



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2008

Article 23

1-1-2008

One Night

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Class of 2008

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McCabe, Alison F. (2015) "One Night," *The Mercury*: Year 2008, Article 23.

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Keywords

creative writing, fiction

Author Bio

Alison McCabe is a Psychology and Creative Writing double major. She will attend graduate school in the fall to receive her M.F.A. in fiction, and from there she has very little clue as to what she will do, though she knows what she would like to do, and that is to become an enormously successful writer. Instead of mentioning her interests—which are too many to list, and none of which are particularly interesting—Alison would like to use the remainder of her bio space to thank all the wonderful people who inspired, guided, and encouraged her to pursue writing.

One Night

I'm going to think about the sun and the morning and a beach and some sand and a mermaid and a dolphin and the vacation that Benny and I never took to Fiji, because private practice shrinks have got the money, just not the time.

This will be the perfect opportunity to see to it that Benny never breathes again. He is sleeping, which is most ideal because his eyes are closed and so he will not see the glimmer of a steak knife as it catches light from the circular bulbs that frame the medicine cabinet behind the bathroom door left slightly ajar. Or if he wakes up, which Benny rarely does, it might be an excellent chance to follow his stagger to the toilet, watch him fill the bowl with ripe lemon piss, and then kick the back of his knees in such a way that will make his head dunk in. He will be too tired, and now too stunned, to notice the hairdryer balancing on the edge of the toilet seat, plugged in and blowing cool refreshing air through his thinning black hair until he throws his left shoulder up to fight the pressure of two palms pushing him down. And the hairdryer might then fall in and there might be a splash and maybe a quick singe. Or if he doesn't wake up to take a leak, and the steak knives are still in the dishwasher, the navy blue sock resting at the foot of the bed, the one he wears with black dress pants, might make its way around his oversized Adam's apple and to the nape of his neck so that Benny might even throw in a few raspy last words *what the fuck*, eloquent no doubt, before his heart quits on him.

And what is that? I'll ask no one in particular. Oh, and here I'll sigh, that's silence.

It will be best that Benny never breathes again because Benny snores. It is a sleep-stopping snore, the type of snore that doesn't quite cut it as background noise, that is so irregular, so unpredictable, that you must stay awake all eight hours every night to find out just what will happen next with the snore, whether it will whistle or rattle, puff or heave. It is the type of snore that reminds you of all the reasons why it is best to sleep alone, and leads you to forget all the reasons why you once wished to share a night, or two or three or eternal matrimony with another. Benny's snore reminds you of the sex you are no longer getting, and makes you wonder when was the last time Benny even breathed heavy in bed while still awake.

When was the last time Benny walked around the house naked? This used to be one of Benny's favorite things to do because he used to say *I like when I catch you checking out my goliath* or *Who you looking at?* and smirk. Sometimes Benny would sit at the dinner table naked and comment on how delicious the chicken pot pie and bagged salad tasted. One time Benny threw a cooked carrot at my shirt just so he could take it off to *get out the stain* and bring me to the bedroom.

Now Benny snores. And drools. And takes up more than half the bed. And sleeps with flannel boxers on. And doesn't get up until nine and I have to

be in the office by 8:45. And, dammit goddammit it's 6:16. And this is really the perfect opportunity.

And here is where you raise an eyebrow or two and say *she can't be serious*.

I'm going to get up now and walk around and head to the kitchen for something to eat because this is what you do when you cannot stand the warthog beside you hogging the king-size comforter. I'm going to walk into the kitchen and pour myself a glass of water and I'm going to rest my hand on my hip and my glass on the counter for a moment while I eye the bottle of ammonia behind the breadbox. Ammonia gets even the most difficult grime off of tiles. And I'm going to think about the tiles and the way they look more orange than tan when the sunlight hits them at this hour. I'm going to think about the sun and the morning and a beach and some sand and a mermaid and a dolphin and the vacation that Benny and I never took to Fiji, because private practice shrinks have got the money, just not the time. And I'm going to think of how Benny tells me how he tells all of his clients that a second honeymoon will save their marriage, that a spontaneous getaway will combat anxiety, cure insomnia, reduce gray hairs. *Dinner out might save you two*, he says, or *have you tried Viagra, whipped cream? Drink some tea and relax*, he says, *I'm sure I can help you through this*.

I'm going to drink some water and I'm going to stand in the kitchen alone and I'm going to hear Benny snort then hiss. I'm going to bring him a drink too, and wake him up with kisses. See that, I'll say, I'm sweet.

I'm in the kitchen and I'm staring at the tiles and the counter with the breadbox and I'm pouring Benny a drink and bringing it to the bedroom. I'm on the bed again and he's snoring and so I'm sure of this. He is lying on his side, his back to me, and I notice the black corkscrew hairs trickling down his spine from neck to tailbone, thicker at each end. I smile at the tufts on each shoulder blade, at the gummy, pale flesh underneath them. Once when Benny was a few years younger and his hair inches longer, I made him two pigtails, mixing strands of the fine head hair with the coarser curls sprouting from each side of his neck toward the end of the braids. He posed for pictures, standing like Marilyn Monroe. Now I'm on the bed and his back is to me. I smile at these thick, black hairs and so I'm sure of this. I'm kissing his neck and his shoulder blades and I'm impressed that I haven't forgotten how to make the kisses light and almost romantic. The snoring stops. Benny is awake and I am offering him his glass of water.

And here is where it ends and you say *what the*

And here is where Benny smiles and takes the glass and takes a sip and spits every bit out because three parts ammonia and one part water is really quite tough to swallow. And now Benny widens his eyes like he hates himself more than he hates me at this moment because he was about to, was excited to kiss my neck too.