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“You want to get something to drink and hang out?” said Fiona.

“I don’t have any money.” Mother was at her boyfriend’s house and the thought of drinking sounded fun. Maybe I had more devious thoughts?

“I got money,” said Edgea.

Pierre kept sneaking peeks at Edgea’s round ass. It was nice but jerked to one side every time she took a step. I noticed Edgea limped oddly. There was something strange about one of her boots. One heel was larger than the other one. We walked over to the mini-mart and the guy behind the counter greeted me with a warm hello. He glanced at the two girls and their exaggerated make-up. *Prostitutes*, he must have been thinking. That would have made me the pimp. We bought what we needed. Pierre left. His mother needed help taking the dogs to the vet. I could tell he wanted to stay and drink with the girls. He wanted Edgea. Edgea was homely. Her eyes were dark and murky, her face looked like a skull, but she had some strange sexual appeal. Later, I would figure it out. She was easy.

Back at Mother’s, I called Charlie.

“Yeah, I want to come over, but I have a friend from Argentina with me.” I could imagine Charlie’s stinking breath as he spoke. “His name is Juan.”

“Sure, Juan. Bring him too.”

Forty-five minutes later, I'd consumed a six-pack of Milwaukee's Best and a Fosters thirty-two ounce oil can. The girls dared me to drink a sixteen-ounce glass of straight vodka in one gulp. Edgea put down a dollar, betting that I couldn't do it. I let my arms dangle and shook out the tension in my shoulders. I was home and it finally sunk in that I didn't have a teacher looking after me and that I would never have to go back to Landmark. I was free. Fiona pulled an album from the stack. "Add it up" by the Violent Femmes came on and that song would play over and over in my head for the rest of the day. I picked up the tumbler. *It's clear. How can it be bad for me?* I peered into the depths of the glass and poured the vodka down my throat. For a few moments, it didn't do a damn thing, but then I started feeling a bit numb, euphoric, sociable and uninhibited. Fiona stumbled over to the turntable and started the song over. Maybe it was a hint.

*why can't I get just one kiss  
why can't I get just one kiss  
there may be something that I wouldn't miss  
but I look at your pants and I need a kiss*

The vodka-beer mix was sitting at the bottom of my stomach, plotting to take over. Fiona was looking at her own reflection in the glass door of my stereo. Edgea was next to me. I reached out and touched the thick foundation on her cheek, then looked at the tip of my finger. It was white. She shoved me. I pushed her back. She fell off the couch.

"You think that's funny, buddy?" she said laughing. I got up and ran down the hall, then turned the corner into Sister's room. Sister was out. Edgea limped after me. I pulled a table over, blocking the entrance. She climbed over it, catching me and pushing me over Sister's desk, which I knocked over. I laughed and tried to pull myself up, grabbing a bookshelf, but it fell on me instead. The doorbell rang and I kicked open the bedroom door, which fell off the hinges.

"Shit!" The door was always coming off the hinges because in general I preferred to kick it open rather than use the doorknob. I propped it back up. The bell rang again.

"I'm coming. Hold your dicks, bitches!" Jumping more than walking down the steps, I reached for the door and opened it. Charlie looked in and Juan peered from behind him.

"Where are the girls?" said Juan.

"What? You're bringing me a horny Mexican?" I said.

"I'm from Argentina," he said with a slight accented twist on his words.

"I'm just fucking with you man." I swayed to the other side of the door catching myself in the frame. "Come on in."

I handed them blurry beers. There wasn't much left. I had drunk most of them. Fiona and Edgea sat on my bed giggling.

"Girls, these are my friends."

Juan's eyes flared open when he saw Fiona. He sat next to her with his beer in hand.

I walked into Sister's room. She had her collection of plastic horses lined up against one wall. I kicked over the first one and the rest fell like dominoes.

"That's not nice," said Edgea from the doorway. She leaned awkwardly since one of her heels was larger than the other.

"Aw, that's how a brother shows love for his sister." I waved my hand in the air like it was no big deal.

"You should show me some love." She took two large steps forward and stood nose to nose with me.

"Okay." I staggered forward, almost knocking her over, and kissed her. She pulled me onto Sister's bed and we made out.

*grasp and reach for a leg of hope  
words to memorize. words hypnotize  
words make my mouth exercise  
words all failed the magic prize  
nothing I can say when I'm in your thighs*

"You're supposed to be making out with Fiona," said Edgea, breaking the seal of our lips.

"You want me to make out with her instead?"

"No. I'm just saying that was the plan."

"Yeah, I don't like that plan. This one seems better."

I was on top of her when I noticed Fiona standing in the doorway. Pure loathing washed over her.

“What the hell are you doing?” she howled. “Get off her!”

But Edgea and I kept making out.

“Edgea! Let’s go! Get off my boyfriend!” Fiona demanded.

But we continued making out.

“I fucking hate you both! You fucking assholes!” Fiona stormed out of the room.

I could hear Charlie and Juan talking to her in the next room.

“Well, why don’t *we* make out? It’ll be your way to get even.” Juan’s proposal sounded simple.

*why can't I get just one screw  
why can't I get just one screw  
believe me I know what to do  
but something won't let me make love to you*

“Fuck you, you dirty Mexican!” Fiona screamed and ran out of my house.

I turned back to Edgea.

“Let’s have sex.” Her skull face was blurry. It looked like a white blob.

“You’re drunk.”

“So are you.”

“We’ll have sex tomorrow when we’re sober,” Edgea said.

I kissed her some more, hoping it might change her mind.

Then from behind me I could hear Charlie.

