

A Memory to Be Ashamed Of  
(based on possibly true events)

Alcohol-related blackouts are gaps in a person's memory for events that occurred while they were intoxicated. There are two types of blackouts, defined by the severity of the memory impairment. The most common type is called a "fragmentary blackout."

Complete amnesia, often spanning hours, is known as an "en bloc" blackout. With this severe form of blackout, memories of events do not form and typically cannot be recovered. In this state, although the subject is temporarily unable to form new long-term memories, he or she can maintain other skills such as talking or even driving.

*National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Bam! Bam! Bam!*

My open palms pound the thick wooden door. Again and again and again. Soreness radiates down my forearms. Two of my nails are chipped. How long have I been doing this?

"Please, Daniel! Open the door! Please don't do this to me!" I cry.

My throat is hoarse and dry. How long have I been screaming?

The banging continues. *Bam! Bam! Bam!* Only it isn't just from my hands. Fuck! My head is throbbing. I rub my temples as sharp pain jumps behind my eyes. This potent headache has been cracking around for a while, but this is the first time I'm feeling it.

"Go away, Lisa!" Daniel's yells from the other side of the door. "You're disgusting. I never wanna see you again. Take your skanky ass back to Stratford and sleep in your own fucking room."

"I'm so sorry, Daniel. Please don't do this. I'm so sorry. Please just—"

Wait, sorry for what?

I stop banging. The familiar haze of disorientation hangs in my brain like a cloud of pot smoke. I'm not sure why Daniel is yelling at me. I also can't answer much more pressing questions like, what time is it? *Where am I?* HOW DID I GET HERE?

Take a minute. Breathe. You've done this before. Start with what you see.

A tarnished brass plate with the number “15” is right in front of my face on a nicked wooden door. To my right, rows of similar doors line the walls. Ugly brown carpeting with random, rusty stains travels down the length of the hall. At its end, a faint gray light shines through a small, mesh-covered window situated high up on the wall. Okay. It’s dawn, and I’m in the basement hallway of Hayes, right outside my boyfriend, er, friend . . . whatever. Outside Daniel’s dorm room. I’ve been here hundreds of times. So why isn’t he letting me in? And how did I get here?

*Bam! Bam! Bam!* Shit! I double over and grip my head. Queasiness erupts in my stomach. I want to barf, but I swallow the nausea. It tastes like sour licorice.

Oh right. Now I remember. I finished reading *King Lear* and was about to get a jumpstart on outlining my Modern Feminism paper when Rohan busted into my room at Stratford Hall and declared Tuesday to be Jager Night—because Whiskey Mondays and Wine Wednesdays weren’t enough. I protested, but he called me a dork and insisted I could let loose during the week. Many shots later, I hopped on my bike and pedaled over to Daniel’s place. That’s the last thing I remember. Jager and chaining up my bike outside Hayes.

After that, it’s all a blank.

\*\*\*\*\*

Memory is a funny thing. It can morph and distort and even disappear. When people cannot recall moments or events, they must rely on the narratives of others. Someone else must tell their story. This is Lisa’s.

Lisa opened the door of room 15 and stepped into the hallway. Like many of her hippie chick counterparts at Colorado University, she wore a flowy, patterned skirt wrapped around her narrow hips. She promptly tripped over the hem and had to catch herself on the door. A thick chunk of long blonde hair got caught in her mouth as she stumbled. She tried spitting it out, but

that made saliva dribble down her chin. She lifted her skirt to her makeup-free face and wiped. Some damp hair stayed peeled to her skin.

“Whoops!” she giggled. Her pale blue eyes were unfocused as she pushed the strands away.

The door was still open, so this spectacle was in full view of three guys sitting on a futon in room 15. Like Lisa, they were all freshmen at Colorado University, but unlike her, they came from fancy boarding schools with names like Choate Rosemary, The Thatcher School, and Deerfield Academy. East and West Coast trust fund kids who paid full tuition and had ski homes in Vail or Aspen. They’d never heard of Washington High in central Indiana, where Lisa had earned her scholarship to Colorado, and didn’t know that she’d left behind a lot of friends who she missed terribly. But after two months of going to school together, they had decided that Lisa liked to study hard and drink even harder.

