



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2008

Article 29

1-1-2008

The Salesman

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Class of 2008

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Shedleski, Zachary C. (2015) "The Salesman," *The Mercury*: Year 2008, Article 29.

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The Salesman

Keywords

creative writing, fiction

Author Bio

Zach Shedleski is a senior who is getting his BS in biology. He has no aspirations and actually believes they are pointless. Whatever happens, he will still be living for the weekends and dreading every morning he has to wake to an alarm. Zach has a long list of interests, none of which are interesting. He likes Townie better than Mamas.

The Salesman

I can't do this anymore. Just because I'm good at bullshitting people doesn't mean I need to do it for a living. I should be a salesman. They bullshit for a living and they can tell people their real names. I'm stuck with John or Jim or even Jacques if I'm feeling like a snobby romantic.

It's supposed to be an innocent game. In reality, this is sex with clothes on.

It was fun in the beginning. I was always excited to mark some naïve, rich daddy's girl who was far too trusting of any guy that had a smile and a look to boot. Going through the steps of a relationship was easy when feelings weren't an issue. A stint in the Peace Corps and a thriving investment firm were always easy ins with the families. My pseudo girlfriend loved the corps stories, along with the mother. The business savvy dad felt confident with me because of my "firm". Selling the dad was easy once I was "the one" in the mind of the ignorant daughter whose last true love was a puppy named Sprinkles.

I should have been a salesman.

I'm sitting around the campfire with all her model friends. The sun is starting to disappear. It's 6:00 PM. I hate November. I'm dressed from head to toe in thermal gear. I look like the Brawny man except with less sex appeal. I wasn't going to bring my lucky hat. You never know when some underwear model is going to have a hard lemonade and use his arms that are chiseled from granite to throw you in the stream. There goes the hat. Nevertheless, you can't go camping without a hat. It's a rule or something.

"John! John! Why are you sitting here like a party pooper!?"

What intricate language. I wonder where she learned this term. It was most likely in between her photo shoots and the shopping parties with her friends. It takes me a second to remember that I am John. Awesome. This shit is getting old. I don't know why I always pick John. Maybe it's because it has a long, respectful-sounding full name, probably not. Maybe it's because it's short and easy, most likely. It doesn't really matter. I'm John and she is Marybeth. You have to love the double names. I can barely remember one.

"John! Get over here!"

I skip over to the side of the stream and join the gladiators and gorgeous blonde knockouts as they are attempting to skip stones into the stream.

"John, how do you do it so well?"

I take a moment contemplating whether or not to actually attempt to explain this incredible ability.

"I don't know. Dumb luck I guess."

I know if I try explaining that they will just stare at my old beat-up Eagles hat and how it doesn't go with my bright orange thermal gear. Just once I would like to mark someone of interest with interesting friends to match. I think its called

reality. Some of my friends do the whole "I actually like the girl I'm with" thing. The funny thing is that they seem miserable too. I wish I could be miserable like them.

A couple more stones skip into the water: one, two, three. I look over to see the underwear model trying to skip a rock the size of his head. As I'm looking at the pinnacle of evolution, my hat disappears. I look and see that Marybeth is behind a tree with my hat on backwards. It's always backwards. I know this game. I have to playfully try half-assed to get it back, while we both laugh and grope each other. It's supposed to be an innocent game. In reality, this is sex with clothes on. Eyes in complete contact at all times, sharing in each other's affection. Thank God I'm blessed with nice eyes or this girl might see straight through me. I want to enjoy this ritual like everyone else does, but I can't help contemplating just hitting her to get my damn hat back. It's not her I resent, though. It's me. I see the pure joy in her eyes of just being with me. It's not her fault. I'm just pissed that I've never felt that way.

"You can't get your hat back from a girl?!"

Thank you, Calvin. After playing along with this childish game I finally get my hat back. It is now about 7:30. It's almost completely dark and everyone starts pairing around the fire. Billions of years of evolution are seen right in front of my face. It's like some force is pulling each person towards the one they will be with that night. The force working on me is probably greed. I see Calvin next to Victoria who hasn't talked to him all night. Now she's on his lap under a blanket. I'm basically watching porn.

Marybeth comes over and sits on my lap, taking and placing my hat on her head. It's backwards, of course. My initial thought is to throw her into the fire and laugh, thinking about the 100k I'm stealing from her father. After thinking twice about this idea I decide to let it slide. After all, I can't help feeling guilty as she nestles into groove of my neck. The hat does get in the way of the uncomfortable sitting-on-lap-head-lean anyway.

