

1993

## Parable

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#### Recommended Citation

Cornelius, Michael G. M. (1993) "Parable," *The Angle*: Vol. 1993: Iss. 1, Article 49.  
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1993/iss1/49>

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## Parable

### **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Excuse me, sir. Would you mind telling me the time?"

The bartender looked at the pretty young woman in front of him. 'It's half past eleven,' he said, glancing stonily at a clock on the wall."

### **Cover Page Footnote**

Appeared in the issue: 1993.

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## Parable

"Excuse me, sir. Would you mind telling me the time?"

The bartender looked at the pretty young woman in front of him. "It's half past eleven," he said, glancing stonily at a clock on the wall.

A small flush spread across the woman's cheeks. "I see. Thank you," she said. She started to go to her table but, on a whim, turned to the bartender and asked, "You haven't, by chance, seen a young man in here tonight, have you?"

The bartender continued to stare at her. "I've seen a lot of people in here tonight."

The woman's flush grew even deeper. "He's about 5'10" tall, in his early twenties, with straight brown hair. Does that sound familiar?"

The bartender's countenance clouded for a moment, but then a look of recognition crossed his face. "Say," he said. "Maybe I have. You wouldn't happen to be Marie, would you?"

The woman smiled eagerly. "Yes. Yes I am."

The bartender smiled for the first time. "Your friend left a message here for you. I'd forgotten until just now. Where did I put it?" he added, fumbling behind the counter for the scrap of paper.

"I hope nothing bad happened," Marie said. "Gary - my boyfriend - said he had something important to discuss with me."

The bartender gave her a knowing wink. "I know what that means!" He produced the note. Marie grabbed it eagerly. "Thanks," she said, tearing it open to read it.

"Well?" the bartender asked, grinning, trying to catch a glimpse of Marie's petite face.

"He - that is - um - he's not coming back," Marie stammered, fighting back the urge to burst into tears.

The bartender softened. "Hey," he said. "I'm sorry. Sometimes these things just don't work out."

"Just don't work out," Marie whispered as she went back to her table. She sat down but she didn't cry. She wasn't going to cry in front of all these people. The bartender brought her a glass of white wine. "On the house," he said, trying to give her a reassuring smile as he walked away.

Marie ignored the wine and hid her face in her hands. One lone, bitter tear escaped her eyes and crept down her face. She wanted nothing more than to go home.

"Your boyfriend - is he an idiot or what?" said a lightly accented voice coming from behind Marie.

Marie turned. The voice belonged to a tall handsome young man with dark eyes and wavy hair. "Excuse me?" she said.

"Your boyfriend. I asked if he was an idiot. He must be, to leave a woman as beautiful as you." The hackneyed line did little to improve Marie's mood. In spite of her chilly stare, the man sat in the chair across from Marie. She decided to confront the stranger head on. "So," she said, "Do you really think I'm beautiful, or are you just trying to pick me up?"

Marie had figured that her directness would startle the stranger, but he only smiled and said, "Please! Do you think I would use such a cheap line on a beautiful and obviously intelligent woman such as yourself?" Despite her heartache, Marie laughed. Encouraged, the strange man continued. "I meant every word," he said, fixing his dark mysterious eyes onto Marie. Marie caught herself being absorbed into them.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Alec. Alec DuBoise."

"Marie Winthrop."

"It is very nice to meet you, Marie Winthrop," Alec said, leaning in a little closer.

A short while later, when the bar closed, Marie found herself agreeing to accompany Alec on a

date.

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The boy hurried past the dim apartment buildings. His father would kill him for staying at Jim's house so late. He would tell his father he had been studying, but his dad wouldn't believe him. Why should he? The truth was, Jim and he had been thumbing through Jim's father's *Playboy* magazines.

Boy, would he be in trouble, though! He smiled. That's OK. It would be worth it.

He cut through the alley to save himself precious minutes. A noise distracted him. He peered behind some garbage cans to see what was there; nothing was. Probably just a cat, he thought. Suddenly, a pair of strong arms grabbed him from behind and thrust him up against the brick wall. That was the last thing he would remember, save the piercing sting on his neck and the warm, dull sense of him losing his own blood.