“We’re going back to my place.”

“Okie dokie,” I said and waved my arm over my back at them, but I kept making out with Edgea. Her boots were still on. I tried to pull off the one with the larger sole, but she stopped me.

*why can't I get just one fuck  
why can't I get just one fuck  
I guess it's got something to do with luck  
but I waited my whole life for just one*

“Come on. Let’s have sex.”

“Not today. You’re just drunk and I’m not sure you would want to have sex with me if you were sober.” If I could have seen, I might have noticed the vulnerable look in her dark eyes.

“Sure I would. You’re hot.” I couldn’t remember right then, but when I met her, I thought she was ugly.

“Not today. Get off me.”

“Okay.” I was drunk and horny but could still hear Mother’s words, “If a girl says *no*, it’s *no*.”

“I’ll see ya soon. I’m going to go find Fiona,” Edgea said before hobbling out the door.

“Tell her I said hi.” I suppressed a smile. Ever since I had found out that Fiona had cheated on me, I’d secretly wished there was some way to get even. I was blind drunk but clear on what I was doing. It felt good.

I staggered across town to Charlie’s house. I spent a few hours hearing about his family’s long history in Lithuania, how they were royalty and his grandfather had been the President or Prime Minister. *Blah, blah, blah.*

I suddenly felt strange. Hot flashes and a cold sweat washed over me. I knew the story was going to end with, “Now the Goddamn communists have our country. The bastards.” Charlie always told it the same way. He was a capitalist and even when he was very young, he’d collected bars of gold. As Charlie talked about how rich his family should have been, I thought of all the gold he had upstairs in his room, locked away at the bottom of his closet. My dreams of gold were interrupted by the sweat that poured off my scalp. The hot flashes became overpowering. They were my body’s warning signal to get home and quick, so I said farewell or maybe just walked out the door while he was still talking, I can’t recall.

Stopping on the street, I glanced down at my boots and emitted a stream of vomit that completely covered them, the sidewalk, and the grass.

“Puke boots. Geez, that sucks,” I said out loud, to no one in particular. I staggered onwards to a local Safeway supermarket on Macarthur Boulevard. Spotting a pay phone, I clumsily called Sister. I knew she would be home from riding lessons by now.

“Hey Anastasia, what’s up?” I slurred.

“You knocked down my horses, you asshole. My room is a wreck, and what is this white powder all over my pillows?”

“Sorry.” I tried to focus on something, but my eyes were going in their own direction. Everything kept drifting to the left. Above me I recognized a blurry rotating sign. It was red and white with a giant S.

“Brother! You wrecked the house.”

“I’m at Safeway,” I mumbled.

“Are you drunk?”

“I was. Now I don’t feel too good.”

“Where are you?”

“The Safeway”

“Which one?”

The phone went dead or I blacked out, but I could still hear shoppers walking to their cars.

“Mommy is that man dead?”

“No dear,” said an older lady. “He doesn’t have a home.”

Time passed, then suddenly someone pulled at my jacket and made me sit up. My head fell back as far as it could go and my mouth opened.

“Christ, you smell like puke.” It sounded like Dash. “Time to go, buddy.”

Opening my eyes, I could see the world moving.

“Leave me alone you bastard,” I said, tasting the vomit. I spat but it didn’t go further than my jacket. “You are kidnapping me. Let me go! You fucking bitch.”

“Fucking bitch, yes, I’m a fucking bitch,” he said.

I opened one eye and saw it was a guy who looked like Dash, but older, more handsome, with tousled blond hair, his physique now rugged. I closed my eye, rolling my head the other way.

“Thank fucking god. I thought you were a rapist.”

“Who said I’m not going to rape you,” said Dash as he pulled me into the van.

We were moving. I was leaning against the door. I watched Dash driving. The setting sun washed everything in orange. He was rubbing his elbow in an odd way. When he saw me watching him he stopped and grinned.

Dash would later tell me that he had been at home when Sister called him since he was the closest one to Safeway.

Sister opened the van door and her moon was flying around her head and it said: "My brother's an idiot." Her arms were crossed but I was still too drunk to care. I reached for her imaginary moon. Dash pushed my arm down since it was crossing his face. I lay sprawled out on the seat.

"He's as white as a ghost. Maybe we should take him to the hospital!" Sister said.

I could feel Dash's finger running down the side of my face. He held the finger in front of Sister.

"What is that, clown make-up?"

"I think it was from a girl," he said.

"Was she a clown?" Sister's stare stabbed me.

I shrugged. I wasn't sure myself.

"Where did you find him?" Squinting, she looked like Mother.

"He was curled up next to a shopping cart holding onto it as if it were his baby."

Dash opened all the doors and the back of the Volkswagen van, trying to air out the smell of puke. They put me in Sister's room and when I opened my eyes, the day-glo orange paint made me feel like someone was screaming through my eyeballs. "Oh, God orange, who has an orange room?" I mumbled.

"Yes, I know you're sorry," Sister said, and then she put a cold, wet rag on my forehead.

Sister and Dash fixed the door I had kicked off the hinges, and picked up the shelves I'd knocked over, setting the house right and taking out the empty cans, dumping the bags in the neighbor's trash, all before Mother came home.

"Where is your Brother?" I could hear Mother's voice and buried my head under Sister's pillow.

"He has food poisoning." Mother came in and sat on the side of the bed. I pushed my face deep in the pillows to hide my breath. Years later, she would tell me she knew. Besides, I had punished myself. I was sick.

"How's the little soldier doing?" She placed her hand on the back of my neck.

"Not so good."

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