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Last Call: I'm Never Drinking Again and Other Lies I've Told Myself

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Last Call:
I'm Never Drinking Again and Other Lies I've Told Myself

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2020



LAST CALL

I'M NEVER DRINKING AGAIN
AND
OTHER LIES I'VE TOLD MYSELF

ODNA OGLESBY

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MONA SIMPSON, my advisor, whose workshops changed the way I write and whose guidance never wavered, many tears, and all.

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BEFORE

First Time

Humans have plenty of ‘firsts’ in life. Some you don’t remember, your first words, first steps, first time peeing by yourself. Some firsts are hazy, the first book you read by yourself, the first sentence you ever wrote, the first time you ever rode a bike. Other firsts change the rest of your life in ways that are unexplainable. Your first kiss, the first time you have sex, the first time you think you’ve fallen in love, the first time you actually fall in love, the first time you get your heartbroken. I’ve had all of those firsts, but none of those monumental firsts had an effect on me like the first time I ever got drunk. Problematic? Not sure, but it definitely taught me something about myself. It taught me how much I loved to feel drunk, it taught me how amazing it felt to let go and not care about... anything.

I got ready for the party with my friend Gianna. She had been friends with Sloan for a while now, my nerves were going, I was only 14 and wasn’t the biggest partier. It was our friend from dance class, Sloan’s going away party for her semester abroad. She went to a Jewish High School and every year a group of sophomores got to spend a semester traveling in Israel. To calm my nerves as we got ready Gianna snuck wine from her parent’s fridge and we began to drink, straight from the bottle of course.

By the time we arrived, I was already feeling looser than normal. We walked in and saw other friends from dance, friendly faces made the rest of the unknown people in attendance seem much less threatening. Sloan ran over to greet us when we entered the kitchen, it was filled with people and there were bottles everywhere. Her parents were talking with some of the kids, seemingly unphased by the alcohol being consumed. Maybe they felt better about everyone drinking since they were there? My parents were the kind who sat me down at the kitchen table before my first day of high school, took out a shot glass, filled it with water, and made me

believe that one shot would get me drunk. I wish that were true mom and dad, I would have saved so much money if my tolerance worked like that...

Once all of the introductions were made, small talk was engaged in, and everyone had a plastic cup in their hand we moved outside to the fire pit. It wasn't a huge party, just close friends, but there were more people there that I didn't know than those that I did. I was still feeling good from the wine but Gianna had made me a vodka orange juice that I was making my way through quicker than expected I had never had hard liquor before, my mom had let me sip from a margarita, but the sugary mixers always did well at hiding the metallic tang of the tequila. I can remember the whole moment clearly, Gianna handing me a red solo cup filled almost to the brim with what looked like straight orange juice. I turned to her, raising my eyebrows as if to say, hey I want a real drink! She laughed and told me to shut the fuck up and take a sip. It was electric, the orange juice was merely a coverup, a garnish, for a glass of mostly cheap vodka. I let it pour into my mouth, taking too much in but not wanting to look like a pussy so I forced it down my throat. It's like what I imagined battery acid to taste like, cold and sweet but sharp at the same time. It set every single one of my taste buds on fire and then quickly put it out all at once. It burned going down my throat and hit my stomach with a thud. My esophagus felt warm, a warmth that quickly shot to the ends of my fingers and tips of my toes. It was electric.

I didn't know what happened when you mixed alcohol, all I did know was that the few sips I had taken of the drink in my hand made me feel much looser than the wine had, and I liked it. I was laughing and talking to people with ease, even the people I didn't know as well. I wouldn't classify myself as a socially anxious person, but having to interact with people that I don't know at all and who my friends knew well could be overwhelming, but when I'm drunk it's exciting. I

wasn't afraid of what they would think of me, I didn't care if I said something that was little off the cuff because everything sounds funny when you're drinking.

I went to take another sip of my drink and realized that I was sipping from an empty cup. I turned to Sloan and asked her where I could get a refill, she laughed,

“Oh someone drank that fast! Here come with me,” she took my hand and began to lead me inside.

Sitting down I felt steady, but as soon as I stood up things started spinning. My legs were buzzing, shit every part of my body was buzzing. I regained my composure as quickly as possible, doing my best to focus my eyes and keep my vision singular. I couldn't let anyone see that the only freshman there was already drunk. Inside Sloan asked me if I was having fun and making friends, she seemed happy when I told her my nerves had subsided and was having fun. Alex, Sloan's brother, and some of his friends followed us into the kitchen, he came and put his arm around me. Turning to Sloan, he smiled at her then at me, informing us that he and the boys, “liked this one,” nodding in my direction. I laughed, I felt my cheeks getting hot and prayed they would assume it was from the liquor. I didn't think of it as a weird comment then, although now looking back on it, it was. Sloan punched him in the arm and led me back outside, I turned to see the boys all watching us from the window. I took a sip, no, I took a gulp, a massive gulp, and another volt of electricity shot through my body. More, more, more, I thought to myself, I need more of this feeling, more of this harsh liquid courage. I finally understood what that saying meant. I sat by the fire and Alex quickly squeezed in next to me. We exchanged light small talk, shared a few laughs, then he began to flirt with me. Just as he put his arm around me another one of his friends came and sat on the other side of me. I began to feel nervous, turning to my drink to fix that, the nerves quickly subsided. Soon we were all laughing together, I was complaining

about the boy I was dating yelling a little too loud that I didn't even like him, we broke up the following Monday much to my new "friends" delight.

As the night continued and more drinks were consumed it became hard to disguise how drunk I had become. I think I had about 4 glasses that night and as a new drinker that was more than enough to push me from controlled to less than controlled. We danced, I tripped a few times which made the group laugh, but I laughed with them so it was okay. Many new friends were made, even plans for lunch were scheduled, very few of which would actually come to fruition. It was a kind of fun I had never had before, I would spin, and when I stopped my vision kept going. My body felt like a 100-volt battery, I was hot and I was energized, I thought I was moving in ways I had never moved before, but in reality, I was just shaking my ass incredibly offbeat.

At least 10 of us ended up spending the night at Sloan's house that night, and at 9:30 in the morning, when her mom came to wake Sloan, Gianna, and I up for dance class I experienced my first hangover. A feeling that, as I grew older, would be one that I would become quite accustomed to living through.

My first time getting drunk wasn't a bad one, and maybe that's part of where the problem lay. I had fun, I felt safe, and I liked the person that I became while I was drinking. I liked feeling carefree, I liked people laughing at the jokes I made and not worrying that they were laughing at me. I liked being able to flirt with boys and feel confident about it. I liked alcohol. I liked the hard lump it left in my stomach after taking a shot that was too big. I had fun bending over, looking at whoever had taken the shot with me, both of us fighting to keep it inside and laughing once we finally won. I hated the taste but that was something I learned to efficiently

mask with enough mixer or a correctly timed lime. Drinking was social, drinking was fun, drinking was not something that I saw a problem with. At least not then.

Hiding a Hangover 101

Have you ever woken up sure that if you were to leave your bed, death would be waiting for you around the corner? Have you ever believed that you were going to die from dehydration only feet away from a water source, but the thought of getting to the said water source was so excruciating it forced you to accept your untimely end with humility and pride? Have you ever had to try and hold your eyes in your head because you were sure that your migraine was causing your brain to swell and in turn slowly forcing your eyes out of their sockets? Have you ever

woken up next to the toilet only to stay there until 6 PM when your significant other finally force-fed you potato chips and water?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, don't fret! I have been in each and every single one of those positions, and through them, I have developed a two-part, foolproof way of avoiding the brain splitting, sudden death accepting, already wavering faith questioning hangover.

The golden rule for hangover aversion is to plan ahead! Most of the steps in this list will have to be performed before any alcohol enters your body. If you know you're going out and want to have a NIGHT, but live a normal life and have responsibilities like a normal adult get ready for the morning after with these steps.

Part 1: The night before

-Buy Pedialyte and place the whole, and I mean the WHOLE bottle next to your bed.

-Leave at least TWO glasses of water next to the Pedialyte.

-Leave yourself 2 Advils and some type of non-perishable food next to the liquids.

I suggest something like a banana, a slice of bread, chips, or pretzels. If it is too flavorful or difficult to eat you will avoid eating it in the morning, trust me.

-Make sure you have food that you can eat as soon as you get home, preferably some kind of protein and some kind of carb.

Part 2: Arriving home and the morning after

-Arrive home safely.

-Wash your face and put on your pajamas. I know it will be tempting to go straight to bed after this but don't.

-Go get the food that you left for yourself before the drinking began and a glass of water. No, not one of the glasses you left by your bed, an entirely new cup.

-Eat ALL of the food and drink ALL of the water. Feel free to complete this step wherever you find it most comfortable, and in a situation such as this I always say anywhere is a kitchen table, even your bed.

-Go the fuck to sleep

-Once you have woken up in the morning drink at least half a glass of water and several large sips of Pedialyte.

-Go the fuck back to sleep

-We're not going back to bed after this step so if you're still feeling like you may lose both eyeballs, sleep more. If you don't feel as though the Grim reaper is getting closer with every passing second, finish your snack, finish all the water you have left, and fill a glass half full with Pedialyte.

-Get your sorry ass out of bed, get another glass of water, and get into the shower.

-And always remember, sips not chugs.

LA AA

Gianna had been sober for three months. She was 22 and the idea of being sober for the rest of her life was something she hadn't fully wrapped her mind around just yet. Many people had told her that once you make it past three months of sobriety you can make it to a year, a statement she was banking on. She started going to meetings alone but quickly realized that until she was able to find friends at her meetings going alone felt too daunting. We all told her that the only way she would be able to develop a community was to go and talk to the other people there, but she wanted support while she did so.

Her favorite meeting was on Thursday nights in Venice. It was a speaker meeting which meant there was one person who would share his or her story and then if anyone wanted to they could ask questions or share a little bit themselves. I think she liked speaker meetings so much because it alleviated the pressure of feeling like she had to share, something she had yet to do. Thursday's were also a prime night for going out in LA, something that she still loved to do. She said it helped her feel like even though she couldn't drink anymore she could still go out and be "normal."

Sloan and I became her go-to AA supporters. We would drive to her house, have dinner, go to the meeting, and then Sloan and I would proceed to get absolutely trashed while Gianna watched, driving us wherever we wanted to go. In the back of my mind, I always wondered how she was able to watch us drink and be drunk without cracking and joining us, but her desire for another day sober and the promise of that next month's chip seemed to overpower the need for drinks.

I remember one of the first times she and I ever hung out one on one, there was a party in the Valley that we had both been invited to so we went together. We were in her bathroom putting our makeup on when she asked me what alcohol I was planning on drinking that night. She must have seen the look of confusion on my face in the mirror, she turned to me and said,

"What? Just because I don't drink doesn't mean you don't have to!" She pushed my shoulder and went back to doing her eyeliner.

"Oh, well, yeah no I know. I just wasn't sure if that was something you were okay with or-" she cut me off before I could finish my sentence, turning to me ready to deliver a speech I could tell she had given many times before,

“Look, sobriety for me doesn’t mean that I can’t ever be around alcohol, I just can’t have it myself! I want to see my friends have fun! I want to live vicariously through you, it’s like I feel drunk without drinking!” she paused for a moment, putting her eyeliner down, “okay let’s go!”

“Go? Gianna where are we going?” I had half of a line of eyeliner on my left eye when she grabbed my hand pulling me out of the bathroom.

“We’re getting you something to drink!” She threw a pair of slides in my face as she ran out the door, I had never seen a sober person be more eager to buy alcohol before.

We drove to the nearby liquor store, both with only half a face of makeup on, messy buns, and mismatched outfits. I was 19 at the time so she ran in and got me a fifth of tequila.

“Gianna, that’s too much I won’t be able to finish that!” I said as she threw the bottle in my lap and looked over at me, grinning like the Cheshire cat.

“Well, then we’ll just save it for next time silly!” She reached over and started pushing the bottle into my sweats.

“Gianna, what-- stop! What are you doing?” Swatting her hand away I moved the bottle out of her reach.

“So okay, you can drink, but I can’t,” she nodded and I nodded back in agreement, “but also, my parents can’t see you drink. They don’t think it’s good for me to be around it, which I totally get! But I disagree, so just hide it when we walk in the house.” She giggled and turned to face the road.

Something about the way she spoke and the fact that she was always the one making the drinks for me, quelled any guilt I might have had about drinking in front of her. It quelled it, but it never quite went away. Total honesty, I agreed with her parents, but if I didn’t drink she acted as though I was trying to make a statement, so I did.

“Okay guys, tonight's speaker is supposed to be really great! He's like, super inspirational and has great stories!” Gianna was finishing her makeup while Sloan and I finished cooking dinner.

“For sure, but you also say that every week,” Sloan turned to me and rolled her eyes.

“Yeah G, you said that last week then this man proceeded to tell us how he knew he had hit rock bottom when he woke up in a literal dumpster. I think even if I wasn't a drinker and I woke up in a dumpster that would be my all-time low. I mean a great story but-” I laughed as Gianna opened the bathroom door, threw a wet towel at my face, and went back to the mirror.

“Okay, rude! Look I'm sure tonight's gonna be awesome, we're just messing.” I threw the towel back walking into the living room to grab my overnight bag.

“You might be messing, but,” Sloan's voice trailed off, I shot her a look as I reentered the kitchen.

“Guys can you just pretend like it made you feel something,” Gianna whined, Sloan turned to me, making a face and cackling. “Guys I'm serious!”

“We're being serious! Right, Sloan!” I pinched her arm as she glared in my direction. Swatting my hand away she yelled towards the bathroom,

“Hey, we are here supporting you while also being forced to question our own drinking habits every damn week, at least let us poke fun,” Sloan shouted back, focusing on perfecting her pasta sauce.