“Whoa! Take it easy! No need to flash us!” Daniel called from the futon where he sat in the middle of the three. A Nike sweatband kept his mop of curly dark hair off his face.

Lisa dropped her skirt and leaned against the doorjamb. Her head fell back as she tilted her face toward the boys. “Hey now, I’m just fine. I just gotta go to the bathroom. No problemo.”

Daniel put on his thick black glasses and passed his Xbox controller to his roommate Adam. He walked toward Lisa and laid his hands on her shoulders. “I’m sure you do,” he joked, his golden eyes twinkling, “Don’t get lost. It’s confusing out there.” He pressed close to her.

Lisa gazed back at him and kissed the smooth caramel skin of his cheek. “I got this. Anyways, I don’t wanna be sitting round here watching you play video games all night.”

“What, you got more drinking to do? Or maybe a book to read?” John asked from the futon. Without taking his eyes off the screen, he took a drink of his IPA then flicked his long brown hair out of his face.

Lisa worked in the library every weekday afternoon, entering numbers into the catalogue and roaming the stacks to reshelve books. They sometimes called her Super Nerd, dorky librarian by day and wild partier by night.

“Maybe I do. But that’s my business. Nobody else’s,” Lisa replied.

“Well, if you find anything to drink while you’re out, bring some back to share.” John downed his beer and tossed the can toward the trash can. It bounced off the rim with a clang and splattered on the floor. He didn’t move to pick up.

Without responding, Lisa staggered down the hallway. She walked right past the women’s bathroom and stopped in front of the men’s instead. It took several seconds of squinting at the word “men” and swaying before she shrugged her shoulders and entered. She laughed at the urinals before going into a stall. It took longer than usual for her to pee. The toilet paper was stuck to itself so that she had to tear off little bits to wipe with. When she came back out, she leaned against the sink and then washed her hands. Her glassy eyes stared back at her in the mirror as she scrubbed. Punching the silver button on the dryer made the machine come alive. It lulled her like a song, and she lost herself in the soothing hum. With her eyes drooping open and closed, her body slid down the wall. She sat underneath the nozzle and let the warm air wash over her.

Suddenly, the machine shut off. Lisa’s head jerked up. She looked around, her face crinkled with confusion.

“Where am I?”

\*\*\*\*\*

With my back slumped against Daniel’s door, I wrack my brain, trying to recall something, *some* inkling from the night before. But the only thing coming from there is my massive headache. It surges and throbs in the dark nothing of my memory.

Damnit. I promised myself that Phish concert a few weeks ago would be the last time! Of course, I promised the same thing a month before at orientation when I came-to in some random backyard listening to a guy talking about Bob Dylan. And let's not forget last summer, waking up on random couch after random couch. Why is my social life such a mess when I'm totally in control at school and work? I really need to get *all* my shit together.

But one step at a time. For now, it's about figuring out why Daniel locked me out. We've only been dating for a month or so, and it isn't super serious, but he's never pulled anything like this before. What's with him calling me skanky? And where's my bag?

I turn around and knock again, softer than before. My voice is less desperate as I call out, "Okay, Daniel, I don't know why you're doing this, but can you please let me in? I think I deserve an explanation."

Silence from the other side of the door.

My eyes burn. I don't have time for this shit! "Okay, you don't need to talk to me. But can you at least give me my bag? I need my keys and ID."

Nothing.

"Fine, you piece of crap!" I bang on the door again. "I guess I'll keep doing this until you answer." *Bam, bam, bam!* "I'll even sing, if you like! Any requests?"

Just as I'm about to launch into a hungover rendition of "Margaritaville," the door swings open and I fall into the room. After getting my bearings and standing up straight, I see Daniel. His arms are folded across the faded coral tank top he's wearing, and my patchwork bag dangles from his right hand. His usually smiling mouth is set in a grim line.

