen and her face started to hurt from fake smiling at every man, woman, and child who walked into the boutique. Small things got to her, like the fact that her air conditioning kept escaping around the bodies wandering through the door and a new shipment of lingerie arrived that she hadn't been expecting. When half the order turned out to be the wrong sizes she nearly burst into tears, but no one said a word to her about it. Carmen may have been detached but she was good at hiding it. Nonetheless, when her boss arrived to made a circuit around the boutique Carmen felt like a mouse doing its best to avoid attracting the attention of an uncomfortably close hawk. She busied herself with the shipment of lingerie, only looking up if her clipboard fell into shadow as her boss swooped by. Carmen might have felt guilty, but she kept smiling. Marilyn didn't notice that the smile touched Carmen's lips but not her eyes. Marilyn wasn't whom Carmen had to answer to, it was Charlie. She did not relish the thought of being a disappointment to anyone, but the thought that it would be Charlie made her feel like someone was pouring burning ice past her heart. Dismay was slowly filling her from the toes up; she had no way to stop it.

Carmen felt her first moment of clarity when everyone had gone and she clicked the deadbolt into place at 5:30. As she watched the block of metal glide easily into the doorjamb, Carmen shuddered, her ears hearing phantom echoes of much larger locks grating into place on much larger doors. It only took a moment before she remembered herself and quickly finished closing before she finally headed to her car.

The drive up the mountain was an easy one; she had done it so many times before. It was along the sole road that led directly from the lower village up to the ski resort, various bits branching off as it went, one to the High School, one to the Boot & Board Shop, one to the only Mexican restaurant for forty miles in any direction. This was where she and Charlie always did Margarita Night. It was tradition and the only place they wouldn't run into anyone they recognized.

Charlie hadn't arrived yet, so Carmen took advantage of the extra time to knock back a shot of tequila. She asked that the shot glass and lime rind be cleared from the bar before Charlie showed up, she didn't want that to be the starting point of their conversation. Within ten minutes he was there. He smelled like cut grass and looked

like hell. Carmen had to laugh; he did always make her feel better.

"Carmen, Carmen, Carmen," Charlie began as she knew he would. "What in the world possessed you to come out drinking on a Tuesday?"

"How about we drink first, Charlie." It was a statement, not a suggestion.

"Alright, getting serious, I like this!" Charlie rubbed his hands together with an impish grin on his face, "We'll take two blue margaritas, mine's frozen, hers straight, salt on both."

Three drinks passed and Carmen still hadn't come out with it. Charlie had chatted away about his day, his car, and his sister. Charlie said that Sal had gone out of state for a few days to visit her boyfriend; it was getting close to her birthday so she wanted to see him. She hadn't come back yet, which wasn't a surprise, often these trips sparked spontaneous traveling sprees and Sal wouldn't turn up again for a couple weeks. Charlie had been fixing up the house as a surprise; he figured it was the best Birthday present he could afford. Sal and Charlie were close; she was just about the only person who knew him better than Carmen did. Sal had been eighteen when their mom died. She held together their household and fourteen year old Charlie as best she could, keeping multiple jobs and selling weed to the local dopers on the side. It wasn't enough, and the only reason they were able to keep the house was because their father still lived in town. He paid for it but did nothing else - that house had never supported the weight in his shoes. Carmen suspected he must realize that only the Earth could hold up a soul like his, obese with its own self importance.

Carmen knew how Charlie worshipped his sister. She was the one thing in the world that made him realize his own worth. Sal was the only person Charlie loved; the only person besides her. Carmen knew this also, and she could feel the dismay now rising to her throat. Soon it would come spilling out. By the fourth drink she had to excuse herself to make a phone call while he ordered nachos. When she got back, she didn't touch the chips.

"Charlie," she said.

"Mmpf?" He had already dived into their nachos. Carmen didn't mind, at least she could get it all out then.

"Charlie, do you remember the news two nights ago?"

"Sure, some more bullshit about taxes and the national debt."