I reentered the kitchen and pulled a fifth of tequila out of my bag. I went to hide it in the freezer, behind the frost-covered chicken, and next to the Spongebob Push Pops. Gianna showed us this hiding spot when we first became friends. She would laugh and say she was sure the push pops were as old as her and the chicken, the chicken could have been from the home's previous

owners. Sloan's eyes lit up and a devilish smile spread across her face hearing the sound of the freezer open. She gave me her, 'one wouldn't hurt?' look that I had grown familiar with, although normally it was being used in the context of, 'one MORE wouldn't hurt.'

"Sloan, no," I whispered.

"Come on dude, it's fine!" She went to pull the bottle from my hands, but I moved away faster.

"Dude! You come on, not before the meeting!" I began to lower the bottle into the freezer when Sloan moved behind me, grabbing the bottle from my hands and knocking me forward.

"Sloan!" I said in the loudest whisper I could manage.

Before I could get to her she had grabbed two glasses from the cabinet and juice from the fridge. "Only one" she mouthed, making us each a tequila grapefruit, 70% tequila, and 30% grapefruit.

"Only one but make it count for three." she winked, handing me the drink and slipping the bottle into its place in the freezer.

Sloan handed me the glass mouthing '3, 2, 1,' I hesitated for a moment, would Gianna really care? Would I get some kind of bad karma for going to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting drunk? Sloan looked over at me impatiently waiting, her eyes telling me to not be a pussy. 'Only this one,' I mouthed. She smiled, we plugged our noses and chugged. Finishing the drinks much faster than we should have we keeled over, the drink hit my stomach like a rock. We wrapped our arms around our bellies in an attempt to keep the liquor down. Hobbling over to the sink I let the saliva that had pooled in my mouth fall down the drain. I washed the glasses, dried them, and put them back in the cabinet, absolutely no evidence could be left behind. Sloan was still bent over when Gianna came into the kitchen,

“Oh my god Slo, are you okay?” Gianna exclaimed as she ran over to help Sloan stand upright.

“Oh yeah no just got a cramp, I think I’m getting my period!” Sloan shot her a thumbs up, slowly uncurled her spine, and returned to her sauce.

“Oh no, do you want some Midol?” Gianna turned to go back to the bathroom.

“No no no, it’s okay I think I just need to eat something!”

“Okay if you’re sure, I have some if you need.” Gianna smiled, pushing herself up to sit on the counter.

I was suddenly faced with a dilemma, that being the fact that I couldn’t do anything but stare at a tree in her yard that had suddenly begun to sway back and forth, there was no wind assisting it. Note to self, a 70/30 ratio hits even harder when taken in one gulp.

I opened and closed my eyes a few times attempting to steady my vision as I turned to face Gianna,

“Oh! Look at those rosy cheeks!” she cooed and I touched my face, was it hot from the alcohol or the fear of getting caught?

“What can I say, it’s getting hot in this kitchen! Look at you all dolled up to make friends,” I teased. Gianna stuck up her middle finger, put it in her mouth, and sucked.

“Oh that’s how you’re planning on making friends is it?” I teased.

Gianna laughed, Sloan, who had remained silent throughout all of this filled our bowls and we sat down to eat. We finished eating and while Gianna cleaned up Sloan and I went to make ourselves look presentable in case we happened upon a sober lover. A feat we attempted every week and every week was met with nothing but disappointment. Gianna finished cleaning and went to perfect her outfit. Once out of sight, Sloan ran out of the bathroom, reappearing with

two more drinks. The pre-dinner drink had begun to wear off and it was only a fact that if we didn't re-up we would hit the post drunk sleepy phase and yawning at an AA meeting is not in line with the unspoken etiquette. We downed the drink, a much kinder ratio this time around, brushing our teeth and tongues we popped gum in our mouths, a feeble attempt to hide our increasing buzz.

We finished our makeup, changed our clothes two, then three times. When we were finally ready, Sloan ran for shotgun, and I accepted defeat, crawling into the backseat. On the way to the meeting I had a horrible realization, I was, in fact, about to vomit. I got off my phone and asked if I could roll the window down passing it off as car sickness.

"Sorry I think I just filled up way too much on pasta and I-" I was rudely interrupted by a burp, vomit entering my mouth. I swallowed and tried to direct my breath out of the window. The taste of tequila and meat sauce did not help with nausea, I closed my eyes and stuck my head out of the window. My stomach felt tight, moving up and down with the rhythm of Gianna's LA style of driving. My face became increasingly more warm and the nausea spread. The stress of being found made my head buzz and my vision cross with anxiety.

"Are you okay? Should I pull over?" Gianna's deep fear of throwing up was another reason she claimed she needed to get sober, the late-night sessions over the toilet always took a toll on her psyche. I could see the fear in her eyes, smiled and said,

"No, yeah, I'm fine, just need air," I closed my eyes, and took deep regulated breaths.

My nausea had passed by the time we arrived at the church and I could feel that my cheeks were returning to their normal color. It was a small and unimpressive building, exactly what one may think of when envisioning where an AA meeting might be held. We pulled into the parking lot and drove through a thick crowd of cigarette smoke. If I had to guess I would say at least 90%

of sober people smoke cigarettes, and I get it, you give up one destructive vice, you can smoke cigarettes as a treat.

We parked and entered the cloud, Gianna and Sloan joined everyone in smoking, but I knew a cigarette would do nothing but push me over the edge. Standing up helped calm my stomach, the smoke that I was surrounded by did not.

“Guys, I need to go to the bathroom, meet you inside?” I walked away before either could respond. I pushed past the hoard of too cool adolescents all chain-smoking in curated-for-AA outfits, making a b-line towards the church doors.

As the greeter said hello I was met with a wave of, what I believed to be, guilt-induced nausea. Note to self, never get drunk before an AA meeting! I smiled and nodded, attempting to speak would have released the flood gates and vomiting tequila and pasta on the floor would most certainly not align with AA etiquette.

For a small church, the bathroom was disrespectfully hard to find. I ran down a shockingly long hallway, turned a corner, and was met by the beautiful detailed man and woman on the door. The woman’s bathroom was occupied, so I went to the men’s room. Locking the stall door I supported myself, one hand on my knee and one holding back my hair. I let the saliva that I had been collecting for the whole car ride fall into the toilet and vomit quickly followed suit. After the contents of my stomach found its new place in the toilet and I had gotten the dry heaving under control I wiped my mouth and left the stall. Opening the door I was met with the horrible realization that I was no longer alone in the bathroom, an older man, probably about 45 or 50 was standing next to the sink.

“You okay there?” His face was hard, a mix of confusion and an all-knowing disappointment.

“Oh my-- yes, sorry sir I just--” He lifted his hand before I could finish my sentence like some kind of church bathroom oracle.

“Don’t. I get it, these meetings can be scary, but realize this, we have all felt what you’re feeling. We all know how hard it is to even show up, but for you, and for everyone else who is brave enough to get in their car and drive here, don’t show up like this.” He handed me a wet paper towel and a piece of gum.

“Sir, I--” I felt the blood rush out of my face, my indiscretion was no longer a secret and I was sure I needed to vomit again.

“No, I understand. Take this and don’t worry, I won’t tell. We’ve all been there, just remember why you’re here and remember it’s always just one day at a time.” He nodded, spraying a suffocating amount of Febreze in the air before walking out the door. Payback I assumed.

I stood there, frozen in place. I wiped my mouth clean and popped in the gum. I was no longer drunk, from vomiting or from the man I just met, I wasn’t sure, but I looked in the mirror and things seemed uncomfortably clear. One day at a time. Everyone always says sobriety is one day at a time and I thought to myself that maybe tomorrow would be that first day. Who gets drunk before an AA meeting? Someone who has a problem. Why couldn’t I say no to Sloan? Why didn’t I stand my ground? I felt my eyes start to burn with tears, maybe I was still slightly buzzed. I tilted my head back, I spent far too long getting this winged liner right to let it be ruined by a few tears. I decided that tomorrow would be my first day, I would get sober. I went out and found Gianna and Sloan, they were already seated and I squeezed in next to them. I looked around scanning the chairs and spotted the man from the bathroom in the back row. He smiled and nodded, then returned his attention to his phone.

“Where were you?” Gianna whispered.

“I had to shit, Slo that sauce did not sit right with me,” I punched Sloan on the shoulder and she scoffed.

“Hey don’t blame my sauce for your weak stomach,” she winked pulling out her phone.

“Oh also, Connor invited us to his table at Bootsy tonight, apparently the surprise guest is going to be crazy and you know what that means!”

“Extra bottles?” My eyes lit up.

“Extra bottles, baby.” She smirked.

“Let’s fucking go.” We all laughed, and I decided that my first day would tomorrow. It was not.

A Drunkard's Guide to Cooking

There is something to be said about the level of ingenuity seen when a drunk person attempts to cook. In my many years of drinking and eating, I have found that the optimal time for drunken creativity in the kitchen comes between the hours of 2 and 4 AM. This sweet spot of the early morning is before the alcohol fades and the sleep hits, and after the initial drive to dance and drink more has passed through what little uninebriated consciousness is left.

Cooking in this state, albeit dangerous, is really a time where you are able to get creative with your food. Flavor pairings that may have at one time sounded off-putting now sound like an exciting new terrain that must be traversed. Why not add some milk to your bowl of hot Cheetos, or give yourself a generous side of ketchup for dipping your snickers into?

Below you will find a curated list of recipes made by drunkards, for drunkards.

APPETIZERS

Sometimes after a long night out, the idea of a full meal can seem daunting and overwhelming. Perhaps you stopped by a McDonalds on the way home and the Big Mac meal just didn't quite hit the way you wanted it to. Here are some quick fixes for your light late-night hankering.

Flamin' Limon Cantaloup:

1 Bag of Limon Hot Cheetos

1 Cantaloup

The idea of wielding a sharp knife may seem reckless while in this state of mind, but with a little focus, all fingers should stay intact. Carefully, and I mean carefully, cut the cantaloupe into pieces. Bite sizes, large slices, doesn't matter! It's all about how you wish to eat the fruit. Open the bag of Hot Cheetos and using your hands, because no one has time to find a rolling pin, crush the Cheetos into pieces. A fine powder is not necessary unless that is your desired consistency.

Put the cantaloupe into a large bowl, sprinkle with the crushed Cheetos, and enjoy!

Corn

1 Bag of Frozen Corn

Just eat the corn. It will taste weird at first, but then... it hits.

Blend o' Crunch

½ a cup of Popcorn

½ a cup of Ruffles

1 squirt of Mustard

1 squirt of Ketchup

This will make for a party in your mouth and then an even bigger party in your tummy.

Place the popcorn and ruffles into a medium-sized bowl. Add in your condiments. Mix. Yum!

Another viable option here is to just eat an entire bag of popcorn in bed and in the morning eat the popcorn that is covering your bed for breakfast. Don't knock it till you try it.

ENTREES

Sometimes there is nothing that sounds better than pursuing a career in culinary arts while drunk.

The idea of dropping everything you have ever done and just committing yourself to a life of cooking. Here are some recipes for the inner drunk chef in us all.

Pasta a Limone

1 bag of Limon Lays

1 bowl of leftover pasta

Take your leftover pasta and sprinkle with the limone lays.

Eat Cold.

Delish

Flaming Chicken

1 can of chicken

1 bag of Flamin hot Cheetos

Here we have a key ingredient for a drunkard, protein! Many people believe that the best way to prevent a hangover is to eat bread, but the real system hack is protein! Why? Not sure, but trust me when I say it works.

Put the canned chicken into a bowl.

Crush the Cheetos and sprinkle them over the chicken.

No hangover for you!

DESSERT

If you're in a sweet tooth kind of drunk mood, here are some great dessert recipes to fill that hole.

Vanilla Crunch

1 bowl of vanilla ice cream

1-2 handfuls of Cinnamon Toast Crunch

1 splash of Fireball

Put however much vanilla ice cream you want into a bowl. Crush up some CT Crunch with your hands and sprinkle over. For an extra dash of cinnamon flavor, add one to two shots of fireball to the bowl. Lets party!

Laurel Canyon

I feel as though if my hangovers weren't so monumental I would have a very different relationship with drinking. It's the mind-shattering migraine and not uncontrollable nausea that truly inhibits any kind of productivity the day after a night out for me. Oh, to think about what could have been accomplished in all the days I have lost, trapped in a mess of pillows and blankets, unsure if I would live to see another day.

There was one morning after having to crawl into bed at 12:15 am, never having even made it out of the house, I could have sworn to every God out there that a whole team of construction workers were line dancing with their jackhammers on the inside of my skull. My eyes were pried open by the sunlight as if it were trying to punish me for falling asleep next to the toilet for an hour the night before. The towel under my head left an imprint on my cheek so deep it would not fully fade away until 3 pm and the bucket next to the bed let me know that I deserved it.

"Morning sleepy head!" My friend Alex was perched on the end of the bed, head tilted like a mother trying to hide her shame, "someone got a little wild last night now didn't she!" I tried to kick him off but he held onto my foot and laughed, reaching down he revealed a glass of ice water and half of a bagel with butter. I groaned and rolled over, my face sinking into the pillow beside me.

"Hey don't get mad at me! I'm simply stating the facts here." He laughed again. I began to sit up which only angered the workers inside my head more, it seemed as though my moving threw off their rhythm and they were not happy about it.

I took the glass from him, craned my neck, and took a sip. 91.5% of the contents spilled onto my face and the towel-covered pillow, but the water was so cold I wished I had poured the whole thing onto my head. I drank the remaining 8.5% and laid my head back down.

