Ronny

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Recommended Citation
McMurray, Elisabeth (2009) "Ronny," The Promethean: Vol. 17 : Iss. 1 , Article 61.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol17/iss1/61

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RONNY (SENIOR THESIS EXCERPT)

Elisabeth McMurray

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;” Romans 1:28-31 (NKJV)

Ronny Bewley was another inmate who was saved through our church outreach. He is huge in my memories, but he couldn’t have been over six feet. He was large though, a good 250 to 300 pounds of muscle. He was also hairy. He had hairy arms and hairy legs and a hairy face with a full beard of curly brown locks with tints of gray.

I was fairly young when he got out of jail and moved into the church. Within the Christian community only those who lack faith question God’s ability to change a person. This was, perhaps, what led my parents and the elders of our church to allow a rapist to live in the back of our church nursery and later in a trailer on the church property.

Ronny’s arrival just happened to coincide with a string of vandalism that had been occurring every weekend. One night Ronny and a friend chased down the two teenagers responsible, scaring the boys so badly they never returned. We never had to clean eggs off the sign again.

Ronny’s salvation slowly worked itself out. He got his son back and began a new job. He was faithful to the church and attended most services. He cleaned up so nicely that it wasn’t long before he attracted the attention of a younger divorcée in the congregation, Denise. Denise’s larger frame meshed well with Ronny’s. Her flaming red hair and saucy temper made them seem perfect for each other.

We all attended the wedding to cheer on the youth department’s new hero. He had saved us from the evil vandals and also had cool tattoos. It became normal to have a group of teenagers gathered around Ronnie as he laughed a lot and always had interesting stories to tell. Andrew thought he was hysterical and we younger girls admired him from afar. He had a really cool trick. He would hold my brother in a certain position around the neck until he passed out. It was amazing what sort of things you could learn from prison and all of us kids watched in fascination as he perpetually brought various boys in the youth group in and out of consciousness.

I caught Ronny’s attention once. It transpired by chance one day when we happened upon Ronnie, his young son Beau and Denise swimming at Lake Tapps. My brothers quickly joined in dock fights (a water version of King of the Mountain) and Ronny showed them who was Lord of the Lake until he voted himself too old to keep up. He jumped into the shallow end of the swimming area towards Beau. When he surfaced he was frantic. “My teeth fell out, my teeth fell out,” he hollered. “Hey everybody spread out and dive for my teeth!”

Ronny looked strange with the gap where two front teeth should have been. It was almost funny. I dove down into the water just to show I was trying. I didn’t think there was any hope of finding his partial; his teeth were gone forever, lost in the murky glacier water. It was a miracle when I dove down right over the teeth. I picked up what I thought was a used Band-Aid and surfaced with Ronny Bewley’s false teeth pinched between my fingers. He was ecstatic that I had actually found his costly tooth partial and loudly stated, “I owe you one Lizzy, I owe you one man.”

Ronny eventually went back to jail. No one told me why. None of us kids knew why. We were distraught. We sent him cheerful letters and he replied. His letters always had cartoon drawings in them, which were actually quite good.

A few months passed before a teenager in the congregation told her parents he had been sending her inappropriate letters. All I ever heard was he said things a man should only say to his wife. The girl was sixteen and seemed so upset that I got angry. I wrote Ronny Bewley and told him what he was saying wasn’t good. “You only say those things to Denise,” I wrote. I asked him to stop. I told him, “You owe me one,
remember?"

I'm not sure how he took that letter, a harsh rebuke from a prepubescent female. He never wrote back. Ronny visited church when he got out. He came once or twice to Friday basketball. He really liked Becca. He ignored me. Eventually he quit the church all together. I didn't hear anything more about him until my mother let Abigail spend the night with a little girl, Megan, whose parents had previously attended church. Meagan was an unusually hyper child who was well known around Sunday school for wetting herself. Frequently. Meagan had two older sisters, Melissa and Marsha. They were both in high school and in special classes for developmentally slow students. Abby barely knew them when she arrived at their house.

"Abby, do you want to sleep with Meagan or with me and Marsha?" Melissa asked, her chapped lips parting in a smile causing reflections of light to shoot from her metallic braces.

"I don't know," Abby said. She was taken aback, it was hours before bedtime.

"She's sleeping with mee," Meagan whined and then started whimpering.

"No Meagan, you wet the bed," Melissa retorted, "Abby's sleeping with us."

Abby was relieved at first. She didn't want to share a wet bed with Meagan who still sucked her thumb. Her relief, however, turned to horror that night when she found herself alone with the two older sisters.

"Marsha, it's time to change for bed." Melissa pulled up Marsha's shirt over her head to reveal bare breasts.

"No," Marsha griped, "I don't want to change."

"You have too," Melissa replied. "You haven't changed today."

As the younger sister changed the elder, Abby sat embarrassed, mortified at seeing such a profoundly endowed girl stripping in front of her. We were a modest family and kept such things to ourselves. As the night progressed Abigail was exposed to more than just boobs. When the lights were finally out Marsha left the room. Melissa turned towards Abby.

"She's going to the living room. To sleep with Tom," she stated bluntly.

Melissa apparently didn't understand the gap in their ages and began relating the fascinating and horrific facts of her reality. "You know Tom? He's Marsha's boyfriend," she whispered in the dark towards Abby. "They have sex all the time, mostly in the living room. One night I was sleeping on the couch and they started having sex on the floor."

"What?" Abby was horrified. "Why?"

"Oh, I was pretending to be asleep. I saw his penis. It was really small," she stated, giggling hysterically at this revelation. This was followed by a moment of peace and Abby thought she could sleep, escaping until our mom would come and rescue her.

"We both slept with Ronny." Melissa's words shattered the calm.

"What?" Abby knew she must be lying. Ronny was married! Ronny was old and funny and cool. He could choke hold you until you passed out. He wouldn't do that!

"Yeah, we had sex with him in the woods behind his house." She seemed to revel in the risqué-ness of it all.

Abby wanted to vomit. "Both of you, at the same time?"

"Noooo." Melissa thought that was funny. "It was at different times."

Abigail arrived home safely. At least physically safe. They dropped her off the next morning. She shot out of their Ford like a pinball and ran inside without saying goodbye or even thank you. She ran to our mom, sobbing, "Please, never make me go there again, please mom."