I reach for his face, my tone pleading and pathetic. "What's going on? Why would you lock me out and say such awful things?"

He pushes me away. “Seriously?” The expression in his eyes terrifies me. It’s full of disgust. He’s *never* looked at me like that before.

“Please, babe, I don’t know what’s wrong! I don’t know what I did. Can you just tell me?”

I try to touch him again, but he smacks my hands away and steps backward. “Are you kidding me? You’re going to try and pretend like it didn’t happen?”

I think I might turn to stone under his gaze. “What didn’t happen?” I scream. “What the fuck did I do that was so awful?”

His fury explodes all over the room as he roars, “You went down on John in the dude’s bathroom last night, that’s what!”

Before his words can sink in, he slings the bag around my neck, shoves me into the hallway, and slams the door in my face.

I’m frozen. The strap around my throat is choking me. I rip it off and throw it to the ground. I crumble next to it and try to process what Daniel just said.

I went down on . . . John? In the bathroom? John? I don’t even *like* John. And I’m certainly not attracted to him. I’d sooner put leeches down my pants or wear a corset with stilettos than hook up with John. There’s no way it’s true.

Or is it? There’s a black hole where the last several hours of my life should be. So how can I be so sure of what I did or didn’t do?

\*\*\*\*\*

Lisa was sprawled out on the floor of the men’s bathroom for almost twenty minutes. But she looked around at the urinals like she’d never seen them before, making it clear that she had no idea where she was or how long she’d been there.

She was about to stand up when the door opened and knocked into her knee, which was splayed out in the entrance pathway. “Ouch!” she yelped.

“Whoa! Sorry!” John’s voice piped through the cracked door.

Once Lisa moved her leg, John pushed into the bathroom and stopped short when he saw her. “Ha! It’s you!” He slapped his side with glee.

Lisa joined his laughter and held up her arms like a showgirl. “It’s me!” she sang.

“What are you doing in here?” he asked, stumbling slightly and slurring his words.

“I’m not really sure.”

“Well, you’ve been gone for a while.” He leaned against the wall and looked down at her. His hair fell in a curtain around his face, but he made no move to push it back.

“Gone from where?” Lisa flashed him a dazed smile.

“Girl, you are so fucked up! You left Daniel’s room, like, thirty minutes ago.” John laughed and slid down next to her. “You do know you’re in the *men’s* bathroom, right?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “Whoops!”

A fit of giggles overtook her. John slung an arm around her shoulders and said, “I guess you found that drink.” He stared at her for a minute, and she didn’t pull away from his touch.

“Nope! But we should find a new one. I’m thirsty!” she exclaimed as she tried to get up. She couldn’t quite do it, so John grabbed her hands and pulled them both up. They lost their balance and got tangled in each other. John had his arms wrapped around her shoulders as Lisa fell into him, her face pressed against his bony chest. Her spit soaked into his thin Grateful Dead t-shirt as she laughed. “Whoops!” she repeated.

When she tried to pull away, John tightened his arms and stared down at her. “You’re so pretty,” he muttered. Leaning down, he pressed his lips to hers.

Lisa didn't return the kiss, but she couldn't pull away either. Her arms hung by her side, crushed underneath his.

When he pulled his face away, she asked, "What are you doing?" Her bleary eyes never landed on his.

John kissed her again. "You know what I'm doing. Don't you like it?" he breathed into her cheek. His hands moved to her lower back, her butt, her thighs.

Her body stiffened. "I don't know." She tried to crane her neck to look around, and John's greasy hair got caught in her mouth. "Where am I? Daniel, is that you?" she mumbled.

Her garbled words were barely intelligible, but even if she'd been speaking clearly, John wasn't listening to her anymore. His hands explored with more urgency. He kissed her harder and pressed his body against hers.