Alex stared at me, his blank expression quickly turned into laughter as he took my hands and ushered me out from under the covers. The construction workers protested, as did I, but once I was out of the door the smell of bacon hit my nose and I was suddenly well... or so I thought.

I trailed behind Alex and shuffled into the kitchen. Sloan was sitting at the kitchen table eating and seemingly fine from the night before.

“Jesus Christ, I thought you were never going to wake up. What did you even drink last night?” Alex cackled as he shoved another piece of bacon into his mouth.

I grabbed two strips and a glass of orange juice before sitting down next to Sloan and laying my head on the table, “is there any way you can maybe go three octaves lower with your volume?”

“Oh! Would you like that?” Alex said even louder, “Well I missed the party taking care of you so this is your punishment!” Alex looked at Sloan with a proud grin, she punched him on the shoulder and rubbed the back of my head.

“Okay enough, don’t be an ass she’s definitely paying for it by the looks of her.” Sloan handed me her glass of water, “Remember, sips not gulps.”

I didn’t listen, took two huge gulps, and suddenly the three bites of bacon I just ate started crawling back up my throat. “Fuck I--” and ran to the bathroom.

“I told you.” Sloan’s voice trailed off as I ran to the nearest toilet. I paused and before a mix of bacon and bile left my system. My body shook as I waited for the second wind, when that didn’t come I stood up, washed my mouth out, and splashed cool water onto my face.

When I finally reemerged back into the kitchen Gianna had risen from her nest on the couch,

“I thought you died!” Gianna’s voice seemed to be magnified 120X.

“Ah, please, volume...” I sat back down at the table and took small sips not gulps of water, pushing the rest of my bacon in front of Alex.

“Just wait till Danni calls you, he’s the one whose volume you’re gonna need to control,” Gianna said, as she shoved bacon, eggs, and orange juice into her mouth all at once.

“Fuck... was he mad? I mean I didn’t skip it on purpose! Shit, it’s basically his fault that this happened, I mean it was his birthday!” I grinned, trying to make myself believe what I was saying. I took a sip of orange juice, waited a few seconds, and followed with another, next thing I knew I had finished the whole glass. Sloan looked at me, expression blank and almost all-knowing, she raised her eyebrows and sighed and I headed straight for the bathroom.

After my second morning rendezvous with the porcelain throne, I knew that something needed to enter and stay in my stomach. I retrieved the now cold bagel Alex had brought to me earlier in the morning and bite by bite struggled to consume half of it. As everyone else slid into their afternoon routine of pot and the pool I stayed wrapped in blankets on the couch. Although a valiant attempt was made, the half of a bagel decided that it was no match for my nausea and yet again I was face to face with the toilet.

I managed to take a half nap, attempting to calm the construction workers whose jackhammer line dance had turned into more of a conga line, going around and around, taking a little extra time behind each eye before moving around the rest of my skull. My eyes shot open, a cold hand resting on my foot,

“Okay sleepyhead, time to get up, I have to go to meet my parents at some dinner. You gotta go.” Sloan’s soft voice made up for the icicles she sent up my leg.

“Yes yes, right, no home, I need to go there. You’re correct.” I sat up, took a deep breath, and got to my feet. I looked at the clock, 4pm, great! Prime traffic time.

There is something to be said about trying to get from the Valley to the City in Los Angeles at rush hour. Even if you are the healthiest, most put-together person in the entire world, that traffic will make you feel as though you are on the verge of death, and hungover, that feeling is unexplainable.

I asked Gianna if she would be willing to drive my car home for me and I would pay for her Uber back home, and although she said she would she insisted that we stop at her house first because she needed to tell her father what she was doing. At that moment I knew, I would be facing this traffic, with this brain-splitting hangover, all alone.

When we got to her house I said I would wait for her in the car. It had taken everything in my power to not vomit going up the Valley side of the canyon, but something told me I would not make it over the hill without more bile being expelled.

“Okay so...” Gianna said as she popped up next to the passenger window, “my dad is kinda mad at me so he said I can’t leave the house again today... but do you want to like, take a nap here and then drive home later?” Her eyes were soft, I could have popped them out of her skull myself.

“No Gianna. This is why... Okay, nevermind, can you just please get me a plastic bag. With no hole. I need to go home.” I closed my eyes and began digging my fingers into my temples, it was the only thing keeping me from either vomiting more or taking her eyes out.

“Okay! I’m sorry I really--”

“Please, Gianna. Just get me a bag I need to get home.” I couldn’t tell if my vision was going blurry from the headache or rage, but when I went to get into the driver's seat I was seeing

all the colors of the rainbow. I leaned my head onto the wheel of my car a little too hard and the horn went off. I snapped my head up, paused, and opened the door dry heaving onto her driveway.

She came back out with a bag and a bottle of water, "Are you sure you don't want to sleep here? You look kinda pale." I could have slapped the grin off her face.

"No, thank you for the water. I will text you later. Love you."

I began making my way down her driveway as she screamed 'love you!' and slipped back into her house. If I wasn't so weak I would've... Then again if I didn't feel like this we wouldn't have been in this situation so whose fault is it really? The answer is me. It was my fault.

I turned right onto Laurel Canyon and was met with cars as far as the eye could see. Like we were all waiting in line for an amusement park as if the descent into the city was Goliath. I sighed, my journey was long and my stomach was weak. The moment my eyes fell upon the line of red tail lights the construction workers decided that they needed to change up their style of dancing once again, from congo line to room full of professional tap dancers. Pitter-patter, pitter-patter this is what you get for last night. Oh my god. I rolled my windows down as I began the descent. The decline of Laurel Canyon isn't steep so my stomach stayed calm for the most part. I've driven over this hill so many times I truly believe it would stay calm even if I were driving it blindfolded.

Weaving left, then right, then soft left, into a sharp right, I begin to feel... it. I move my right hand to the center of the steering wheel, twist my hair with my left hand, tuck it into my bra strap, tuck the bag under my chin, eyes forward, alert, and start to heave into the ziplock. Nothing, but my stomach stays tight.

'Just pull over!' I thought to myself.

‘No. Get home now. Don’t stop, you can make it.’ I went back and forth with myself. Trying to think louder than the jackhammering going on inside of my skull.

‘Start. Stop. Pullover. Get home. Just shut the fuck up and drive.’ Granted I probably should have pulled over until the episode passed, but I needed my bed and Matzo Ball soup stat. After about 30 seconds my muscles relaxed and I was fully focused on the road again. My head was throbbing and my stomach hurt from dry heaving.

I believe if I wasn’t so comfortable with this drive I would have never been able to make it home. I began to feel my abs contracting again, the warning sign creeping in, contracting and releasing over and over. The contractions passed quicker this time. My adolescent brain thought that calling my mother was my only way to safety. She answered and I began to cry, she sighed knowing this routine too well, she asked if I wanted the Lemon-Lime Gatorade and Matzo Ball soup, I said yes, she agreed. I love yous were exchanged, she worried about my drinking, I brushed it off, I started to dry heave again, she sighed once more. Goodbye.

I wretched twice more before making it to Sunset, where Laurel Canyon transforms into Crescent Heights, the official “welcome to the City ” familiar to so many. When I turned on Melrose I felt... depleted. I could taste the soup and feel my comforter around me.

‘This isn’t it...’ I thought to myself, ‘This isn’t... normal.’ I brush it off, knowing that tomorrow Sloan is throwing a party I will be there.

‘But look at how you feel!’ It’s like I’m screaming at myself but my dumb ass is covering my ears. ‘Just drink more water before bed.’ I know I’m lying.

I turn onto my street, pull into my garage, pull too far forward, hit the cabinets on the inside, I reverse, park. Grabbing my overnight bag, still in my clothes from the night before, I hobble into my house. I don’t even think it could be considered a hobble I was so sideways. My

mom was waiting in the kitchen, we exchanged glances and I averted my eyes before I could read her face.

“Do you want your soup?” She’s sad.

“Yes please, and the Gatorade?”

“Yep.”

Chapped

My lips are chapped from suckling a bottle.

My lips are chapped from trying to fill an unfillable hole.

My lips are chapped from laughing at a bad joke made by someone who is suddenly looking really good.

My lips are chapped from breathing through a dry mouth in a sweaty room.

My lips are chapped from falling asleep with my mouth open.

My lips are chapped from waking up from a fake sleep

My lips are chapped from rough kisses meant for the night before

My lips are chapped from staying in bed too long.

My lips are chapped from refusing to get water

My lips are chapped from licking them in hopes of fixing them

My lips are chapped from suckling a bottle again.

Tracking A Week

August 19, 2018.

I have decided to see if it is possible for me to drink like a normal person. Why am I tracking this week you might ask? Well, to put it simply, I am afraid I may have a slight drinking problem. I tried to recall the last time I went a whole week without drinking and came up with a big fat blank. I can not, no matter how far back into my memory I go, tell you the last time I went without drinking for a whole week.

To begin the process of exploration into my possible habit, I have decided to track my drinking over one week. I've just gotten back to school but there is still a week until classes start. In order to get an accurate reading on my drinking, I will continue to drink as I normally would,

without letting the fact that I'm going to be tracking it get in the way. I will write down everything I drink during this week in order of consumption.

Here goes nothing.

Saturday:

1 Tequila Cranberry

The same tequila cranberry topped off with more tequila

1 shot of tequila

1 tequila soda

1 shot of tequila

2 tequila sodas

Sunday:

Nothing

Monday:

1 6 pack of Resin IPAs

Tuesday:

Nothing

Wednesday:

4 Resin IPAs

Thursday:

2 Resin IPAs

2 Ciders

Friday:

2 Classic Margaritas

1 shot of tequila

1 Special Margarita

2 Misc. Beers

Saturday:

1 6 pack of Resin Iipas

Reviewing the data that I have collected, I do believe that I am incapable of drinking like a normal person. Moving forward I shall try to limit my alcohol intake, and if that is not possible I will seriously consider the idea of sobriety. However, at this time I have made the decision that I shall continue to live my life as a non-sober person.

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I always used to say I didn't want to be a statistic, but that ship set sail 7 years ago. I was young, looking back on it now I realize I was a fucking kid. I was 15, I didn't know any better. My parents always said not to mix drinks, but who listens to parents? Okay, stupid statement but as I said, I was young. We were all drinking and we were all drinking a lot. Sure, chugging straight out of the bottle never leads to the best choices, but what's the worst that could happen, right? I'm with my friends! Right?

That's what I thought. As I've gotten older things have become clearer and now, I can tell you everything about that night. All I can do is write, right? Just put my hands on the keyboard and start typing and then it will be done! The writing will be done, I will never be done with the memories, what they did, how they affected me for years to come in ways I am only starting to understand. Those will never be done because those are a part of me.

It was someone I didn't know's birthday. The party was at a huge house in Beverly Hills. We walked because my friend Danni lived right around the corner. It was a wet night, not raining hard but the air made our hair damp and our arms sticky. This guy, let's call him John, and I had been flirting for a few weeks now. We were in the same friend group, I always thought he was attractive, but he always had a girlfriend. He was finally single so obviously, I had to jump on the opportunity!

I wasn't going to sleep with him, I was still a virgin, I hadn't done anything more than kissing someone at that point. I was 15. In my opinion, that wasn't abnormal and plenty of people take their time with the more serious sexual acts.

By the time I got to the party I was pretty wasted. Sloan and I had split most of a bottle of red wine and had done so much too fast. The alcohol started to settle into my system as we walked through the door. I was hit by a wall of noise and body odor as soon as I entered the house. I could see a white tent that had been set up outside. Was it to protect us or the garden from the rain? I'll never know. The smell of room temperature liquor crept into my nose and everything began to smooth out, the edges of things began to fade into one another. I could tell you who people were, where I was, what kind of orange juice was on the table, but where the wall began and a picture frame ended was a bit trickier. My body was buzzing and my brain began to match my eyesight going smooth, evening out and my conscious thought reset every 5 minutes.

Sloan took my hand, leading me into the kitchen where there was more liquid on the floor and counter than in any cups or bottles.

"Fuck... Guys, I told you we should have gotten here earlier, everything is basically gone," Sloan shouted and turned to see herself yelling at an audience of one person or $\frac{3}{4}$ of one person

given the texture my brain had taken on. I was smiling and staring out of the window, watching the rainfall in the street light. Something about rain at night, if you focus hard enough you can see it falling everywhere, but it always shows itself best in the street lights.

She rolled her eyes and began to sift through the mess of red cups and overturned bottles of juice and liquor that was much too nice to have been drunk by a bunch of teenagers. I went over to the sink, grabbing an overturned solo cup, washing it, and filling it to the brim with cold water. I chugged the whole cup too fast and went back to find Sloan. She had uncovered a bottle of Skyy Vodka with just enough left at the bottom for two shots. I normally didn't drink Vodka, but wine drunk made me love anything I could get my hands on. Let's be honest here, any kind of drunk me loved any kind of drink I could get my hands on.

3, 2, 1. The vodka hit the back of my throat fast, it was too warm to try and ignore the overwhelming taste of strangely sweet metal. It burned my esophagus and fell into my stomach like a ball of steel. I wretched, putting my hands on my knees, shocked by how heavy that small amount of liquor felt at the bottom of my gut like it was trying to hit the ground but my organs and flesh were in the way

Sloan chuckled. Rubbing my back she handed me an open and very warm bottle of lemonade, I drank without thinking and when I opened my eyes I saw John. He walked over to us, smiling the smile of a hot man who's clearly a little tipsy. His eyes slightly glossy, with a smile that screamed smug and sexy with just a hint of stupid. Delicious. He took Sloan by the shoulders, squeezed, and kissed her on the side of the head. Turning to me I swore I saw a twinkle in his eye, his smile widened, but maybe it was the party city disco ball on the counter casting a shadow at just the right angle, maybe I was just drunk. He smiled and put his arm

around my shoulder, pulling me close so I could smell the harsh film of mixed liquor stuck to his tongue.

