

# A Story

## Monika Armstrong

The dishes in my sink are piling up. I haven't put my hands in soapy water for a week now. I tell myself that I'm too busy to do them. That would seem a valid excuse, but I know the real reason. I was going to do them Monday, but an encyclopedia salesman came to my door. He reminded me of Mark Spitz. His eyes were even the color of Olympic pools. I wasn't going to let him in at first, but then he told me his name. I wondered how he knew that his name would compel me to let him enter my house. At the time, I simply reacted — as if it were reflex.

George Gordon Byron sold *Encyclopaedia Britannica*s to put himself through college. He was studying English. I could not ignore the blatant parallel between him and the writer, so I asked him if he was related to the Lord, by any chance. He said that he was, although distantly. His mother had named him George Gordon for reasons of posterity. I told him that I thought that his mother sounded like a reasonable woman.

George Gordon proceeded to give me a sales pitch on the encyclopedias. I did not listen to him because I was too busy staring into his cobalt eyes.

I ended up buying the entire series. Deep down, I wanted to get to know this man. I knew that I would never seem him again if I didn't buy something.

He told me that he would be back in about a week to complete my order. When we two first parted, I sensed a hesitance. He left and my life has not been the same since.

That was Monday. Today is Saturday, and my dishes still sit in my sink. I was going to wash them Tuesday, but I kept thinking about George Gordon. It gave me a strange happiness to know that I would see him again.

I thought of this Tuesday morning while I brushed my teeth. As I was standing in front of my mirror, I realized that I had put on a few pounds. I decided to go on a diet. I joined Nautilus that morning and spent the day working out.

Wednesday, I noticed that the paint on my walls was becoming drab, so I went to Central Hardware and bought some Sherwin Williams Latex interior house paint. I spent the day redecorating my house in

cobalt blue and grey.

George Gordon called Thursday to verify my order. He told me that it wasn't standard procedure, but because I had been such a receptive customer, he felt that I deserved preferential treatment. Before we hung up, George Gordon asked me about my husband. I told him that I didn't have one. He had left me a year ago. I knew that I shouldn't have said anything to him about my marital status, but his voice compelled me to trust him.

I woke up yesterday and wondered about my sanity during my drive to Nautilus. I tried desperately to be diplomatic about the situation, but all I could think about was seeing George Gordon again. I knew that I was being irrational, but it didn't matter. I worked out and then went to Walden's. I bought myself a book of poetry.

Today, my arms and stomach are sore, but I've lost three pounds. Now I feel an urge to call George and I'm scared. I do not know why I'm behaving as I am. I have never done anything impulsive in my life.

My dishes are still in the sink. I am looking at them as I realize that I want to see George Gordon now. I want to see George Gordon Byron. I want to hear him speak to me. I want to speak with you, George, about intellectual things. I want to be witty and impress you, George. George, I want to make you laugh and I want to make you admire me and tell me that you find me attractive, even beautiful in my own way. I want to be written about, George. But most of all, I want to kiss you, George, and make you fall in love with me.

Could I be insane? Why am I so obsessed with a man that I don't even know? I feel giddy, like a teenager in love for the first time. My life has changed because of a virtual stranger who sells encyclopedias.

I think of what we could name our children. If we have a boy, we'll name him George Gordon to keep it in the family. If we have a girl, we'll name her Lucy.

Maybe I'll invite him to dinner one day next week, and I realize that I have to wash dishes if he decides to eat with me.

I am insane. What other explanation could there be? I always think things through before making a decision. I don't feel crazy, though. I actually feel quite sane and in a funny way, I feel free — liberated.

Actually, it hasn't been all bad. I've lost weight and my house looks better than it has in years. The only problem is that my dishes are still in my sink. I'm going to do them, George. I've been thinking a lot about you since Monday and it's made me neglect doing my dishes. I'm washing them now, George, but not for you. I'm doing them for me. Really, George, I did it all for me. But I needed you as an excuse.

My door bell is ringing, and my hands are in a sink of soapy water. I run to the front room and open the door. Soap suds are dripping from my hands.

"Hello. I decided to drop by and see how you're doing. I tried to call you earlier, but you weren't home. I'm really sorry for dropping by without any notice, but I've been doing some odd things lately."

"That's quite alright, George. Come in and have a seat. Would you like something to drink?"

"No, thank you. I really came to just talk, be intellectual and maybe laugh a little."

"That sounds nice, George. Could you do me a favor?"

"Of course."

"Write me a poem, George."