She was like a rag doll in his arms, unresponsive and limp. Only when she whimpered Daniel's name did she even seem alive.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another wave of nausea rises in my throat at the thought of whatever else was in my mouth last night. If it really did happen, it's fucking disgusting. *I'm* fucking disgusting. No wonder Daniel locked me out of his room. But I can't just let him go. He was my first friend here, the reason I hang with this group at all. Without him, who will I talk to?

I pound my fists against his door again, my voice a pathetic howl. "I'm so, so, *so* sorry, Daniel! I can't believe I did that. I don't want to be with John. I want to be with you!"

"Fuck off!" he screams. "You're filthy. I don't want to see you. Ever again!"

I lean against the door, my teary cheek wet against the laminated oak. "But I don't remember! I swear! How can you blame me for something I don't remember?"



“Yeah, right. That’s the weakest excuse I’ve ever heard. Fucking pathetic!” He punches the door.

The sudden, ear-splitting crack causes me to jump back and ram into the opposite wall. My knees buckle. I crouch on the floor, rocking and mumbling that I can’t remember.

I want to pull my hair out. How could I let this happen *again*? I’ve lost countless memories since coming to Colorado, all for the sake of fitting in and finding friends. So many Sunday mornings since college started have involved piecing events together from the weekend. After poring over logs of phone calls to random numbers and having stories narrated to me where I’m the main character, I still have no recollection of my part in it all. When the puzzle is complete, it’s as familiar to me as a welding manual in Arabic. But *this*? This is a new low. I may have peed in some very strange places and sloppily kissed a few friends, but this is the first time I’ve had to apologize for giving some random guy a blowjob in a communal bathroom.

I throw myself back at Daniel’s door, jiggling the knob and knocking until the skin on my knuckles rips away. “Please let me in!”

A soft snicker comes from behind me. I whip around to see two girls peeking out of their room. They don’t even try to hide the fact that they’re laughing at me.

I’m about to say something about minding their own business when Daniel appears. Before I can do anything, he grabs my arm and hisses at the girls, “Show’s over.”

As he yanks me into his room, one girl taunts, “It wasn’t as good as the one last night.”

What the hell does that mean?

Once we’re inside, I totally forget about those girls. My earlier hysterics didn’t work, so it’s time for a calm approach. I sit on Daniel’s futon, my voice steady. “Please believe me when I say that I don’t remember anything from last night. Obviously, I didn’t know what I was doing.

And no matter what I did or didn't do, you're the one I want to be with." I'm crying again. When I look up at him through my tears, it's like he's on the other side of a clear plastic shower curtain.

Daniel takes a deep breath and leans on his bunkbed a few feet away, his head bowed. "You can apologize all you want," he grumbles, "but it doesn't change what you did." His eyes meet mine. They're full of that same disgust from before but also knitted with self-pity. "How could you do this to me?" he asks, a pathetic whine at the end of his question. "Did you even think about me sitting a few rooms away when you were sucking some other guy's dick?"

He stands and comes toward me, poking his finger into his chest and getting in my face. Flecks of spit land on my forehead as his voice rises. "Did you even think what this would mean for me? How fucking embarrassed I'd be? How could you do something so disgusting?"

My cheeks are so flushed that I could heat the whole dorm on my shame. "I'm so sorry," I squeak. "I don't remember anything."

If only I could. But I've never been able to recall any of the other times. Why would this one be different?

\*\*\*\*\*

By the looks of Lisa's slack limbs and vacant eyes, her body and especially her brain appeared to be malfunctioning.

But John didn't seem to notice as he pulled her backward and nearly tripped over the step separating the shower area and bathroom stalls. He managed to keep his arms wrapped firmly around her waist as they pitched through the opening. With a rough turn, he pressed her against the tile wall. Communal taps and shower heads poked out every few feet, and nests of grimy hair collected in the drains in the middle of the space.

He kissed her chest and face, murmuring about how hot she was and how he had wanted her ever since they met at orientation.