“Good to see you,” he grinned as if he knew exactly what was going through my head.

“Yeah, you too,” I giggled like a schoolgirl and could feel my cheeks getting hot. God damn it, can’t I keep my cool for one second?

I looked up at him, he didn’t seem to notice my reaction, but when I followed his gaze I realized why. He was preoccupied making eyes at another girl across the room. I shrugged his arm off of my shoulder and moved closer to Sloan. John looked at me for a moment before heading off in the direction of the girl he had just been making eyes at. Sloan leaned her head onto my shoulder, turning my face towards hers.

“Hey bubba, so... apparently, he tried to kiss her earlier but she turned him down. I don’t think it’s anything, but I just wanted you to know. But he’s just drunk so it’s not serious!”

She was trying to make me feel better, and it’s not like I was devastated, but I wasn’t going to be second best.

“Let’s go dance!” I grabbed Sloan’s hand and dragged her off towards where the music was coming from.

“Hey! Where are you girls going?” John suddenly reappeared, took Sloan's other hand and followed us onto the dance floor. Sloan wrapped her arms around me, but he took both of my hands and pulled me close to him, kissing me on the cheek sending a shiver down my spine. He spun me around, pulling me into him and swaying back and forth. I tripped over my own foot and we laughed, suddenly I saw everything in twos but I brushed that off to dizziness. I felt my heart flutter as we messily danced together. Spinning and swaying and laughing over and over and over.

“You look really hot tonight,” His lips touched my ear, his warm breath creeping down my spine and covering my whole body in goosebumps. My arms, legs, neck, other places...

“You’re not looking too bad yourself!” I winked, trying to look cute but also because with one eye closed I could actually see things clearly.

Sloan came over to us asking if we'd seen Danni, the rest of the boys wanted to go back to his place because someone said the cops were on their way. John went to go check upstairs as Sloan and I pretended to look making a b-line for the bathroom.

“That was cute!” She said as I closed the door.

“Yeah I mean, he’s cute” I giggled, stumbling a little and I caught myself on the sink.

“Hold on there bubba, I think enough drinks for you tonight,” Sloan laughed, taking my jacket so I could pee.

“No yeah, yeah, you’re right.”

“Are you gonna... ya know,” Sloan winked.

“I mean I’ll kiss him, but I’m not gonna do anything else. Right? Like it’s too soon, yeah?” Had he said something to her? I felt myself starting to sober up, the pressure of not knowing made my chest feel tight.

“Oh no, yeah, just kiss. We don’t give them what they want on the first night. If we did they’d never come back.”

We laughed and left the bathroom to find the boys. Danni was being supported by Alex, the lower half of his body was soaking wet.

“Umm... What happened here?” Sloan laughed.

“Dan thought it was a great idea to pass out with half of his body outside of the tent!” Alex hoisted him up so both feet were solidly on the ground, “let’s get out of here.”

We began walking back to Danni's house. I stayed at the back of the group with Sloan, my stomach churned, but not from the alcohol.

He was handsome, I couldn't lie even if I wanted to. When we arrived at Danni's house we all piled into the kitchen. John lay Danni down onto the banquet and went straight for the liquor cabinet. He grabbed a glass, filled it with too much vodka, not enough orange juice, and handed it to me.

"Oh, no I'm okay." I went for a glass of water, but he insisted.

"Oh come on! Just one sip!" He put the drink in my hand, I paused. Looking at the mixture of vodka and orange juice, one sip wouldn't hurt.

"See not that bad!" He laughed as my face curled. It was.

We all hung out for a little in the kitchen. Danni finally arose from his stupor. John and I were making eyes at each other when he motioned towards the office. I smiled and nodded my head, yes. Slowly we each moved closer to the room, then laughed and ran inside.

He threw all of the pillows off the tiny daybed, grabbed my waist, and pushed me down. Climbing on top of me he covered me in kisses. We laughed, I grabbed the back of his neck and pulled his face to mine. We kissed fast and hard. He took off my shirt and I took off his. I could feel how hard he was, it felt as if he was about to bust the zipper on his jeans. Suddenly everything became more intense, his kisses changed from intense and playful to hard and full of force. His tongue shoved into the back of my mouth, a feeling that was neither hot nor sexy. Full transparency here, I felt like I was 13 again and I had just learned how to use tongue.

Laying down was not good for my current state, as my breathing got stronger and deeper my head became lighter and the room began to spin. I turned my head to the side, looking out the

window I could see the rain clear in the streetlamp outside, it was falling in sheets. My eyes focused on the rain, trying to steady my vision.

“One second. Hold on, sorry I’m really dizzy,” I sat up and reached for my shirt that was on the ground beside me.

“Hey hey hey, wait no it’s okay we can go slow.” He held my face in his hand and smiled.

He leaned in, kissing me slowly. I could taste the vodka that was still lingering on his tongue so clearly it made my stomach hurt. As the kissing intensified he started slowly taking my pants off, moving his hand farther down drawing little circles on my stomach.

Okay, I thought, this is okay, this is fine, this is sweet and tender.

His hand slipped under my underwear and into my body. He chuckled.

“See, I told you this was okay,” I was slightly taken aback, yes I was wet, but isn’t that just a natural reaction to stimulation?

It felt good, I didn’t stop it. The room was still moving in a slightly tilted direction but it felt good. We kissed, his lips moving down my neck. I turned my head to look out the window again, the rain was softer now but still clear in the streetlight.

“I really want to fuck you,” He whispered into my ear between heavy breaths. It tickled my neck, I pushed his face away.

“Umm,” I had to catch my breath trying to sit up again but caught under his body weight, “no I don’t want to do that.”

The room began to spin faster, this time like a bad carnival ride. Around and around and around. I saw two of him, two of his arms that lead down to two of his right hands in between four of my legs. I went to move his hand away but he kept it there, going in and out in and out, it

changed from a soft touch to a rough and forceful pounding. His other hand was holding onto my shoulder, his fingers digging into my collarbone holding me in place.

“Come on, just for a second,” He slipped his fingers out of me, placing his wet hand next on my cheek and kissing me hard. I heard him unzip his pants.

“No, I really don’t want to. Next time, yeah?” There would be no next time.

He paused and went back to shoving his two fingers into me. I put my head back, that was easy enough.

I closed my eyes and told myself to just enjoy what he was doing, he did have a way with his hands. We began to kiss again and once more the breathing became intensified, the room started to get hazy. The glass of vodka he had given to me in the kitchen was finally catching up to me. I tried to get up but he pushed me back down.

“Yeah, you like that?” His breath was sticky against my face.

“John, I--” He smashed his face onto mine, cutting my sentence short, his tongue hitting the back of my mouth.

His kisses were hard, he wasn’t listening to what I was saying, or trying to say. I could feel how hard he was, I could feel that his pants were unzipped but I had told him no, I said no.

“Ugh I just wanna fuck you,” He bit my neck a too hard. I flinched under him, his body pressing into mine, his sweat dripping onto my forehead and rolling down my face into my mouth.

“No, John-- I don’t,” He pressed his mouth over mine, muffling my words.

His hand began moving faster, the feeling became sharper, deeper, maybe he was using another finger? It felt different, my lower stomach began to cramp up and it began to hurt. I was dizzy, I needed water and suddenly it felt like there was a lump in my stomach and it wouldn’t

go away. I tried to turn over, my gaze locked onto the streetlight outside, the rain falling in a constant and steady stream. I tried to move him off of me but he dug his fingers deeper into the flesh around my collarbone. The pain where his fingers were, a deep cramp I had never felt before. I turned my head to the left and that's when I realized, the hand that had been inside of me was on the bed next to my head. My stomach turned, all of the liquid in my stomach began to make its way back up my throat.

He started moving faster and going deeper. His mouth was over mine and I couldn't breathe. The room was spinning but I no longer felt drunk. I pried his hand off of me, turned my whole body to the side and I felt him slip out from between my legs. I shoved him off of me. I sat up, my stomach jumped, and I threw up off of the side of the day bed.

"Oh god, did you just yack?" disgusted, he moved away from me.

My whole body was shaking, but I couldn't feel anything. I pulled my pants up from my ankles, my hands trembling as I grabbed my shirt from the floor.

"Look if you won't let me fuck you at least give me head," He put his arms behind his head, like a king in his castle expecting the poor maiden to do as he requested. I kept my gaze forward, locked on a decorative pillow that had been thrown onto the floor, now splattered with vomit. I wiped my mouth with my shirt before bringing it over my head, my hands still unsteady, I missed each armhole twice. As I got up to leave, my knees gave out and I caught myself with the doorframe.

"Hey, where are you going?" He shot up and grabbed my wrist. I jumped, moving backward I tripped and fell onto the floor, my hand landing in my own vomit. I stared at him, expression blank, eyes stinging from trying to keep back my tears.

“What?” He looked at me, eyes blank, completely unfazed. He zipped his pants and pulled his shirt over his head, “Okay, whatever.”

I sat on the floor, my hand covered in my own throw-up, unable to move. He said nothing as he walked out of the room. He left the door open, I turned to see that the kitchen was now empty. I looked out to the streetlight, the rain had stopped. I heard him walk up the stairs and close a door a little too hard. I tried to get up but my knees buckled again, my vagina throbbed, it was as if I could feel my heartbeat between my thighs. I moved my hand down slowly, it hurt to the touch. Sloan came in a few seconds later, I hadn't moved.

“Okay, now that you've had your fun let's oh shit what happened? Where's John?” She laughed, I would not let her see me cry.

“I just—” my words caught on the lump in my throat, I tried to steady my breath. My eyes locked on the streetlamp.

“Okay whoah, here.” She picked me up, I wiped my hand on my pants and pulled my sweater off of the ground. We walked into the kitchen and she got me a glass of water.

“Where did John go?” She asked again.

“Oh um,” I took a breath, trying to keep my voice steady, “He just, uh. Got tired?” my hands were still shaking as I brought the glass up to my lips, I jumped when the water touched my tender mouth.

“Hey is everything okay?” Sloan looked at me, my face red, my eyes burning from the tears I was holding in.

“Sloan, I'm tired, can we just go home?”

“Yeah bub, the uber is outside!” She handed me my bag and went out the front door.

I was still throbbing, every step sent a twinge of pain into my crotch. I got into the car and closed my eyes, pretending to fall asleep. When we finally got back to Sloan's house I took a shower, I turned the hot water up all the way, I wanted to make the top layer of my skin peel off and slide down the drain. I stepped in slowly, but when the water made its way between my legs it burned. I inhaled a sharp breath, my stomach cramped up, and I bent forward, protecting myself and trying not to vomit. I turned the hot water off and so it was just cold. Freezing cold. I sat down in the tub, I tried to cry but I couldn't, I wanted to scream but I wouldn't. With my knees tucked under my chin I sat in the cold water, it felt good, soothing.

Teenagers drink too much. Teenagers are irresponsible when they drink. Bad things happen when teenagers drink. Yes, all of the things they tell you in school are true. But you never think that it will happen to you. I never thought that after a drunken night at a party I would be raped by someone who I considered to be a friend. But it happens. It happens a lot. I didn't admit it to myself for years. I said oh it doesn't count as the first time, oh it was nothing. But it's not nothing. It's something. But I was young and didn't know that. I was young and I was afraid of being a statistic.

AFTER

October 13, 2019

I guess I can pin-point the call to action, lightbulb “I need to get sober moment,” although throughout my 8 years of drinking there have been many that were actively ignored. If you had asked me in high school what I thought about my drinking habits I would have given a scrunched nose, raised shoulders, and some variation on the line, “I don’t have a drinking problem, I have a sipping problem!” or the more self-aware, honest, but still blasé, “I’ll be sober one day!”

I never thought that blacking out was a problem until I started to realize how many people said they had never blacked out. If I drank and didn’t have a pixelated recollection of the night before I considered that to be a win for me. The reality of the situation was, I never had less than 4 to 5 drinks in one night. Why have one when you can have four, five, six, or even seven if you’d eaten a big enough dinner?

My decision wasn’t triggered by some catastrophic event or some kind of royal drunken fuck up, my decision was triggered when I realized that it was almost physically impossible for me to just have 1 drink. It was last Tuesday, I was at my local bar having a beer with a few friends, emphasis on A beer. One single beer. The problem with telling myself that I am only going to have one beer is that it’s never just one. Sure I will try to hold out for as long as possible, but the longer my glass stays empty, the itchier I become. My entire body begins to feel like I’m having some kind of allergic reaction to seeing my glass empty. Hands shaking, foot-

tapping, lip licking, the whole deal. I finally gave in and decided that two beers would be fine. Two beers weren't fine. Two turned into three and three into four and next thing I knew I was four beers down on a Tuesday night and I was looking at my friends and seeing doubles.

I stumbled home that night alone, sat on my balcony, and realized I can't do this anymore. I realized that it's not normal to itch when you want another drink, it's not normal for one beer on a Tuesday to turn into four. The way I drink isn't normal, and that's why I needed to stop.

October 15, 2019

This is going to be easy. This is not going to be as hard as I thought it would be. This is going to be easy. This is not going to be hard. This is going to be easy. This is not going to be hard. This is going to be easy. This is not going to be hard.

This may not be easy. This may be hard. This may not be easy. This may be hard. This may not be easy. This may be hard.

Just say no. Just say no. Just say no? Right? All I have to do is not drink. Not drink? Just don't drink. Fuck.

