



2000

Pharmaceuticals

Rob Moll

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Recommended Citation

Moll, Rob (2000) "Pharmaceuticals," *Cedarville Review*: Vol. 3 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/cedarvillereview/vol3/iss1/15>

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Keywords

Creative writing

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Pharmaceuticals

⌘ Rob Moll

On a quite suburban Friday night, a couple prepared a meal for some friends. They lived in a small house with an extra bedroom, which was empty except for a bed and a dresser. They said it could always be used for company – often friends and relatives would stay a night- but eventually it would be for the baby. The baby showed no promise of arriving within the next nine months, however.

“Will you peel those carrots for me?” Janet asked her husband. One of Roger’s college buddies was coming into town and they decided their families should have dinner together. Jeff and his wife were bringing their one-year-old daughter. Jeff and Roger hadn’t seen each other since before Jeff’s daughter was born. Roger remembered Jeff being the last one of his friends that he figured would settle down like that.

Roger obeyed without a word. He grabbed the carrots one by one and sliced off the skin into the trashcan.

“Don’t forget to cut off the ends and cut them into fourths so we can serve them with the dip.”

Roger finished peeling his third carrot and cut off the ends of it and the other two. He cut each one in half and then cut the halves long ways twice. He placed them on a section of the plate with white dip in the middle.

“Anything else?” Roger wasn’t much of a cook and though he made good conversation, he needed help planning out an evening. For this type of thing, Janet was in charge and he helped with whatever Janet wanted him to. Today he was a little absent minded.

“Just put them on the coffee table.”

He walked into the living room. His feet made no noise as he walked across the wood floor. He set the plate on the coffee table in front of a blue and white couch. On the other side of the room was a TV

and on either side of that, a window.

Walking back into the kitchen, he looked out the window into his back yard. A wooden deck stuck out into the yard. Tall bushes and a gray shed separated their back yard from the surrounding ones. Roger noticed the lawn needed mowing. He remembered that he used to walk behind his dad as he mowed the lawn. Sometimes he would mow out a maze of trails, which Roger would run over pretending that the tall grass was hot lava. He decided that he would mow the lawn the next afternoon.

Roger thought a little about his childhood as he wraithishly walked back into the kitchen. He leaned against the counter behind his wife who was checking on a casserole in the oven. It was almost done.

“Whoa, you scared me!” she said as she turned around. “What’s the matter, you look like you’ve been on another planet?”

“Nothing, I was just thinking.”

“Honey, you’re going to kill yourself. Stop thinking about it. Is the bread cooled off yet?” It had been out of the oven for about fifteen minutes. Roger lifted the dishtowel off of the pan and looked underneath it. It was white and smelled warm. The skin stretched above the top of the pan. He touched it to see if the inside would be ready. It was warm enough to steam up as it was sliced.

“She’s ready to come out . . . of the pan.”

Janet was looking in a cupboard above the counter for something. She stood on her tiptoes and stretched out her hand to reach a jar. Roger felt that heart-skipping sensation that one feels just before he falls in love. It had been a long time since he looked at her that way. It isn’t that they were growing apart, they hadn’t been married long enough for that, but they had gotten used to each other. He saw that figure every night for two years before he fell asleep. She was still as beautiful to him as ever; only it didn’t make an impression as often. Roger hoped that they would be together for the rest of their lives.

“Do you ever think that sometimes. . .? Sometimes?” he asked.

“Sometimes what?” she was still trying to reach the jar. After she grabbed the jar, Janet turned around and caught him looking at her.

There was a world behind his eyes, one that she had never been given access to. She remembered that he used to look at her like that before he asked a question that was important to him. “Wow, I haven’t seen those eyes in a long time.” She said smiling as she walked past him to the sink. Roger stood where he was.

“Do you think that we should see a doctor?”

“Honey, I told you not to worry about it. It takes time. Lots of people aren’t successful for over a year.”