After a few more beers and a few more laughs she leans closer to my ear and whispers, "I need to tell you something." As a guy that has gone through many relationships, most of which were completely fake, I know it can only be one of three things: "I'm breaking up with you," "I love you," or "I'm pregnant." From my experiences, girls don't bring their boyfriends camping with them so that they can break off the relationship, so that is out of the question. She's on the pill, the greatest invention in the history of pre-marital sex, so that's not a possibility unless God hates me. So it's most likely the L-word. Awesome.

Time begins to pass quicker with each beer drunk. It has gotten easy to tell these girls that I love them, even though that couldn't be farther from the truth. I have become desensitized to the entire process. They give big speeches that could be three words. I sit there looking like I can't live without her. It's pretty easy once you get the gist of it. I just have to remember that it's my livelihood and I'm fine.

She starts becoming more and more aggressive in trying to get me back to our tent. I don't really feel like dealing with the situation right now, but I tell her if she gives me my hat back that I'll meet her in the tent. She walks off into the darkness, hatless, with nothing but a flashlight. I look around the fire and wonder

how and why I put myself through this. As I get up, Calvin takes a break from Victoria, almost as if he is obliged to do so, and yells, "Go get 'er cowboy!". Thank you, Calvin. I would say the same to him but it seems like he has already "got 'er" twice under the blanket.

I'm unzipping the door to the tent. I barely have one leg in before I am bombarded by hands, feet, legs, and arms from every direction. For a moment I think there is more than just her in there. Disappointingly, there isn't. It's just me, her and the sounds of nature. We begin with the pre-speech kissing. This never leads anywhere because girls know that if guys are aroused in the least bit, they don't really think with their brains too much.

The kissing ends. She begins her long, drawn out lecture about how she grew up never liking someone as much as me. When she is around me she doesn't think of anyone else. Blah, blah, blah. I zone out for a while, subconsciously listening for a key phrase like "I seriously..." or "I truly...". She decides on "I seriously love you.". This is the time where I give a dramatic pause like I'm so excited that I'm speechless. In actuality I'm usually thinking of who the Eagles are playing this Sunday, or what the score of the Sixers' game was.

This time, however, is different. I'm putting myself in her place. She just confessed her love to a guy that has no interest in her at all. When I break up with her, she will be devastated. She is going to think back to this night and realize it was all for show. If that happens to me, I will go crazy. To think that I've found my one and only, just to realize it's all a joke, would be the worst thing in the world. I'm not happy with my life and I'll never be happy as long as I pretend to be who I'm not.

"Marybeth."

"Yes?"

"I don't feel the same way."

Tears stream down her face. A natural reaction in this situation is to try to console her. This is one of the many tricks girls have to sway guys into saying things they don't mean. First I console her and then I'm supposed to change my mind about the situation. Not this time. This is the one sure thing I have had in my life. Not that I don't love her, because that's obvious. I need to feel for someone, both good and bad, because right now I don't feel anything.

"Just leave!" she manages to sneak out between the sniffing of her nose and the coughing brought on by the sniffing.

I go for the zipper on the tent door. I can't find it. Great.

"What are you doing? Please leave."

Trying my best I finally manage to find the zipper. I unzip it and give a shot at leaving only to discover I unzipped the window zipper. For those of you who don't camp, a window zipper only unveils a netting to let a breeze through, not a fully grown man. Some more rustling results in my escape. I leave listening to her cries fade as I approach the fire, feeling guilty, yet relieved at the same time.

"That was quick!"

I ignore this for my sarcasm has left me for the first time in the recorded history I call a life. I ponder the awkwardness of the rest of the night. I can't go back in the tent for obvious reasons. Eventually her friends will start asking where

she is. All I can do is let it come to me.

Time passes like it just ate Thanksgiving dinner. I nurse the same beer until I forget if it's beer or piss. Either way I still drink it because I'm pretty sure it's not piss. People start dropping off into their tents. I'm left sitting there for who knows how long. It could be a couple hours. I could have just sat down.

As I start to drift off sitting in my chair, I feel a tap on my shoulder. It's Marybeth standing there wrapped in a sleeping bag, eyes still swollen from the tears. Without a word she curls up on my lap and snuggles into my neck groove. This time I don't mind her taking my hat.

The tears dry and she regains the ability to talk like someone who has dabbled with speech before. We sit there and talk about unrelated things. We laugh and joke about stupid stuff we've done. It's weird. It took me telling this girl my true feelings to feel good for once. We aren't here as a couple anymore. We are here as two people, not hiding anything from each other. This is the most pure moment of my life. I put my hat on her head, backwards of course. The sun starts rising. It's 6:00 AM. I hate mornings.