October 17, 2019

It feels pretty dumb to have gotten sober right before my parents visit. I don't need to be drunk to be with them, but a beer after a day of familial relations does always make me feel, for lack of a better word, sane. A cold beer after a day of trying not to argue with my mother, or trying to not get angry at my dad for forgetting god knows what? Heavenly. Truly the best kind

of reset. But now, I mean I guess I can use this time to develop a meditation practice, or just bang my head against the wall until the headache is from pain and not parents.

October 20, 2019

I just said goodbye to my parents. A whole weekend with my mother and father and not one drink touched my lips! I wanted one, I thought I needed one, but I didn't drink. My parents and my relationship hasn't been idyllic, could it have been worse? Completely. I love them, I do, but there is a reason that I moved across the country for school. There's a reason I didn't like to be home when I was in high school. Growing up, home felt like the middle of the ocean. There was no end in sight, no top or bottom, just a vast expanse of deep blues and greens. The fighting, screaming, cursing. It wasn't safe. I was never in danger but I wasn't safe. It made me feel heavy, it made my body and my soul feel like cinder blocks that I couldn't get away from. It was sink or swim, but my fair skin couldn't take the floating and the longer I stayed there the more my skin began to fry. Liquor and friends became like sunscreen. I found a safe space in my friends, a life raft, and with that came the reality that I went where they went. I enjoyed it, I liked going out, I loved dancing, going to sleep when the birds were waking up, drinking was just a part of that.

October 27, 2019

Is two weeks supposed to be hard? I've always heard that 90 days is one of the hardest milestones to reach. You're almost at 100 days of no drinking, you've done it and you're continuing to do it... so why not see if something has changed? Why not see if drinking normally is something that you can do? Three months, 90 days, that's supposed to be the test, but

if 90 days is supposed to be the test then why does every ounce of my body want a fucking drink at only 2 weeks? I can taste the cool, carbonation of a beer, the sharp bite of a tequila soda with lime juice, and the salty kick of a pickleback.

It's Saturday, karaoke night at the bar in my town, a night that used to be one of my favorites feels like torture right now. And I feel, above all else, pathetic. Why can't I just tell myself to go out and have fun? Drink a coffee or a red bull and be with friends, sing a song that makes me happy without a drink. Why is it so hard? Is that the addiction? And if that is the addiction what part of the brain is that coming from? Why can't I just shut it off? Just give me a lobotomy.

October 30, 2019

Halloween weekend. I'm ready. No, I'm not. The only thing to do in town during Halloween weekend is drink. People want to party and have fun with friends of course, but the larger and more important end goal is to get so trashed you don't remember, at least not all of it.

October 31, 2019

The big party was last night and I lasted approximately 30 minutes. A group of people who all live in the same building decided to open their doors and have one massive shit show- I mean party.

Note to self: Never ever ever again in your whole life even if you think it won't be a bad idea, drink 36 ounces of Red Bull before going to a party. Or anywhere for that matter. Okay edit, never ever drink 36 ounces of Red Bull, PERIOD.

That's not to say I can't handle caffeine, truth be told I've been supplementing my need for alcohol by overdoing it with my caffeine intake. A 20-ounce cold brew with a double shot of espresso? Count me in! 4 cups of green tea before 12 pm? Absolutely. 36 ounces of Red Bull before a party filled with sweaty, horny liberal arts kids? Hell sounds more beautiful than that.

It was pouring rain, the hallway was littered with empty bottles, cigarette butts, and a broken bottle of poppers. The Red Bull made my teeth chatter and the amyl nitrite being tracked all over the floor made my head spin. The combination of caffeine and chemicals, while sometimes fun, was not that night. I felt every single person around me, I saw every interaction that was being had with intense, laser-focused clarity. Everyone's skin touching my own, my body covered in the sweat of 40 different people, only 5 of whom I actually knew by name. It was no longer fun, I felt like I was in the climax of a 70s experimental drug film. Sober. I pushed out of the hallway into the pouring rain. My mascara had started to bleed down my cheeks from the humidity inside, the rain forcing it down my neck and onto my tank top.

I tried my best to sneak out without anyone noticing, telling one friend I would be right back knowing I would not be returning. I let myself get drenched, the smell of cigarettes tangled into my hair and embedded in my clothes. I got into my apartment and began to cry. I wasn't sad, I was overwhelmed and geeking off the caffeine. I wished I had been honest with my friend, I wished she had read my mind and come with me. I cried because I didn't want to be alone, but I didn't want to ruin anyone's night. I cried because I just wanted to steal someone's liquor, lock myself in the bathroom, and chug. I cried because I was proud of myself for not doing that. I cried because I realized this was the first time I was crying in a very long time.

November 4, 2019

I finally decided that I am going to suck it up and try and find a meeting to go to. Going to the one that my school puts on would be easy, but I want to be able to be fully anonymous. Even though everyone that goes to the group on my campus is there for the same reason, I know that because there is a risk of me seeing them around, I will end up performing. I won't be able to be fully honest, and I want to be.

Today is also the first day that I haven't been thinking about drinking.

November 7, 2019

Today I hit the 25-day milestone! Did I know that this was a thing? No, but my sobriety app seems pretty proud of me for it. I should celebrate with a beer! Kidding...

November 13, 2019

One month. Woohoo! Right? It's... awesome. It's... okay. I'm not going to lie and say that this has been easy because it hasn't. Has it been as hard as I thought? No. But there are still moments where I would do just about anything to feel alcohol on my lips. I live in a town where the only place large social gatherings occur is the bar. The weekend revolves around what's happening at the bar, whether it be DJ night, a random Friday without any hope of someone throwing a party, or karaoke night. Everything is about the bar. Tuesday night is burger night so why not go and hang out at the bar? Wednesday is my depressing science class so why not go get a drink afterward to decompress and stop thinking about the devastating effects ALS has on a person's life? Then it's the weekend. Mondays the bar is closed, but what's really stopping anyone from going to a gas station to get a six-pack and just hangout? Sometimes it seems like all there is to do in a small town like mine is to drink or do drugs. Not everyone does it, but it's a

huge part of the culture. But I have made it for one whole month, going out, socializing, doing the shit that I'm supposed to be doing as a college student and still not drinking. Am I proud of myself? Yes. Do I want to drink? Yes.

November 15, 2019

32 days without alcohol.

November 17, 2019

My co-worker unintentionally gave me a sip of alcohol last night. It felt like some kind of cosmic test. Almost as if the universe was lowering its glasses down to the tip of its nose to get a good hard look at how far it could push me. How close can we get her to alcohol? How far can we push her without her breaking?

It was a rum and coke, and a good one at that. I knew what it was the second it hit the back of my throat, that sharp cool rum taste creeping out from under the mask of Coca Cola. I liked it, it felt good. It coated my throat and lingered on my tongue. She apologized immediately, realizing what she had done. I said it was fine, we decided it didn't count as a relapse. I wanted to hold onto the taste all night, but it didn't last long.

November 20, 2019

5 weeks! I still haven't gone to a meeting yet, but I'm going to. It's hard to do it here because there aren't many groups in my area that I can actually make it to. A lot are on Tuesdays and Fridays when I have work, but if I have to travel I'll do it. Will I? I like to think that I would.

It's funny, people haven't really asked me about my sobriety until recently and it's always the same questions. What does sobriety feel like, how are you feeling, does it feel like there is something different now? It's not a bad thing and I don't mind talking about it, but honestly, I wish that I had more to say because... there isn't, at least not yet. I feel like I have been waiting for this huge magical moment of change. I've been waiting to wake up feeling like I'm a whole new person like now I can take on the world and take on any challenge that comes my way! But, no. There has yet to be a morning when I wake up feeling like a "new woman" or a "changed person" or like I've gained any kind of clarity, but I guess I can't just assume that I will feel the change all at once.

If I really think about it, it's been in the little moments. The moments where I would have normally turned to alcohol and decided not to. It's not covering up the bad feelings with a beer or shot of tequila. It's been allowing myself to feel bad or feel less than and not turning to alcohol to try and avoid those feelings or push them down. It's been not lying to myself and saying that when I drink I can figure my shit out because we all know that turning to substances isn't figuring anything out. Turning to substances just lets you quiet the feelings and not have to deal with them. It's been feeling bad and allowing myself to take the space I need to sit and try and figure out what caused it and what I can do to try and fix it. It's been allowing myself to be alone and not feel like I'll always be alone.

November 21, 2019

I was close to breaking yesterday. It was the closest I've come to actually breaking since I began this journey. I'm not sure what it was, there wasn't any specific feeling that drove me to it, but maybe that was the problem. I wasn't feeling anything yesterday. I realized recently that, aside from Halloween, I haven't cried in almost 6 months, like actually sat down and had one of those big cathartic cries. The kind of cry where the tears pour out of you like a leaky faucet and your stomach hurts and your snot is all over your face and your eyes are puffy and red for hours after.

I used to cry a lot, all my life my initial reaction when dealing with something emotionally taxing or intense was to cry. It would just happen, and if I tried to stop it more tears would come. Then I was told by someone I loved over and over again that I needed to stop crying. That it was stupid that I was crying. That it was unfair that I was crying because as soon as I started to cry I won. That was not the point of my tears, my tears were not to win, my tears were not to be unfair. My tears were how I felt a release, a healthy release. But I stopped crying and instead I would drink.

There is something about sad drunks that I really love. Well, love may be the wrong word. It's something I'm fascinated by. It's the fact that when sad drunks drink they can finally let everything out and not care where they are or who they're with. It's a kind of drunk I rarely experienced, but yesterday something inside of me was hoping that if I just said fuck it the flood gates would open and I would finally be able to get the release I've been craving.

On top of that, today I'm going into the city for the first time since getting sober. Am I worried? I don't really know. On first thought, I'd say no I feel fine about it, but then again I can't really be sure. Sober in the city, it sounds like an episode of some cheesy sitcom. I imagine

myself walking around with my headphones in, bagel in one hand, iced coffee in the other, Sober in the City.

November 23, 2019

And as I lifted the Ketamine covered key to my nose, Money Machine began to play. The lights were erratic, my body was hot and dripping with sweat, and suddenly everything began to move slowly. I felt like I was swimming in a massive pool, surrounded by people, but on land. I was taken by the sound, the low drone of the bass, and the sharp staccato coming from the synth. It felt like I was everywhere and nowhere all at once, my body had been transformed into an empty vessel that moved along with the crowd and the bass drops. Ebbing and flowing with the high hat and distorted sound of their remix of Baby by Justin Bieber.

This would be the entry I would have written if I wasn't sober. I was offered several varieties of drugs and many different kinds of alcohol, but I stayed sober. Even when I had an argument with my inner self about the fact that I only have a drinking problem, not a drug problem, I said no. Congrats, me. You're really starting to prove that you can control yourself when it comes to your vices. Super big moves. Two thumbs up. I'm having so much fun here. I mean it.

On top of all of this sober fun I've been having, tonight is my friend's birthday party. I know there will be drinking, and I know there will be drugs, and I cannot wait to say no to them.

November 24, 2019

The party was exhausted and, yet again, I was this close to grabbing a bottle of wine and locking myself in the bathroom for a few minutes. I knew if I just closed my eyes and chugged I could repress my gagging enough to finish and no one would have even known I was gone. I could have hidden the bottle in my duffle bag and thrown it away when I left this morning. It's not even like I feel like I need to drink to be social. I just want to drink because it makes it easier for me to deal with having to talk to people when I'm not in the mood. It makes me feel like I'm a little bit funnier, slightly more chipper, just, better? Not better. More fun? No. It just makes things easier.

November 26, 2019

I need to write, and keep writing, and write some more. Then I need to edit, and keep editing, and edit some more. But god I'm so tired. I feel slow. I don't feel amazing like so many sober people say they feel. I guess it was stupid that I expected to just feel amazing all the time. I haven't been drinking, but I also haven't been going to the gym. The only things in my fridge are 3 eggs, two varieties of pickles, and some tapioca pudding. When I was drinking I would have been able to come up with something to make using only those ingredients like I was a professional chef, but not now, not sober. I mean seriously, the more that I think about it some of the meals I have made while under the influence? I'd win Chopped, all I'm going to say.

Is it wrong that I expected something more from this? Is it wrong that I listened to all of the things that are supposed to draw you in about sobriety? That I believed it when people said that sobriety changed so much of their lives, that sobriety made them the person they always dreamed of being but never thought they could be. That it would make me feel something? Fucking anything? How am I supposed to write, how does it work? Is anything that I'm trying to

say worth saying, worth other people reading? I would hope so, but doesn't everyone think that their voice is one that will change things? The voice that will be heard by all, understood by many, and change at least a few? I suppose the people that don't think so are the lucky ones, and maybe they're the ones who actually speak with some substance. Maybe the fact that they don't care is the reason they are heard because they're not speaking for anyone but themselves.

Experiment, stop caring. Easier said than done, especially when you actually do have to care and you do have work and things to do. But then again, who am I to say? I have always cared.

Drinking helped me not care and now I feel like all I do is care.

November 27, 2019

Off to Florida to see my grandparents for Thanksgiving! I have yet to mention the whole sobriety thing to them. Is it a topic I want to speak on? Not really. Should I? Who knows. Will I? Definitely not, I shall be passing this "sobriety thing" off onto my horrific migraines and call it a day!

It's not a big deal, I know. Plenty of people go sober, but the majority of those people's issues with substances were so bad it made sobriety not just a choice, but a need. I don't really need to explain to my grandparents that while I was still making it to class, I was also drinking 6 or 7 nights out of the week. I don't need to give them another excuse to call my mother and tell her how badly she's doing raising me. I don't need to give them another reason to think that my Aunt is the better daughter and my cousins are the better grandchildren. They have never really been in my life, and when they were they were not people you wanted around. They have been there monetarily though, they are paying for my education and making sure I can graduate without loans, something I will be grateful for for the rest of my life. This is why I feel an

obligation to see them, to be kind, and call out of the blue sometimes, but I feel no obligation to open up to them.

