

Silent Night

by John Wentworth Chapin

It was that first sip of bourbon that brought on the calm. Yes, she drank every night, and no, she didn't have more than two except for the occasional festive or depressed night. Yes, she drank alone, and no, she didn't worry about it. She'd dated enough drunks to know the difference. Sometimes she had a date and sometimes she had to work late, but she carved out time at about 6:30 to kick off her cramping shoes and relax a bit before going on with the day. Vespers, she called it. The church of the self.

You need to get laid, her sister said. You're alone too much.

I'm not alone enough, she answered, skewering a cornichon on her fork and snapping off half in her slight overbite for emphasis. It was a quick deli lunch; her sister had the habit of injecting intervention into every meeting, no matter how brief.

You live like a nun, her sister objected.

She toyed with a comparison between Mother Teresa's needy millions and the marketing department she ran.

That's right, she smiled. A nun.