Lisa didn't kiss him back but couldn't really put up a struggle either. Pinned to the wall, she rocked her head back and forth and tried to ask him what he was doing.

He kept on kissing her, touching her, his body and mouth growing more insistent.

Keeping one palm against the wall, right above Lisa's shoulder, John used his other hand to undo his pants. Then he pushed her down, one hand on her head and another on her shoulder. She lost her balance and fell to her knees. Her face was right next to his naked groin.

His voice came out pleading. "C'mon, Lisa. You're always flirting with me, joking around. You know you want to."

Without warning, Lisa's head jolted up and her body jerked to the side. "What? she exclaimed. "No way!"

She tried to crawl away, but he held her in place against the wall and pushed himself inside her mouth. Clutching her head on both sides, he thrust his hips forward and groaned. Her hair scrunched up under his fingers that pulled at her scalp. Lisa swatted the air but ended up scratching John's bare ass in the process. Rather than stop, he moved faster.

Lisa gagged and tried to squeal, but his drunk ears misinterpreted the sounds as moans of pleasure, so John pressed harder, never releasing his grip on her skull or allowing her to move away from the wall. "Oh, fuck yeah!" he sighed. "Daniel was right. You give great head."

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm doubled-over on the futon. The pulse of my headache increases with every apology I make. The emptiness in my gut takes form, growing teeth and gnawing at my stomach lining. My pleas come out in pathetic croaks. I don't know how many more times I can say I'm sorry.

But Daniel's accusations keep coming. "I don't care how drunk you were. It's disgusting. And I'm not the only one who thinks so."

Not the only one? "What does that mean?"

His lip curls upward in a sneer. "Everyone heard what you did. Some even saw it."

Someone *saw* it? "Who?"

"Lily and Anna from across the hall. And Adam."

I can't breathe. People actually witnessed me and John doing . . . *that*? Oh my god, I am MORTIFIED! I've barely known these people at school for more than two months! I've been trying so hard to fit in with them, trying to downplay my working-class existence. But now, this is going to be the whole sum of who I am to them. A girl who gets drunk and has shower sex. Forget working class—I'll be no-class to them.

Daniel has his back turned, but I barely notice. His words are like ice. "When Adam came back, he told me there was a surprise in the bathroom. I didn't want to believe him, but when I got in there . . . what I heard . . . fuck!" He punches the door then massages his knuckles. "I couldn't bring myself to actually look at it."

Words tumble out of my mouth in a hysterical waterfall, gushing along with my hot tears. "I can't believe people saw me doing that. Why didn't they say anything? Oh my God, I'm so embarrassed. So fucking embarrassed."

Daniel springs across the room and gets in my face again. "You're embarrassed? *You're* embarrassed? What about me? I'm the one who's dating the nasty girl who gives guys head in the bathroom. I'm the sucker who everyone's laughing at."

He grabs both my arms and jerks me across the room. “I don’t wanna see your nasty face anymore.” After flinging the door open, he thrusts me into the hallway. “Why don’t you go clean yourself up and take a shower. By yourself, if you can manage it.”

The door slams. The deadbolt drops. A hollow thump. Possibly the last thing I’ll hear from Daniel ever again.

I’m a crying mess, slouching against the wall and wiping snot with the back of my hand. The two girls from before, Lily and Anna, laugh from behind their door. Adam pokes his head out of his girlfriend Julie’s room down the hall but ducks back in when I swivel toward him.

The monster in my stomach churns, getting frothy and wild. I want to scream at them, but I don’t know what for. I want to scold them for being such assholes. I want to beg them not to judge me. I want to ask them what they saw. I want to confess my embarrassment. I want . . .

I want to get the fuck out of here.

I sprint down the hallway. A queasy, greasy, hazy, unkempt sprint of shame. The sudden movement aggravates the fiend roiling around inside of me, and I almost hurl on the already stained carpet. But I rally and burst through the double-doors into the stairwell.

And then I crash into John.