December 5, 2019

I almost drank tonight. I almost drank so hard my mouth started to water staring at a bowl of horrendous cheap tequila and grapefruit juice. I feel like it was caused more because of FOMO than anything else. It's just seeing all of your friends having fun and drinking that can make it hard. When I see everyone starting to really loosen up and laugh a little harder that makes me want to join them. I have to take sips of my red bull during the drinking game and while everyone else is getting more drunk I'm getting more hyped up and anxious. I know I'm not an outsider. I know I am not alone. But sometimes it feels like I am. I could just dip a cup into the mixture when no one is looking and I pretend I'm getting water. I could stay in while everyone else is outside smoking and down two glasses in one gulp. I won't, I shouldn't, I want to.

I went home.

December 6, 2019

I didn't drink! I wasn't going to break because of a disgusting mixed drink. I did feel unexplainable anxiety and had to go home though so that was not fun. I realized that I would only begin to feel better if I removed myself from the situation. No one was pressuring me or making me feel any type of way for being sober, no one ever does, but I needed to go home. I needed to be alone and away from the temptation. I know that if I had asked my friends for help

or to come on a walk with me they would have, but I don't know, I didn't want to be a bother I guess? I need a sponsor and I need to go to AA.

December 9, 2019

I decided that since I am about to go back home, and I know that home is a trigger for me I should start getting into the habit of going to meetings now, that way I can carry it with me back to LA. I found a meeting in the town near my school, online it says it isn't really big so that's good. It's not so much that I'm scared to go or anything like that, I've gone to plenty of meetings before, it's more so the fact that now I'm going for me and not as support for someone else.

December 11, 2019

Cue I'm Upset by Drake

It's finals and there is something to be said about the fact that every time I step foot into this library all I can think about is a Six Point, but I will just pass that off onto stress? I went to the meeting last night. My friends said they would come with me for moral support, but I wanted to do this alone. I met a woman there named Patty (I'm changing her name because you know Alcoholics *Anonymous*) she's older, probably in her 50s and she's been sober for 20 years. I got to the meeting about 5 minutes before it started so most of the other people there were already seated. I skipped over the snacks and coffee and found myself a seat in the back. I didn't want to speak, but forgot about the part in meetings where they welcome the newcomers. When the man who was speaking asked, "Do we have any newcomers?" a few people turned to look at me, I guess one thing about small meetings is that there is a regular crowd and newbies don't go

unnoticed. I stood up, everyone clapped, and I sat back down. I guess I could've introduced myself. Said "Hi, I'm ___ and I'm an alcoholic!" but the words didn't come out. It's weird. That's what it is. Weird. It's not scary or daunting, you know what you are. Everyone at the meeting knows what you are. It's Alcoholics Anonymous, everyone is there because everyone is an alcoholic. But it's weird because once you say it there's no taking it back, everyone looks at you with this new label. It's no longer "Hi, I'm ___ and I'm from Los Angeles," or "Hi, I'm ___ and I bleach my hair," or "Hi, I'm ___ and I like the color pink." Suddenly you are an alcoholic. Which isn't wrong, it isn't bad, it's just a new identifier that carries more weight.

When the meeting was over I walked outside, there were groups of people standing around, smoking, catching up on their past week. I sat on the steps of the church and lit a cigarette. I don't normally smoke, but something about a cigarette after an AA meeting just feels right and I happened to have a pack leftover from when I would smoke drunk outside of the bar. Patty walked out and saw me sitting there alone, staring off into the distance. She came and sat next to me, introduced herself, and laughed at how picturesque I looked sitting on the steps. I laughed and asked her what she meant,

"Oh, just a pretty girl sat outside of a church after, what I'm assuming is her first meeting, smoking a cigarette and staring at the cemetery across the street." She took out a pack of Newports, lit the cigarette, and took a long, deep drag.

I hadn't realized that I was looking in the direction of the cemetery, but she was right.

"Oh," I chuckled, "I didn't even realize. This actually isn't-" I paused, did I really want to go into my whole back story right now with this woman I just met?

She turned to look at me, "What sweetheart?" Her eyes were kind and her smile gentle, like the grandma I always wanted.

“Nothing! Sorry.” I puffed on my cigarette and looked down at an ant moving in circles near my feet. Trapped and unsure of which direction was out. Me too, little man.

She laughed again, took another impressively long drag of the cigarette. We made small talk for a couple of minutes, I let my cigarette go out and tossed it to the side. Patty stomped her’s out, looked at me, and smiled.

“Keep coming back, okay? Take it one day at a time!” Her face was soft yet serious.

I nodded, said thank you, and assured her I would be back. I got into my car, repeating the words “Keep coming back,” and “One day at a time,” over and over, but there are still so many goddamn days. The days keep on going and going and going and I keep on wanting a drink. But I will admit, she’s not wrong.

December 18, 2019

I’m finally home, I’m finally home and sober. My jet lag is, for the first time in years, absolutely unbearable. I used to do this thing, a little trick I taught myself to make sure I was never jet-lagged. What is it? You may be wondering. Get absolutely trashed the first night you arrive. Wherever you are, no matter the time difference you're working with. A night out will cure any kind of jet lag, and the only price you are required to pay is a mild to severe hangover the next day. The science behind this is simple, if you go out and get hammered your first night somewhere with a different timezone, yes you will be staying out later, but you will wake up earlier because you will have finished sleeping off the alcohol. Then you will spend the entire day in bed with a hangover and end up going to sleep at a more reasonable hour. Because you have gone to sleep at a normal hour, and you woke up early the day before, your body will hold onto that timeline and voilà! No jet lag.

December 20, 2019

I'm trying to find a meeting I can go to here. Los Angeles is riddled with AA, NA, SA, AlAnon... any blank-A you can think of, LA has a meeting for it. I have friends who I could ask where to find a good meeting, I'm sure plenty would go with me, but being sober here feels different than being sober at school. Almost like it's more of a statement? This declaration of SOBRIETY! I am in one of the biggest party cities in the world and I am SOBER! Look at me, watch me go about my time here as a sober person. It feels like it's more of a show. And I know it's not, sobriety is never a show, it's a real thing and it's important, but here it feels like one big THING.

December 25, 2019

It's not Christmas without the annual Christmas fight. Normally it comes right before the rest of the family gets here, and normally that is my cue to replace the coffee in my thermos with wine, but not today. Today I will drink a gallon of water and eat enough mashed potatoes and roast to put me to sleep by 10:30. Last Christmas I went to a bar with some friends after dinner and proceeded to get so shit faced I peed the bed and tried to convince my mom that I had actually just spilled a huge cup of water right around my crotch, all while throwing up into a bucket she had to bring me. To say she was unimpressed and did not believe me for a nanosecond would be an understatement. I am incredibly thankful that my mom's best friend is here though. He should provide me with enough entertainment to last through an evening with my family and no booze. He has just recently come out as gay, and to hear a man that you have known since you were a child, who has, on multiple occasions told the story of the time he found

a tick on his scrotum at the dinner table, refer to himself as a power bottom... Well shit, that's as good as any drink I could ever make.

December 27, 2019

I found a meeting near me that seems like it could be a match! It's close to my house and it's Tuesday nights at 9 pm. I seem to always be attracted to meetings that happen on Tuesdays, maybe it's a coincidence, but I will say it also probably has something to do with the fact that Tuesday used to be one of my biggest drinking nights. Before I left for college Tuesday nights were THE night. My friends and I would get all dolled up and go to our favorite bar in Silver Lake. Shit, anybody who was anybody was at this bar on a Tuesday, at least that's what we thought. We would see singers, actors, directors, people who were famous on Instagram... the works. And we were all tight with the owners so we felt like we ran the place. All getting in without having to wait in line, getting free drinks, and the majority of us were underaged but no one dared to card us. We were all those bitches on Tuesday nights.

Now, instead of going to a bar and flirting with some singer, I am going to Alcoholics Anonymous. I am growing and taking care of myself? It feels good. Maybe it's a placebo, but I'll ride the wave for as long as I can.

December 31, 2019

It's New Years Eve. The biggest drinking holiday next to the 4th of July, but I will not drink. I will not drink. I will not drink. I will not drink.

January 1, 2020

I drank. But in my defense it was a \$700 bottle of Ace of Spades so how could I say no? 2020 is supposed to be my money year, and saying no to a glass of \$700 champagne, that's not a manifestation of money? The two shots of Mezcal on the other hand... not so money, but very much fun. Although I don't think it was the worst thing in the world for me to drink, I don't even feel that hungover. I will not act like I didn't drink though, so I guess we are back to Day 1.

January 7, 2020

One week sober and I went to the meeting tonight. Well, I drove to the meeting, no longer wanted to go to the meeting, convinced myself to get out of my car and stop being a pussy, walked up to the doors of the meeting, turned around, turned back around, then finally I went back to my car and sat in the parking lot of the church for the full hour.

I drove home and when my mom asked me how the meeting went I smiled, said great, and went to my room where I lay on my bed staring up at the ceiling for who knows how long. I will try again next week, I repeat myself over and over as I slowly close my eyes and wait for sleep to come.

January 12, 2020

Tonight is one of my good friend's birthdays and I will not be drinking! I will be staying sober! I am almost two weeks sober again. The last time I went sober I would have killed for a drink at two weeks, but here two weeks feels like something else. Two weeks feels like a statement, as dumb as that may sound. I haven't been going out as much as I normally would and whenever I do I end up driving which helps because I have to stay sober, but I can still taste it. I can feel the sharp tequila hitting the back of my throat, pushing through the sweet coating of

juice trying to protect my tastebuds. I walk around the bar, my feet sticking to the floor because of the drinks that have been spilled. I can smell the smoke of the mezcal, creeping into my nose and sticking there like smoke from a campfire. My mouth starts to water and all I can do is let it happen.

January 13, 2020

Well... I'm never drinking again and this time I mean it. New Year's Eve and \$700 champagne is one thing, a friend's birthday is another. My mother walked into my room this morning and told me I smelled like the floor of a dive bar. A dive bar on the Lower East Side of New York City in the 80s no less. And yet sometimes I still try and convince myself that I am capable of drinking like a normal person, I cackle. I say that to myself now, in bed with a migraine so bad I think my left eye might pop out of my skull, and I cackle.

January 14, 2020

This should be two weeks, but we're back to day 1. There's another meeting tonight, I told my mom I would go and this time I actually mean it. No, I don't, but I should. I miss my meeting back at school, I miss being around people that I have no chance of knowing. Los Angeles is one of the biggest cities in the world, but when you grow up here it feels like a small town. Everyone ends up knowing everyone in some way or another, whether it be from going out, going to college, or even going to an AA meeting. When I would go with my friend to meetings in high school I would always see people I knew from so many different places all standing around in the same small church parking lot, all smoking cigarettes, and all there for the same reason. There is no shame in sobriety, never has been and there never should be, but there is something that happens deep inside when people begin to find out that you're sober. They ask

why, they ask what was the turning point, not always but often enough. No one is ever owed an explanation for why you're getting sober, but oftentimes people still think they deserve one.

I didn't go to the meeting tonight.

January 19, 2020

I am back in NYC, almost back to being one week sober. One whole week! Woo. Hoo. It's one of my best friend's birthdays and we are going out, but I will not be drinking. God, I wonder how many times I have said: "but I will not be drinking." I tell myself every day.

January 23, 2020

I'm back at school and for some reason all I want to do is drink! Maybe it's the cold, maybe it's because I fucked up over winter break. Maybe I just want something to pass the time and distract myself from having to do any kind of work. I guess I can try and break it down to when I am triggered and what by, but sometimes I'm just sitting in my living room and something in the back of my mind says, *'Hey, maybe a beer would solve world hunger! Why not try it out?'* And while I know that me driving to the gas station and buying a six-pack won't actually do that, I can't knock it until I try it? But, no. No, I will not do that. I will go on a run and then go over to a friend's house instead, or just sit here and continue not drinking.

January 27, 2020

Honestly, since school has started back up I haven't really had the urge to drink... at all. Maybe it's just getting back into the groove of being in class and having something to do other than just sit at home, but damn it feels good. I feel myself starting to get level headed again, it's crazy, a few wild nights back home and I felt off for weeks. Is that a normal thing? Or is that an alcoholic without alcohol?

Maybe it's something about being at home that drives me to want to drink, and not because of my parents. I think it's just being home. I do nothing, I go out, I do more of nothing and then I go out more. Not to say I do that whenever I'm home, during summer I try to work or find something to do, but winter break doesn't give me enough time to find a job or an internship. I guess it's also just the way that I function here at school, there's less pressure put on me to be fun and wild. When I was home I went to one of my old favorite bars, and when my friend who's the manager asked me what I wanted to drink and I said a redbull she looked at me as if I was speaking in a different language, "Redbull?" she asked, laughing. When I told her I wasn't drinking she cocked her head to the side, unsure what to make of my answer, shrugged and went to get me the drink. When she came back the owner was with her, he greeted me with a smile, a big hug, and a shot of Mezcal.

"Come on! Let's take a welcome back shot!" I laughed and thanked him, but told him that I wasn't drinking right now. He put the shots down, a confused look on his face as if he had never heard of someone not wanting a free drink.

"I'm just trying not to drink, ya know." I don't know why I didn't just say I was trying to get sober, it's not something I've ever been ashamed of, maybe I just didn't want to feel like I was ruining the fun?

He laughed it off, exclaiming, “Hey! One shot won't hurt! It's celebratory!” I don't think he understood.