"No, I mean local," Carmen glanced out the window, dismay washing around inside her mouth, its chill pulling the rose blush of alcohol from her cheeks.

"Nope. Look, Carmen, what's up? I know something is wrong, it's not like you can hide that from me."

Carmen looked back at him just after she spotted the black Suburban glide into the parking lot. The vehicle circled, once, like a shark, then she lost sight of it.

"Carmen?"

"It's my sister," dismay trickled the words from her lips.

"She was on the news?"

"No. Well, not really. You know how the police are investigating that hit and run near the border?"

"Yeah, they still haven't identified the body, something about lack of dental records.

What does that have to do with Lacy?"

"She just got her license a month ago. Charlie, we were going to celebrate finally, just the two of us..." Carmen trailed off for a moment her lips damming the icy cold until she couldn't wait any longer, she had to speak or drown. "We were blaring

music and singing, we had no idea until it was too late and even then we thought it was an animal. When we got out, oh my god, Lacy started to scream. She was driving the car, Charlie."

Charlie didn't move, but it was the look on his face that made Carmen want to die. Behind him a police officer stepped into the room. He saw her right away and began speaking into the radio clipped on his collar.

"I drove the car away," she whispers now, "I told Lacy to remember that I was driving the car that day."

"Carmen, no."

"It's ok Charlie," she nodded to the officer as she picked up her purse and handed Charlie some cash. "I had to protect her, Charlie. She's only sixteen. She's in Tampa with mom, she's safe." Carmen glanced once more at the waiting officer. "Besides, everyone always said that I was going places. Well, they were right; Carmen Fairchild is going to jail." She smiled. "I always liked proving them wrong."

Two days later Charlie's dad came to see Carmen. The local police station was too small to offer a space for Carmen to stay while she awaited her trial. She was being held for manslaughter three counties away, which had its perks if you preferred powder blue sheets over white for your cell mattress. This man, whom Carmen had only seen once before in her life, this man, who knew that at his highest moment he could only hope to be regarded as an arrogant bastard, this man had driven two hours to see her. She didn't have a record and the charges were as yet unproven, so Carmen found herself sitting across from Charlie's dad only in handcuffs. The table was a plastic folding one, like those you find at community church dinners and picnics. It's funny what you notice when you're trying not to look at someone, Carmen thought.

He spoke first. "Carmen, I know we only met once, but, believe it or not, I know a little bit about you."

Carmen gave him an incredulous look, "What could you possibly think you know about me?"

The man chuckled but it was a cold sound barking from his throat, "I do read the paper Miss Carmen Fairchild, magna cum laude blah blah blah. Quite impressive. The Community Announcements section shares a page with the Business section. And I can't help but notice every time your pretty face looks out from that page." He leaned forward in his seat, "I realize how much you mean to my boy."

Carmen only stared back at him. He was a filthy man. He had done nothing for anybody but himself his whole life. And he thought he had a handle on Charlie; he thought he had a reason to interest her. Carmen sniffed, tried to cross her arms but was jolted as the cuffs caught her movement. She kept her hands in her lap as she leaned closer, her lips parted as if to divulge a secret, "I don't need you to tell me anything about Charlie," she whispered.

His eyes flashed, "Carmen, do you know why I came here? You don't, so I'll cut the bullshit. Frankly it is costing me money being here, but it just might be worth it to see the look on your face. I know plenty about my boy that you ain't privy to. For example I know that Charlie left yesterday to go pick up his sister from her boyfriend's place, figured her car busted again. I know that he's not going to find her..." his anger cracked and tears started running down his cheeks. "I know because the police came to my apartment yesterday. The house is in my name, so are all of the kids' old doctor



records. Charlie isn't going to find Sal, because, Miss Carmen Fairchild, the police could only identify her by her dental records."

