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## A Party

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# A Party

You're not a party guy. You never have been. It's probably because no one has ever invited you to one. You're probably alone too much. But here you are. You're starting college and trying to change that. You have a fresh start and no one knows how terrible you are yet. You can be whoever you want. You can adopt any facade you think people will like. You have a chance to make a connection with others. But you're scared you're going to fuck it up.

You're outside. The campus dorms and buildings light up the night. Some people you met at freshman orientation walk with you to a party they heard about. You walk with them to pretend you have friends for a second. You carry the beers you bought in an attempt to feel different from how you usually feel.

You arrive at the party house. The outside is completely dark and you question if it's the right house. You hesitantly walk up to the porch and peer along the edge of a closed curtain. You see multi-colored lights and a crowd of people, which confirm you're in the right place. But you're nervous. Part of you knows you shouldn't be there. Your parents definitely wouldn't want you to be there. But what do they know? They just raised you, fed you, and supported your decision to attend an expensive college for a degree you don't care about. Screw them. You walk into the house.

It's filled with seizure-inducing strobe lights and overbearing music. The people there are wearing flannels and crop tops. The air feels cramped. There's a living room and kitchen littered with red Solo cups. The new sights and sounds fill you with anxiety. All the surfaces inside the house are sticky with beer.

The people who you came with immediately scatter and leave you. You stroll around awkwardly trying to gain the courage to talk to someone. But

you can't. You sit on the couch and contemplate why you don't have the balls to talk to people.

You crack open the beers you brought. You drink them all as quickly as you can because you hate the taste of them. One beer, two, three, four; you drink them to distract yourself from how uncomfortable you feel. After a while, you feel a lot better. The lights and music no longer seem that bad, and there's a pleasant warmth in your body. The insecurities you were feeling shrink; you feel numb to what's happening around you.

You start to feel more confident in yourself. Taking your new liquid courage, you decide to wander around the party and see what others are doing. You walk up to a group of guys talking and laughing in a semicircle. One of the guys is talking in detail about a girl he slept with the weekend before. He talks about how he performed oral on her. You look at the guy and ask why he's not worried about catching STDs from that. In response, he says, "Well, you can't get an STD from oral unless they cum." You laugh because you think he's joking. He looks at you confused and you realize he's not joking.

You hear some commotion upstairs, and it makes you curious. After journeying up the steps, you see ten people standing in a white, glowing bathroom. Everyone looks excited as they stare at two guys with their heads down by the sink. You stroll closer and see a line of white powder in front of each faucet. You immediately realize that the powder is cocaine. You've only seen cocaine in movies. You saw people snort sugar or crushed up Smarties as a joke back in high school, but now you're seeing the real thing. You're immobilized by curiosity as you see each line of white powder vanish up a nasal cavity. The bathroom crowd cheers like they've just seen an Olympic record being made.

You descend back downstairs. The room seems to spin a bit and you feel more numb than you did before. You sit back down on the couch in an attempt to make the spinning stop. After a few minutes, a girl sits a couple feet away from you and looks at her phone. She's cute. You consider talking to her for a moment. You've never been good at talking to girls, but your artificial confidence is there egging you on. Like ripping off a Band-Aid, you turn to the girl and casually say, "Hi." She looks up from her phone and smiles. "Hi," she says.

You ask her how she is enjoying the party, and she tells you that she's a little bored. You exchange basic information with each other like hometowns and majors. You ask about the things she likes and it turns out she likes the same kind of music as you. She scoots closer to hear you better over the sounds of the party. You get a better look at the green hue of her eyes. She smells like lavender.

The two of you talk for a while, and you make her laugh a few times. You've never been an open person, but the alcohol frees up your tongue.

There's an awkward moment where the conversation dies, and you don't know what to say next. Her face gets a couple inches closer to you and then retreats. *Did she almost kiss you?*

You become nervous again and weigh your options. You don't want to seem like a creep, so you decide not to kiss her. The conversation starts to feel way more forced than it did before. You grasp at straws to regain her interest in you, but you have nothing. Some friends of hers come over and ask her if she's ready to leave with them. She tells you she has to go and waves goodbye. *Did she actually have to go or was she just trying to get away from you?* Either way, you don't blame her.

Now you're alone again. But you're used to that. Eventually, the party winds down and you leave. You had some fun, and it was definitely more exciting than sitting in your dorm room alone, so you go to a different party the next weekend. You repeat this cycle over and over again.

Later, you see the girl you talked to at that first party walking across campus. You're happy to see her so you wave and smile. She sees you but doesn't wave back. She looks down and keeps walking. *What did you do?*

You keep going to parties to feel something, but the excitement quickly leaves you. Months pass and you're sitting on a couch staring at all the other people at the party. You think, *No one cares if I'm here or not. Why do I bother?* Then you get up and leave. You stop showing up to parties altogether because you don't really see a point in them. Some people say life is a party. To you, it certainly feels like one sometimes. And sometimes, you wonder if you want to keep showing up to it.