“Yeah, no, it's okay! Thank you, though!” I gave him a smile and a big hug then he and my friend took the shots themselves. I felt like an outsider. Maybe that's why I drink when I'm home like I'm trying to hold on to the past even though the past is not somewhere I should be anymore.

February 1, 2020

Feb 1st. 2 weeks sober again. Feels great? Yes, it feels great. It feels like I can actually do this if I want to. Knowing that falling off over break didn't make it really any harder to get back on the sober wagon is something that I feel like I can be proud of.

February 6, 2020

It's my birthday next week and an artist I like is coming up to perform. I'm excited, but also nervous. A sober birthday past the age of 14? Unheard of! I'm trying not to be stressed out about it though. I'm going back to my Tuesday meetings. I still haven't spoken aside from when I had to introduce myself as a newcomer, but it's nice knowing that I could if I wanted to. It's nice to know that I'm not alone. There is something that comes with having a sense of community. And a community outside of my school. There's a weekly meeting that a friend of mine started, it's a nice place and great for finding support, but I can't help but feel like I'm still performing. Trying to put on a front around my peers. At this local meeting, I don't have to try and be any better or worse or more fucked up than the next person. They don't care about me, they don't know me, and I can be fully honest.

February 13, 2020

Queue 22 by Taylor Swift

22 and 1 month sober, who would have thought! Maybe I didn't start the calendar year off sober, but I could start my 22nd year on this earth sober. I think back to my birthdays in high school, how it wasn't about celebrating me, or my friends on their birthdays, but rather about how fucked up we could all get without throwing up. God, the number of times we would all get so drunk we wouldn't even remember the night itself. I think back to when I threw a surprise party for two of my friends and the majority of the people in attendance were trashed before the birthday boy and girl even got there for the surprise. Why are people so obsessed with getting trashed on their birthday? Is it a fear of getting old, of knowing that you're one year closer to death? That never was what triggered me to drink, I think I just got fucked up on my birthday because that's what I thought you did, and I mean, it wasn't the pressure. I never felt pressured, it just felt normal.

February 14, 2020

Will say, solid birthday! Even sober. The show was crazy, and being there sober was... Well... fine. It was crowded and everyone was moshing and if I had been drunk maybe I wouldn't have minded as much, but it wasn't hard to have fun and be sober. I was able to drive all my friends there which was nice because we didn't have to rely on the shuttle. I looked cute and stayed looking cute because I wasn't red from all the alcohol. Maybe I could've let go a little more, not been so frustrated with the crowd, but it was good.

One thing that, while maybe not the biggest sober milestone, I will pat myself on the back for, is that I met someone and was able to confidently flirt and pull moves completely sober!

Something I now realize I haven't done in quite some time. Maybe it was the energy of the crowd or maybe it was because I realized that I truly had nothing to lose cause he's a little younger and I'm graduating, but it was fun. We danced and flirted and then when I wanted to be with my friends I said nice to meet you and went on my way. I don't generally have anxiety doing that, it's not like talking to someone I'm interested in leaves me tongue-tied, the issue for me is that oftentimes I'm simply too lazy to bother. Drinking made me proactive, it would make me want to spend time talking to someone I didn't know. Realizing that I didn't need alcohol to have fun talking with someone new was exciting, one of those little wins that gave me a sense of pride, of growth.

February 16, 2020

Lonely. One thing sober has made me feel is, lonely. I no longer have something that fills the time and space that is left unoccupied by the presence of another. I sometimes enjoy it, the aloneness forces me to think about things I normally wouldn't. I take time to reflect and because of that, I think I'm becoming a better person. I feel like overall I'm happier. But everything is tinged with the light grey of loneliness. Maybe it's having to live through winter in a small town. Being sober has made it easier to get up in the mornings, but now the mornings mean waking up knowing that when I walk out of my bedroom, there won't be anyone to greet me. There will be no one to share coffee with or brush my teeth next to. Being sober took away the haze of the early sun, it took away my biggest concern being how I would make the headache go away. Now I wake up and I think about how lonely I am. I don't even really need an emotional connection right now, I don't really have time for that anyway, but someone to wake up next to would be oh so lovely. Someone who doesn't mind how crusty I am in the morning and will still kiss me

through my morning breath. But do I really want that? Or am I just still trying to fill this void with some easy, quick-fix solution?

I guess I finally get why people say you can't, or at least shouldn't, date in your first year of sobriety. Having another person to fixate on and distract yourself with makes it easier to get days, but harder to work on the actual problem. A distraction is all another person would be right now, something to look forward to at night when I would normally be sitting around wanting to get fucked up just to pass the time.

February 18, 2020

It's hard to not do something that you really want to do, but know that you shouldn't. That you simply can't. And even if it feels so good in the moment, even while the feeling still lingers, you know that in a few hours, maybe even minutes, you'll feel worse than you did before.

I have always been excellent in the art of giving in to my desires. When I was younger I tried really hard to be good, but the desire to distract myself in some way or another, whether that be with the instant gratification or guilt, continuously won out. Then again, as I have gotten older and look back on those times I have no other choice but, to be honest with myself and say no, I didn't always try hard. I put myself, my desires, and my life first, and not always for the best. The way other people felt, the way I hurt the people I loved was not on my mind if I could do something that made me feel good for a moment. The promise that something that could take my mind off how badly I was hurting, no matter how big or small could sway me.

Distracting myself was the goal, and I used many different things to achieve that goal. Drinking was always a go-to. I used it as an excuse for hurting people, for doing things I wouldn't have done sober because I knew better. I used, "Sorry I was drunk," as an excuse far too often when I was much too old to be doing so. Saying that is simply a way of trying to put the blame onto something else because what I have learned is that no matter how drunk you are, you still know more or less what you're doing. You may be more willing to give in to the pressure or the desire, but you know that you're doing so. I have known that one more shot would be a bad idea but I would do it anyway, I would know that leaving with that person would be a bad idea, but I would do it anyway. Alcohol makes you more willing to do certain things, but it doesn't fully cloud the voice in the back of your head that says, "hey go for it, but you know deep down you shouldn't!" Now that I am sober that excuse is, well, totally unavailable. I stopped using it when I realized that, while it's true I may have been drunk, and because of that more readily willing to push my conscience aside, my conscience was still there. I still knew what I was doing, but instant gratification was much more appealing than going home alone.

I'm going back to the AA today. It's a meeting where several different people go up to speak, and if the moment takes you, you go up. I have yet to share anything at a meeting. I'm not opposed to doing it, I just think that I'm not even sure where I would begin. It's scary, saying the words, "Hi I'm ____, and I'm an alcoholic." It makes it real, an unavoidable reality that you are finally facing, but at the end of the day would rather not. Will today be the day? Only time will tell.

February 25, 2020

I almost spoke at the meeting. Didn't, but felt more moved than I ever have before and almost did it. I was outside drinking the coffee that tastes like watery dirt and smoking a cigarette, something I find I only do post AA meetings because it feels right, when this girl who looked to be about my age came to talk to me. Her name is Emily. Look at me! Making friends at my small town AA meeting. It was funny, she said she had been coming to those meetings for some time and I was one of the first people around her age to show up and actually keep coming back. We went to Dunkin afterward to keep talking. She was cute, very small town kind of cute, but cute. Long hair, nails done, water shoes on constantly even though it's not that wet outside. From first glance, I would have never guessed that she was an alcoholic, but I guess people tend to say the same thing about me. She screamed with laughter when I told her about my, "sipping problem" theory. She said that was always what she would tell her parents when she woke up with a raging hangover after stumbling into the house at 3 am.

"I would always crawl into the kitchen, makeup still on from the night before, look up at my parents and smile as they shook their heads," she paused to take a sip of her iced coffee finishing half of it, a girl after my own heart. "They would shake their heads, and I'd just look up at them, squinting my eyes, smile and say 'don't worry guys it's just a sipping problem, plus I'm never drinking again,' Every time! They would half-laugh, but they never believed me. Shit, I didn't believe me!" She sat back and laughed this guttural and unexplainably infectious laugh. I couldn't help it and join her, knowing that interaction all too well. We laughed until our sides hurt.

We finished our drinks and walked to our respective cars, hugged and went our separate ways. Finally, an AA friend.

February 26, 2020

Emily asked if I wanted to hang out again today. I was kind of shocked, but also grateful. I wanted to know her, and I wouldn't say no to my new AA friend.

If you were to look up girl-next-door in the dictionary you'd find a photo of Emily. Her hair hit mid-back, was untouched by color or any product for that matter. Shit, I would put money on a bet that she used a 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner, and yet you still want to get your fingers all tangled up in it, grease and all. She wore clothes that didn't flatter her figure, but if you had the chance to see her in a bathing suit your mind would be sent to sinful places. She wore those duck feet LL Bean kinda shoes all year except for in the summer when she wore exclusively rainbow flip flops. She didn't wear glasses, but if she did they would be chunky and fit her face all wrong. Think Drew Barrymore in *Never Been Kissed* pre-transformation.

When I first met her I could have sworn I had known her my whole life. It was almost like I had been there with her during all of the stories she would tell me about. Her sneaking out, running away from home, hitch-hiking 3 hours to get back from a concert her parents had told her not to go to. She was electric and I wanted to be engulfed in her. Maybe the reason I was so drawn to her was because of this inner vs. outer duality. She looked innocent, though she was anything but. She would joke around and say that her parents were always confused by her, she was the sweetest looking but the hardest to deal with. She would laugh and say her mom knew she was going to be trouble from the moment she came into the world. There were complications with her birth, she was late, her mom needed an emergency C-Section, she didn't cry when she was born so the doctors were worried, and when her mom finally held her she said Emily looked directly into her eyes she smirked and started to wail.

Emily was the middle child and she said her siblings were perfect while she was not. She didn't do well in school, she didn't like sports or art, she would try to join clubs but get bored. She was too big for a town that was too small. I think if she had grown up in Los Angeles or New York City she would have found her people sooner. Maybe it would have saved her. We found solace in one another and even though I only knew her for a short time, it was like we were always meant to be. When I told her I was an only child she threw her head back and laughed, I knew it! She screamed and poked fun at my innocence. I didn't understand at first, but then I figured it out, I was always my own competition, she actually had to fight.

I didn't notice her the first few times I went to AA, she never talked and tended to keep her hoodie on and head down. I eventually asked her why she did this, I mean everyone at the meeting is there for the same thing, so why try and hide? She never gave me a straight answer, she'd just brush it off, saying things like, "I go to listen, not to be seen," or "I know too many people there and don't need them judging me more than they already do."

When I would try and tell her that AA was a place where the judgment was left at the door she would scoff and tell me I sounded like her mother. I dropped it very quickly.

When I walked into the Dunkin donuts yesterday she looked me over and said, "I knew you weren't from around here."

"What?" Confused, I put in my order and sat down at the table with her.

"Your license plate. California? Really?" Her eyes were intense, full focus on me.

"Cali baby!" I laughed, but her face stayed hard, "Los Angeles to be exact."

She went up to get her coffee and sat back down, "No one is telling the truth at that meeting, they just want to see more fucked up or more special than the person who spoke before."

“A bit cynical, no? I mean, I feel like AA is where people go to escape that.” I got my coffee, sitting back down I saw she had finished hers already.

“Yeah, maybe people who go to fancy AA meetings in Beverly Hills, but not here.” She went to the counter and ordered another.

In the time we sat at that Dunkin Donuts she finished three medium black iced coffees, and I thought I had a caffeine problem. We exchanged numbers and I told her I would see her next week.

Then today, I was just about to leave for campus when she texted and asked if I wanted to hang out, I said yes and she said she was going to take me to her “favorite place in this asscrack of a town.” For someone so pretty she was filled with so much anger. It was as if I was looking at myself as an angsty teen, mad at the world and everyone in it like she was stuck in a Tumblr page from 2014. She picked me up in her Ford Tacoma with the wheels so big you had to use the handhold to get into the seat.

“Pretty cool right, makes you feel like no one can touch you. Like you’re the king of the world.” She then proceeded to put on Ariana Grande and know every word.

We drove for about 30 minutes, she chain-smoked cigarettes and screamed along to the music, and the longer we drove the more I began to realize that she just wanted someone to scream with her, so I did. Cheesy I know, but the smile that spread across her face when I belted out every word of Needy led me to believe I was right. After a while, she pulled off the main highway onto a barely-there dirt road, you’d only see it if you knew it was there. We drove for 5 more minutes, it was bumpy, at certain points I didn’t believe there was any way her car could fit, but soon we came to a small clearing. She threw the car into park, hopped out, and started off.

“Hey-- wait!” I clumsily got down from the passenger side and ran after her.

We went down an overgrown path, few footprints could be seen, vines stretched along creating a natural obstacle course. After about five minutes the trees ended and we came out at a clearing, there you could see the entire Hudson River Valley. Emily climbed up onto a huge rock that sat slightly too close to the edge of a steep hill, she motioned for me to join her. I hesitated, she rolled her eyes, called me a pussy, and reached her hand down to me. I climbed up and sat down next to her, I understood why this was her favorite place to be. You could see for miles in either direction, there were no cars or people, if you sat in silence you could hear everything, the birds, the river, the wind in the trees. It was like an entirely different world all to yourself.

She pulled out a joint, motioning in my direction giving me the look of, ‘would you like some?’ I shook my head, she called me a pussy again.

“So you’re just alcohol sober?” I lit a cigarette.

“And? Look, weed has never been a problem, I can control it. I can’t control alcohol,” She lit the joint, the sweet, musty smell surrounded us, “I just don’t see the point in stopping if I know I could stop when I wanted to.”

I laughed, she snapped her head in my direction, her face was suddenly distorted, angry.

“What? What’s so fucking funny?” She inhaled, held her breath, and exhaled, “Don’t fucking tell me you’re one of those.”