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Alec picked Marie up shortly after sundown. They drove to a very fancy restaurant. With an elegant wave of his hand, Alec told Marie to order anything from the menu. Marie thought about getting the most expensive item, but decided against it and eventually ordered pasta salad. Alec chided her gently. "You should order something more," he said, "You look a little too thin."

Marie blushed and tried to change the subject. "Tell me more about yourself," she said.

Alec shrugged. "There isn't much to tell." He looked at Marie and his eyes twinkled. "Besides," he added, "I'd much rather hear about you."

Marie reddened even more. "I'm afraid there isn't anything interesting to hear," she said.

Alec smiled, a mysterious half-grin covering his face. "Let me be the judge of that," he said.

Their orders came just then, so, for the time being, Marie was off the hook. The date ended soon after dessert, but Marie agreed to accompany Alec to the theatre the following evening.

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The impulse to feed was very strong now. The night was half over already; the monster had to feed before sun-up. It had gone to the park to search for victims, because it knew it could find people in the park. They slept under the benches there and offered little resistance. Creeping stealthily, the monster soon came across an old woman, her head bent to her shoulders. In one hand was a bag containing her life's possessions; in the other, a bottle of cheap whiskey. The monster pushed her head back and began to feed. The old woman never stirred, not even when the fangs pierced her neck, and she died still clutching the precious bottle of whiskey.

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The applause thundered throughout the auditorium. Marie jumped to her feet, excited; Alec soon followed. For a full five minutes they applauded. The show had been that good.

"What a wonderful show! The music, the dancing, everything!" Marie gushed in the taxi on the way home.

Alec smiled. "I'm glad that you liked it," he said.

"Liked it?" Marie replied, "I loved it!" Her features softened. "Thanks for taking me," she said.

"It was my pleasure," Alec smiled.

The cab rolled to a stop outside Marie's apartment building. Marie got out. Alec followed her.

"I had a lovely time tonight," she said.

"So did I." Alec leaned in to kiss Marie, but pulled back when she stiffened. "It's just not the right time yet," she said. "It's too soon after - well, you know."

"I understand," he said thickly. There seemed to be nothing more to say. "Good night," Alec continued. "May I call you?"

"Of course," Marie said. "Good night. And thanks." She watched the cab pull away from the curb, then turned and went into the apartment building.

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The teen paused to light a cigarette. Plied with alcohol, he tried to call after his friends and tell

them to wait for him, but he couldn't quite voice their names. He was on his way home from a party at - he couldn't remember. Who cared whose house it was anyway?

He looked ahead of him. His friends were gone now, out of sight. No, there they were - to the left. He could hear them. He began to stagger slowly towards them.

The monster grabbed him as he walked by. The youth tried to struggle, but the monster possessed unnatural strength. He felt a poignant pain in his neck, and he began to rain blows upon the monster's back. His fighting began to slow, and then it stopped, like a child's toy winding down, as the life dully ebbed from his body.

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Alec hadn't called for three days, so Marie was surprised when he showed up on her doorstep with a bouquet of flowers. "They're lovely," she said, putting them into water.

"I was hoping you would accompany me on a walk," Alec said.

Marie smiled. "Just let me get my jacket."

They walked slowly towards the park, taking their time and holding hands. The moon was new so it couldn't be seen; but the stars were out, twinkling like drops of paint on a far-off canvas.

"You know," Alec said, stopping and facing Marie, "I've been doing a lot of thinking these past three days."

"Oh?" Marie asked warily. "And what were you thinking about?"

"I thought about you, and how much I like you." Alec looked deep into Marie's eyes. "I know it sounds crazy," he went on, "But I really think I like you." He leaned in to kiss Marie. This time, she didn't resist. The brief kiss lasted one delicious moment. Then, Alec pulled Marie close to him and held her tight. He could feel her warm breath on his neck. Alec felt Marie's lips brush his skin. Alec relaxed, held Marie closer to him, and sighed. But he stiffened slightly when he felt the darting pain of inhuman teeth entering his body in the search for warm, sweet blood. ❀