\*\*\*\*\*

What happened next caused Lisa’s story to belong to others. Their take on the events would become the official version of who Lisa was, the girl in the shower.

It started with Adam stepping into the men’s bathroom and stopping short when he heard groaning and slurping coming from the shower. Staying close to the wall, he crept toward the sounds and peered around the corner. At first, all he saw was a girl on her knees near a guy with his pants around his ankles. But when Adam looked closer, he realized it was Lisa and John.

He clapped a hand to his mouth to keep from laughing and then ran out. A minute later, he returned with Lily and Anna. When the girls registered the sex sounds, they made grossed out faces, screwing up their foreheads and sticking out their tongues. Adam hung back and gestured for them to look. Lily shook her head and stayed next to him, but Anna moved forward.

Her eyes had been on Lisa and John for only second before she skittered back toward Adam and Lily, whispering fiercely, “Oh my God, that is so gross and skanky!”

Lily shushed her, but Adam giggled and said, “I know, right? Lisa’s so freaky!”

A sudden, high-pitched squeal rose from the shower, followed by a quick series of guttural grunts. The trio erupted into laughter and ran out of the bathroom.

Barely thirty seconds later, Daniel stomped in, seething with rage. When he heard the moans, he froze. He listened for a moment before storming out, slapping the door with all his force. The incredible crash echoed off the tile walls.

\*\*\*\*\*

I steady myself on the bannister and focus on the ground, not wanting to make eye contact with John. It might cause me to melt into a puddle of shame if I look at him. And talking to him is out of the question. I want to dodge by him and dash up the stairs before he can say anything, but it’s like I’m superglued to this spot, staring at his dirty bare feet. Oh God! I can’t believe I did that with someone who can’t even wash his feet!

Rather than engage me in conversation, John averts his eyes and mumbles something under his breath before rushing past me. I think he said, “I’m sorry.”

What the hell does he have to be embarrassed about? Maybe he’s worried about Daniel being mad at him? He’s not dating anyone right now, is he? Questions bounce around my head as

I sort out John's reaction, but then Adam comes through the double-doors. When he sees me, he tries to hide his smile and says, "Oh, hey, Lisa. Sleep well last night?"

I bolt up the stairs two at a time, but I swear I can hear Adam's laughter floating behind me. The vomit burns in my mouth, but I hold it in. Once I get outside, I barf all over the pavement. Dark brown chunks and yellow bile spew out of me.

After the heaving stops, I inhale and wipe my mouth with my skirt. Not wanting to be blamed for the vomit in front of Hayes, I head for the bike racks. My blue Schwinn is waiting exactly where I remember chaining it up. My trembling fingers fumble with the tiny numbers on the lock. I free my bike, hitch up my skirt, and start pedaling. The morning wind whips through my hair and stings my eyes. The sky is bright with sunlight, but few people are out. It's still way before class, probably 7 AM or so. More than enough time to take the shower I desperately need.

Being on this bike is still the last thing I remember from last night, and that was, like, eight hours ago. Fuck! Why do I keep doing this to myself? I pedal faster, trying to outrun my shame, like getting away from Hayes will help me to leave it all behind. But I know that's not possible. Last night is going to follow me wherever I go. I'll be a laughingstock with no friends. Who knows if Daniel will talk to me again, and I don't blame him. Because he's right.

I'm disgusting.

\*\*\*\*\*

The only two people who really knew what happened were in that shower, but Lisa would only be aware of it for a short time, and John's perception was very different from the actual truth.

John jumped at the loud slam. His startled hands rose and released Lisa. She gagged and gasped breathlessly before vomiting toward the metal drain. Dazed, John shuffled away from her, his nose wrinkled in disgust as she continued to vomit. He asked cautiously, "Are you . . . okay?"

No more puke was coming out of her, but she kept heaving.

He looked around the shower, his eyes unfocused and blurry. Then he looked down at his naked thighs and softening erection, as if registering everything that just happened. He clumsily pulled up his pants and ran out of the bathroom, leaving Lisa alone.

