

Exile

Volume 47 | Number 1

Article 8

2000

Slumber Party

Derek Mong
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mong, Derek (2000) "Slumber Party," *Exile*: Vol. 47 : No. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol47/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Slumber Party

For Erin

When she came home from the party the sky was a starless black blue, and the tears on her cheeks no longer glistened like flecks of warm glitter. A bow in her hair hung limp and undone, dangling beside her small boyish ears. Beth wore a heavy black coat concealing her strapless gray dress. It hung wet past her knees. A tear in her nylons had formed as she ran home through the ice and the rain. Beth wore only one shoe. The apartment was empty.

Some light streaked in from the hall lamps outside her door. She removed her coat and let it drop to the carpet, watching as it disappeared through the evening's thick darkness. Silhouettes and shadows formed shapes on the grays of the wall. Beth half-expected childhood playmates, decked out in pajamas of every known color, to be lurking round corners, submerged in the shadow. They would be hiding from parents. They'd be avoiding the sleep which drew them away from the world.

The night's dialogue was still fresh in her mind:

"You know my studio's right up the street. If you'll just give me a second I can call us a cab. Besides, this party reeks of children, and you're too gorgeous to mingle with these married folk. Hell, you're liable to be that chubby bastard's next big affair. Wouldn't that be funny? Ha ha ha."

In the darkness, Beth found her way to the kitchen. The light from the hall lamps mapped out a trail past the couches of leather and mahogany chairs. Her apartment's halls glowed with a harsh form of florescence. Metallic and buzzing, they'd smell like sulfur if given the chance. She walked to the pantry, breaking the silence with the door's creak. Crackers and grape juice. The saltines felt good on her tongue; the juice tasted better than wine. She felt very tired. Her eyelids sank just a little, blurring her vision enough to feel lost. The shapes on the wall morphed into hand puppets, people, and fruit.

"Now, isn't this better? I know it's warm in here, but the damn thermostat's been broken for days. I rarely notice it anymore. Why not take off your coat? Do you like my paintings?"

Guiding herself by the red, digital displays on her message machine and alarm clock, she stepped to her patio doorway and drew back the blinds. The door to the outside was nothing but glass. An insulated sliding panel which kept out the cold. Beth was still half-awake, mumbling rhymes in the silence.

...A pocket full of posy, ashes, ashes, we all fall down...

"Yes, the one in the corner's a still life in oils. I adore the subject of flowers. Don't you? Good, good. Another glass of wine?"

In the wet moonlight that streamed through the glass, Beth's body was colored a silver blue tint. The run in her nylon learned shadow and texture. The bags of her eyes grew darker and firm. Dropping slowly to the floor, she slid off her coat, and her clothes, and her shoe. Her body bathed in the shine of the luminous moon. She dug her toes into the silver gray rug and pinched at the bruise on the side of her face. "When would the snow come?" she thought to herself. "When will the flakes lie on the warm pinkish tongues?" Beth foresaw a horizon of orange sunlight at dawn, a frosting of bronze upon the virgin white snow. It would almost be beautiful.

"You know it's been a long time since a woman like you walked into my life. A long time. I've waited and thought about things... and, well, regardless... you're here. Ha ha. We're here. Together."

Pulling some pillows and a blanket down from the couch, she curled up by the glass and was no longer cold. She waited patiently for sleep. At the base of the door a fluttering moth appeared and stretched out its wings. Others came too and there the moths gathered, glowing together. Peaceful, bright, they caught random rays of the moon in the span of their wings. Beth curled up in a ball and breathed softly as sleep slowly came. Her last thought was that these ivory winged creatures were the fairies of night, and she would surely bottle one up, save it for later, hold its cold purity, just as soon as she awoke.

"Sit with me Beth? Please? A little closer. Why are you shivering? Would you like more Chardonnay? Of course I'm not trying to..."

A few moments passed. The apartment was silent, colorless, and cold. Then something happened. A quick burst of sweet laughter encircled the room. It was a giggle of sorts, reserved in its volume but joyous nonetheless. Out of the shadows leapt children in brightly colored pajamas. They sang and they danced, twirling each other by their doughy soft arms. A warm orange glow filled up the room as if a thousand small nightlights had melted together. The silhouettes disappeared and the red, green, violet, yellow, and blue toddlers danced and joined hands in a circle round Beth, her blanket rising so softly as she continued to sleep. Then they began a medley of songs, softly at first, louder, raising their voices as they hooked their very last rhyme.

Ring around the rosie, pocket full of posy, ashes, ashes...

"That's not what I meant! No, of course I... Where are you going? Don't walk away from me! This isn't what I want! Come back here you bitch! Don't walk away from me! Open that door and I'll—"

They all fell down, bundles of burnt flower still crisp in their hands. The dancing ceased. The million nightlights singed the gray carpet a deep charcoal brown. The song ended. Beth kept sleeping, balled up in a blanket, content on the floor, the bruise on her face beginning to swell.

—Derek Mong '04