“I know we’ve only been trying for six months, but doesn’t it seem- maybe we’re not doing something right.” Roger stood behind his wife and hugged her around the stomach. He moved her brown hair away from her neck with his nose and kissed it.

“Could you check on the casserole?”

Roger let go, feeling a little frustrated. He opened the oven. “It’s brown over the top.”

“Okay, set the table then.”

Roger took the plates from the cabinet and began placing them on the table.

“Forks go on the left.”

“I know that.”

“Don’t get all fussy, you forgot last time.”

Roger finished setting the table and put on his coat.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to get some gas, I don’t want to have to bother with it tomorrow before we go shopping.”

“But do you have to go now? They’re going to be here in just a couple minutes.”

“Look, the gas station is two blocks away. It won’t hurt anything even if I’m five minutes late, and I won’t have any time afterward.”

“Roger, you know that I’m a horrible hostess and I don’t even know them. They’re your friends.”

“And I know it won’t be a problem if I’m not here when they arrive. Jeff and Jamie know how to make themselves at home, trust me. Besides, if I still know Jeff, he’ll be fifteen minutes late anyway.”

“Well, just help me straighten up the kitchen.”

Jeff swung his jacket over his head and poked his hands out the sleeves. “Honey, I’ll have time for that when I get back. I could be filling up right now.”

“Rog, just wake up extra early tomorrow. I don’t want you to – they’re your friends. You should be here when they arrive.”

She pulled a drug store receipt out of her pocket and looked at it worriedly. She crumpled it up and returned it to her pocket. She’d told Roger that she was getting groceries after work, but she stopped in the pharmacy at the grocery store. She remembered the bag she left in the back seat of the car.

“Well, how about I come with you?” she said, trying to think of a way to get the bag out of the car without her husband noticing.

“What? Then no one will be here if Jeff and Jamie come. What? I need to get out. I’m going to get gas.”

“It’s not that- it’s just- you. . . should be here when your friend arrives, that’s all.”

Roger buttoned his jacket. “Look honey it will take 10 minutes, I could have been back by now.”

Janet didn’t seem to hear. She paced across the kitchen, picking up things and rearranging them. “Should I keep the casserole in the oven till they get here?”

“Just. . . it doesn’t matter. I’m going.”

“Roger!”

He turned and looked at his wife in the kitchen. She was pale, and her thin hands shook inside the oven mitt, but she said nothing.

Roger walked out the door. She heard the car start and pull out of the driveway. Janet walked into the living room. On the coffee table, chips and salsa sat next to a plate of cold vegetables with white dip in the middle. She covered her face with her hands. Her hair fell around her head. She felt horrible. And now Roger would know how horrible she was. She knew that he wanted a child. And she did too, just not yet. It was too soon, there were other things to worry about besides diapers and parent-teacher meetings. When Roger brought it up six months ago it

seemed like such a wonderful idea. Many of their friends had their first by now. Some of Janet's high-school friends already had three children. So she readily agreed to begin trying. Two months ago she changed her mind and every time it came up, she couldn't tell Roger. He would be too devastated.

Tears fell from between her fingers as she sat on the couch. She didn't deserve Roger. She was unable to respond to his look in the kitchen. He was telling her that he needed her and she told him to check the casserole. She had hurt him and now he would know how terrible she was.

A car pulled into the driveway and Janet looked to see who it was. It was Roger. She grabbed a Kleenex and wiped her face. Roger walked up the sidewalk to the front door. He carried a white plastic bag. Janet took a breath as he opened the door.

"Hey, I knew old Jeff would be late! Haha. Look, I'm sorry, I was just in a fit, that's all. Are you alright?"

"Yes."

"Oh, this bag was in the back seat. Is it yours?"

"Yea" she took the bag "I needed some things from the drug store today. I must have left them in the car."

"Well, there you go."

She took the bag to her room and hid the birth control pills in her dresser.