Still gagging from the smell of the throw up, Lisa pushed herself back from the puddle. She leaned against the wall and pulled her knees to her chest. Her breath came in short bursts as she smoothed the tangled mess of her hair and tried to stop her tears. But they kept falling as she remembered the pressure of John's hands on her head and the feeling of him invading her mouth.

"Hello? Is anyone there?" she rasped to the empty room. "Please? I think I need help."

When no one answered, she slowly pulled herself up and lurched on wobbly legs toward the sinks. Cold water streamed from the faucet when she turned it on, and she scooped handfuls into her mouth. But it wasn't enough to get the taste of John out, so she stuck her whole face under the spigot and guzzled the cool liquid. It flowed over her lips and chin. She spit a few times and went to a stall to grab some toilet paper to dry her mouth with. Then she studied her face in the mirror, getting lost in the blackness of her extra wide pupils. Droplets of water and tears clung to her cheeks, and her eyes were shot through with red lines.

She stared and stared and stared. Time passed and passed and passed.

Suddenly, she jerked her head away from the mirror and scanned the room as if she'd never seen it before. "Where am I?" she asked. "Daniel?" she called out uncertainly.

After studying the room and seeing the urinals, she nodded in realization and then exited the bathroom. She walked toward room 15 and reached for the knob, but it was locked. With a soft tap, she said, "Hey Daniel! The door's locked. Let me in."

"Fuck off!" he screamed.



Lisa flinched at his harsh reply. Confused and hurt, she staggered forward and slid against the wall. With her feet tucked under her butt, she leaned her head against the recess of the doorway and closed her eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Grab me a beer while you’re up.”

I open the mini-fridge and grab a couple of Fat Tires. With my lighter, I pop off their caps and toss them in the trash.

“That’s such a cool trick. You still need to teach me how to do it,” Daniel says as I hand him a beer and join him on the futon.

We clink our bottles together. “Cheers, babe. Happy Friday!”

After we both take a drink, he pulls me close, and I cuddle into the crook of his arm. We’re kissing when Adam comes into the room. He’s holding a dark green bottle in his left hand, and I recognize the square shape immediately. It’s Jägermeister.

“It’s Friday, dorks. After a way-too-long week of classes, it’s time to drink!” He pulls three shot glasses from the top of the microwave and sets them in a row on the sticky coffee table covered in rolling papers and wet ring stains.

Daniel looks at me and laughs. “No way, not for Lisa! You know how she gets when she drinks that shit. Remember that night she slugged it up in the shower?” His voice is light, like it’s no big deal. Like it’s all a big joke.

I try to match his tone, all silliness and self-deprecation. “Yep, can’t touch the stuff anymore. It turns me into a big old slut.” There’s a twinge in my stomach.

Daniel squeezes my shoulder. “Yeah, she’s lucky we weren’t super serious at the time. Not to mention that I’m such an awesome, nice guy. Otherwise, I might’ve never found it in my heart to forgive her.” He smiles at me with those full lips and hazel eyes.

I smile back. After all, it has been two months since . . . the incident, and he did forgive me. Of course, he doesn’t mention that he was an absolute asshole to me for a week afterward—that he made me feel terrible about what happened and that I had to apologize over and over again before he took me back. And when he did, it was like he was doing me some huge favor.

Adam joins our laughter as he sits in the worn chartreuse armchair next to the futon. Then there were people like Adam and others who made fun of me and called me dirty shower girl for a solid two weeks. Not wanting to be stuck with that humiliating nickname forever, I played along. They’d forget it faster if I didn’t fight it. What else could I do? Plus, accepting my temporary label put me right back in the group.

We even hung out with John since then. The first time Daniel and I smoked pot with him, everyone brushed that night off as a casual, drunk thing. John said he hoped we could still be cool, and I agreed, wanting to put the whole mess behind me. I couldn’t remember it anyway, and what everybody told me seemed to make sense. So I went with it. It was easier that way.