Carmen's heart leapt from her chest and shattered itself across the floor. "What?" But she knew what, her mind spun bits of memory past her like someone twisting the dial on a radio without stopping. Charlie smiling at her, his and Sal's house on the green hill, the marijuana growing in their barn with the tin roof to hide the heat, Sal and her boyfriend having a picnic in the lawn, Lacy screaming, a black shape rolling over the front of the car.

Charlie and Sal had stopped going to the doctor after their mother died, growing and selling weed wasn't exactly a safe vocation, so they wanted to be as far off the grid as possible; plus, those visits were expensive. That meant doctor and dental records stopped, no phones, nothing to their name other than a P.O. Box in town. You had to know someone who knew someone to find their house. That's why it had taken the police four days to find Sal's dental records and match them to her body. The body that Lacy had mangled and Carmen had left behind without looking back.

"Well," Carmen dragged her eyes up the man's face as he spoke, "it was almost worth it to see the look on your face right now. The money, I mean." His eyes shouted at her but his voice dropped low, "It will be almost worth it to know that you will have to tell him, Carmen, you will have to look my boy in the eye and tell him that you killed his sister."

Carmen couldn't sleep waiting for Charlie to come and find her; he came two nights later looking tired but happy. She was going to throw up, looking at him. There he was across the table from her where his father had been. She could see the bits of his dad where genetics pulled his features through. Charlie had the same hair and the same nose. Genetics had stopped there, Carmen thought as she looked into the tired eyes and the honest heart they opened to the world, and she noticed for the first time that Charlie's eyes were blue.

"Hey there," he said, "I've missed you my little convict."

She tried to smile but instead found herself fighting tears.

"Ok, ok bad joke! I'm sorry," he said reaching out to her across the table. His hand touched her arm and she jerked her hand up to brush him away. The handcuffs clanked together as they slid down her wrists.

"Don't touch me," she whispered.

He withdrew slowly staring at the handcuffs, "Carmen..."

"NO, Charlie," she cut him off, "no."

He fell back in his chair, his face a jigsaw of hurt, indignant, and confusion. She took a shuddering breath, squared her shoulders and fixed her hazelnut eyes on his clear blue ones. "Charlie," she began, "I have something to tell you. I know you didn't find Sal. I know because your Dad was here and he told me."

"My dad! What the hell does he know about it?!"

"Charlie, he came here to tell me that he found Sal."

Charlie hissed the air out between his teeth, "Since when did he start caring, what did he want from her bad enough to go get her himself?"

"It wasn't that. Charlie, she was the one...who...Charlie, I love you."

Carmen's voice broke and she raised her shackled hands to her face. "Oh Charlie I love you so much, and I didn't realize or let myself until..." she kept her eyes fixed on his, truth burning in every word. "We hit her, Charlie. It was Sal in the accident."

Carmen watched as his eyes widened in disbelief, as her words carved his



features into something unrecognizable. In the same sentence she had given Charlie everything he had hoped for the past three years and tore his world to pieces. She had reached out and filled the hole in his heart by slipping in a knife. Trembling he stood, shaking his head as though trying to clear it, his eyes clamping shut and re-opening again unfocused. "You..." he reeled and caught himself on the table. A metallic zip sounded as she reached for his hand across the table, dragging handcuffs across plastic. His head snapped up and his eyes focused on hers. Slowly he withdrew from her, his eyes chasing her breath from her body. And she knew in that moment that there was no longer any love for her in his heart. Then the man she loved turned and walked away from her.

JAMES BUCKLEY

## Loose Lips of Liquor

The loose lips of liquor hold  
tongue for no one,  
and the inspiration for all drunken babeling,  
is truth.  
Virtuous is the drunken poet,  
and what a virtue she wields,  
for nothing can sting quite like  
truth ringing free.  
Explain it away as the voice of the vice  
but the conclusion I find  
is the bottom of the bottle  
is the portal through which one breaks  
all binding social confines.  
May God smile down upon  
this Mick of a muse,  
for in her voice virtue sings;  
May God console the sober  
who this virtue scars and stings.