Waving a dismissive hand, Adam pours the thick amber liquid into the glasses. “Naw, that was ages ago. She’s fine now. Just make sure it’s in moderation.” He hands the glasses to us.

I take mine and clink it along with theirs but don’t toss it back like the boys do. As they’re shaking their heads and gasping, I set mine back on the coffee table.

The door opens and our friend Lewis walks in. He’s wearing a dour expression and his shoulders are slumped. “Hey guys. Anybody wanna smoke a bowl? I just got an eighth of some pretty dank shit.”

“Do you even have to ask?” Daniel says. He cashes out the glass piece on the table, and we both scoot over to make room for Lewis on the futon.

Lewis sits down and pulls out a baggie of sweet-smelling green nuggets. As he’s breaking one of them apart, he asks, “Did you guys hear about John and Alexis?”

“What about them?” Adam asks.

“Oh man! You haven’t heard? Shit’s so fucked up.” He presses little bits of weed into the bowl. “Well, last night Alexis and John got wasted and hooked up. But when she woke up this morning, she was super upset and confused, saying how she didn’t want to. She came to me and Kathleen about it, and we told her to talk to the Dean.” His voice dropped, all serious. “They’re charging John with date rape. He’s on probation pending a panel convening.”

Reality changes focal lengths. The volume in the room plunges. Everyone grows blurry and muffled. Rape? John *raped* Alexis. Did she remember what happened to her? Did it matter? She clearly hadn’t *wanted* to be with John, so she did something about it.

I look around to see if the gravity of this news is hitting Daniel in the same way, but he isn’t looking at me. Instead, he accepts the bowl of pot from Lewis and takes a hit. After blowing out a thick cloud of smoke, he says something, but I can’t hear it. All the words in the room sound like the adults in Charlie Brown cartoons.

Slowly, I unroll my thick tongue from the roof of my mouth and ask, “Is Alexis okay?”

Lewis shakes his head. “She’s not great. But she told us this morning that as soon as she woke up in John’s bed and didn’t know how she got there, she had to do something about it.” His eyes are full of sorrow and sympathy.

I never saw that look in anyone’s eyes two months ago, especially not in Daniel’s. All he did was scream at me and embarrass me. He’s a pretty passionate guy, so why isn’t he throwing a

fit now? Even Adam is reacting, with his face screwed up in a grimace as he stares at the coffee table. But all Daniel does is pick up his fucking X-box controller and start a game of NBA Street. It's like this news doesn't affect him at all.

The shot of Jaeger is still on the table in front of me. I pick it up and down it in one gulp in an attempt to settle my nerves, but it does the exact opposite. My tongue burns with the taste of licorice and aniseed. It invades my body, spreads to my throat and stomach, putting pressure on my mouth, my windpipe, my esophagus. Everything on me that can swallow or breathe blisters with alcohol and anger. It builds and builds and builds until I want to gag, to vomit. I'm not totally sure why, but what I want to do most is scream.

But I don't scream. Instead, I pluck the bottle of uncapped Jägermeister from the coffee table and turn toward Daniel. With one smooth motion, I fling my leg over his lap and straddle him. It's like an out of body experience. My limbs have a mind of their own and are suffused with a clear purpose that I cannot quite identify.

The unexpected yet very sexy move elicits catcalls from Lewis and Adam. Daniel laughs at them over my shoulder and puts a hand on my hip. "See what I mean? When she drinks this stuff, she becomes a total nympho."

I smile sweetly. "Open wide," I command, my voice all syrup and candy.

When he does, I seize his jaw with an iron grip. His eyes widen in pain. I can see the surprise in those gorgeous hazel irises of his. Seeing his distress feels *so* fucking GOOD.

His facial muscles contract and he pushes me away, but I only squeeze harder, with my fingers and my thighs. Then, I ram the bottle down his throat, watching the liquor run down his chin like crude oil. He sputters and chokes, but I only press harder and hiss menacingly through clenched teeth, "How does it feel, you disgusting piece of filth?"