“One of those?” I had never seen her like this, but then again I had only spent a total of one, maybe two, hours with her.

“One of those annoying AA people who think that once you let go of alcohol you have to let go of everything else too. I mean, Jesus Christ, it’s not like I’m popping pills or fucking... I don’t know,” her face went blank as she took another drag of the joint. The pot was settling in her system and calming her down, making whatever she was just angry about seem unimportant.

“Oh, no. No, I mean I used to smoke a lot, AA or not, weed just stresses me out now, but if you can control it do your thing.” I dragged my cigarette, my head began to rush and I could feel her calm down. “I think if you have a problem with something then fix it, but if it’s not broke just leave it alone.” I turned to her and smiled.

Emily’s face relaxed, she took another hit of the joint and threw it off the side of the rock, it was nowhere near to being done, “I just can’t fucking stand those kinds of people, ya know. Like, get a life, can’t you see I’m fucking trying here!”

She turned her face to me, her expression blank but her eyes were as wide as a stoned person’s eyes could be.

“I mean seriously, and I mean seriously, I am never drinking again. I’m better than that. Plus it’s not even fun, like, it’s lame.” Her voice trailed off, she brought her knees up to her chest and let her head fall back.

“I’m never drinking again,” she whispered to herself.

“I feel you on that one,” I chuckled and tossed my cigarette in the same direction she had thrown the joint. Its woody taste had turned sour and my stomach had started to hurt.

“Sorry I freaked. I’m just-- I just,” She looked in my direction, but not at me.

I turned to follow her gaze, trees for miles and miles, there was a bridge in the distance and if I looked really hard I could see the cars going over it, like tiny sketches on a piece of paper.

“Hey it’s fine, I get it. It sucks to be doing the work and not get the credit for it, everyone needs something.” I looked at her, her eyelids hung low, her eyes were like two of those designer ice cubes, perfectly glossy and round.

She met my gaze and smirked, “You stink, those cigs are gonna kill you, you know that,” she proceeded to punch me in the shoulder, a little too hard.

I winced, she laughed, and we were silent again. We sat there listening to the river for what felt like an hour, neither one moving except for when Emily would get out a new cigarette to smoke. Neither one of us even tried to attempt to find something to say. I think back on it now and feel like that’s all Emily ever really wanted, someone to sit with, to be with, and not have to be a specific version of herself. Not the good girl her parents wanted, the bad girl everyone expected her to be, the sober girl she was seen as in AA, nothing but a girl sitting on a rock in the middle of nowhere. But then again, what did I know?

The sun began to dip behind the mountains and the wind was picking up so we made our way back to the car. On the drive home, she asked me about my life, growing up in LA, if I had ever seen a celebrity in person, why I came to this bumfuck town, her words not mine. We began on the whole, why are you sober, what was the tipping point moment conversation, but she didn’t share much.

“I was just tired of getting yelled at and feeling like a fuck up, I was just tired. And damn, the look on my mom’s face when I told her I was a day sober, man as hard as I try I will never get that look out of my head. How light her eyes were, how genuinely happy she looked. How proud,” She trailed off but started up again, “and I don’t know, there was this one bad night. I had gone to this party with my friends, it was kinda on the outside of town so we had to call a cab to get there. It was with a bunch of kids who had graduated from our high school so we knew them all. It was lame though and I wanted to leave, but no one would go with me and I couldn’t afford the cab and I was absolutely shitfaced so I figured I’d just hitch a ride. Some guy stopped to get me and, well, no I don’t know, I mean hey, I got home, didn’t I!”

I looked over at her, I couldn't believe how soft her features were, I had always seen them as hard and intense, but really she was just soft.

"Were you, okay?" I hesitated on the word okay, we both knew what I meant.

"Oh, no, yeah, dude, it was fine just a shit night and I swear the hangover lasted like two days; it was trash," She forced a laugh and turned the music up, "okay, sober talk is for AA not for rides with friends."

We didn't talk for the rest of the car ride back to my house, she dropped me off, gave me a big hug and sped off. I sent her a text when I got inside to thank her for showing me that spot and letting her know I was happy that I met her, but didn't get a response.

February 27, 2020

One day at a time, just keep coming back, one day at a time, just keep coming back. Over and over again. I've taken it one day at a time, I've continued to come back, and I'm 6 weeks sober! I asked Emily if she wanted to get coffee before the next meeting, again nothing. I didn't think much of it, we were just starting to hang out, and while it was weird that she didn't even say no, I didn't want to push.

March 1, 2020

So things are starting to get a bit freaky. There is this virus called the CoronaVirus, or COVID-19. It started in this city in China called Wuhan. It spread quickly, but no one seemed to be worried that it was going to spread, or at least they weren't speaking out about it in the news, but it just hit Italy and it's spreading quickly. No one seems to be terribly concerned about it

coming to the states, but then again maybe the news just isn't reporting on it in that way? And then again, I also don't really read the news all that often, so... I wouldn't know anyway.

Sobriety is going strong, the cravings are starting to become fewer and far between and when they do come I allow myself to want it. I've found that if I try to fight the fact that I want to drink it makes me want it more, and I know that that's just me wanting what I can't have. Now when I start to get the itch I allow myself to itch, I allow myself to watch my friends drink, I allow myself to miss the feeling of being drunk. I sit in it while the feeling is strong, and then I let myself move past it once the itch subsides.

The question I find myself asking the most now is, will this be forever? Will this be something that I do for the rest of my life? At 22 years old am I saying that for as long as I live on this earth I will never touch alcohol ever again? Well, shit, I guess that's what I'm supposed to do! Not that I'm supposed to DO anything, but that's what this is about, right? This is about me understanding my relationship with alcohol, understanding that my relationship with alcohol is not normal, nor is it healthy. I guess a part of it, and a part of what's so important about going to meetings is that I always assume I will drink again. I assume one day I will break, but I won't be alone. I'll have people to turn to, to help me back up. I really do enjoy AA I must say.

I still haven't heard back from Emily.

March 3, 2020

I went to the meeting today and I scanned the room for Emily but didn't see her. I sat in the back row and saved her a seat, but she never showed. I texted her when the meeting was over, but again no response. I asked her if she was okay or if she needed anything, but it was radio silence. After the meeting, I asked Patty if she knew her or knew where she was. She shook

her head and said no. I was walking to my car when an older man came up to me, he said he heard me talking about Emily and asked how I knew her. I told him how we met at the meetings and had hung out a few times, but I didn't really know her much at all. I didn't want to give a random man information about a girl I hardly knew, but he looked upset and when I asked him if he was okay he began to cry. I froze, I mean a middle-age man was crying to me in a church parking lot. I stood there, very still, and very unsure of what was happening.

He dabbed his eyes dry with tissue from his pocket and blew his nose, he shoved both of his hands into his pants pocket and took a deep breath, looking up, still not saying a word. I went to speak but he cut me off,

"I'm sorry. I-- my name is Andrew, I'm Emily's father. A week ago things got bad again, and she and her mother got into a fight and--" his voice caught in his throat. He inhaled deeply and looked back up at the sky as if looking up could keep his tears inside.

"Oh, I'm sorry sir, uh, you know--" he looked back at me and cut me off.

"No, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come here I just, we didn't believe she had been coming. I mean things were so good for so long but, god, she came home last week and it was like she was a teenager again." Lifting his face to the sky once more he tried to dry the tears before they could hit his cheeks.

"I just wanted to-- I almost wanted to think we were right. That she had just been leaving and getting high. Then I heard you ask about her. Ask about her by name and, well, we were wrong." That's when he finally broke.

"I'm sorry sir. Is she, okay?" It felt like a stupid question that I already knew the answer to, but I was hoping I was wrong.

Andrew continued to try and hold back his tears, taking the same tissue back out of his pocket, wiping his eyes, and then his nose, then his eyes again.

“She, well, she will be. I hope. I hope this time she understands that we’re sorry. Look, I’ve taken up too much of your time, I apologize for all of this, thank you for your time. I’ll tell Emily you said hi.” Before I could say anything else he hurried to his car on the other side of the lot, got in, and drove away, never looking back in my direction.

I got in my car and drove home. I didn’t put any music on, I didn’t even think, I just kept on repeating Emily’s father’s words in my head. What had she done? Why did she do it? Last week, as in last week after we hung out? She was set on being better, she said to me over and over, “I am never drinking again.” I guess we all say that and fuck it up at one point. I texted her later that night,

Please don’t get mad but I saw your father today, he came to the meeting. I was asking about you and he overheard. Are you okay? LMK.

I didn’t expect a response, but I hoped for one.

March 5, 2020

People aren’t sure what to do here with this virus. Apparently it’s hit NYC and is going to get worse. Jesus, a whiskey on the rocks would be awesome right now! I mean it seems like it travels fast, but my school hasn’t said anything about it so... hopefully, we stay okay? On a side note, 7 weeks today! Woohoo!

It’s crazy what you realize happens to you when you’re constantly drinking, what your body begins to lose. I mean, I’m getting my memory back! Not that I ever lost it, but there are little moments when I’m about to leave the house and I remember I told a friend I would bring

them something or remembering a deadline that I had completely forgotten about. Moments that I would have never thought about before, I would have just shrugged and said sorry I forgot, I'm now beginning to remember.

In AA last week someone was talking about all of the things that they rediscovered after getting sober. Hobbies that they had let slip away, memories that were suddenly coming back to them, some good and some bad, and they said that even though the bad ones were bad, they were happy that they could at least remember them. I suppose I agree with them, that even though I have some memories that are bad... at least I have them? I guess, yeah sure, I can use them. I can try and turn them into lessons instead of leaving them as regrets. I'm not sure about everyone, but there are plenty of people I know who have bad drunken memories. Bad to say the least. I used to joke, I would say that I would blackout after doing something embarrassing or getting rejected by a guy or something like that, and me blacking out was my mind's way of protecting me from being embarrassed in the morning. Thinking back on it now, that wasn't the case. I was never a drunk who would make a fool of herself. I mean, sure, maybe that one time in high school that my friends and I stole her dad's Oxy, finished a bottle of peach-flavored vodka and I ended up vomiting on a table at a party. But I still remember that! I was never the biggest flirt so rejection wasn't on the top of my list of fears, so I wasn't blacking out to protect myself from being rejected. I realize now I was blacking out to try and forget some of the things that I did remember, and couldn't forget.

March 10, 2020

Well, things have escalated, to say the least. All classes are now going online and they are telling everyone to leave if they can. I have decided to stay in town, as have many of my friends. The virus is said to be affecting young children, older people, and people with immune deficiencies worse than anyone else. My father is 75 and my mom has health problems. Also, let's be real here, I would rather be isolated in my own apartment than in a house with my parents. I love them but I really do believe that it will be best for all of us if I stay here. I'm not really sure how long this is going to last, but one thing I am sure of is the fact that I shall not let a global pandemic be an excuse to get absolutely plastered in my apartment alone. Well... No. But, maybe... No! But, what if... No.

March 11, 2020

My meeting is being canceled because of COVID. Not just the meeting, the church is closing down because it's dangerous to congregate in large groups right now. I'm fine? I'm bummed. I still haven't spoken, and I like to think I would have last night if I had known that it was going to be our last meeting for who knows how long.

Emily still wasn't there. I kept looking back towards the entrance, sitting in the back row with my sweater on the chair next to me saving her a place. When I walked outside I noticed there was a group of people in the cemetery across the street. A family huddled together, crying over a fresh grave. I didn't want to stare, but I could have sworn one of the girls looked just like Emily. I saw a man wipe his eyes then his nose with a piece of tissue, just like her father had when he came up to me at the meeting last week. Then again I'm sure plenty of people do that while they're crying. I tried to get a good look at him, to see if what I was scared of was true.

I sat on the steps smoking and watching, my eyes trying as hard as they could to see the details of his face in the setting sun. He turned to face me. I froze, unable to move as the ash of my cigarette grew long and fell to the ground. He paused for a moment, raised his hand, and waved. I raised my hand up, pausing for a moment before bringing it down to cover my mouth. As if he could read my mind he looked at the pile of fresh dirt, then back to me, nodding his head slowly before returning to his family. My eyes began to burn as they filled with tears.

Patty came and sat next to me, “what a shame,” she sighed as she lit a Newport.

“Do you know who it’s for?” I dabbed at my eyes before the tears could fall.

“Not sure. From the look of it, the family crying and all, I’m guessing it was a kid or a grandparent.” She sucked hard on her cigarette, both of our gazes hard on the family across the street.

I finished smoking, said bye to Patty, and walked to my car. I contemplated driving over, paying my respects to my first AA friend. I took the long way home, decided to try and find the spot Emily had taken me to but turned around when I realized there would be no chance of me finding it while the sun was setting.

March 12, 2020

2 months sober and everything is falling apart? Everyday things seem to be getting worse and worse. They are now asking all students that can go home and get off of campus to go home. My best friend is going back home to California, my crush is also leaving so I will be quarantining alone, but I still will not be using this as an excuse to drink. I will not be going to the gas station to get a six-pack of beer and sit on my living room floor getting trashed while working on a 750 piece cat puzzle. No, I will not. Even though, ya know, I mean online classes

that can be done from my bed, nothing else to do with my day since I can't see any of my other friends or go outside. No! I won't be doing that, even though there is literally nothing stopping me from doing so! My own will is stopping me somehow.

It isn't even about having to reset my sober app anymore, I feel like after doing that the first time it kinda lost the seriousness of it, but still. I am going to make it through because if I can make it through a GLOBAL PANDEMIC without alcohol, I can make it the rest of my life.

March 17, 2020

One day at a time. God, everyone always says it's just one day at a time. One day at a time. But what if all the days have just started to become one long night? I can't leave my house because of the Corona Virus. I mean, I can leave, I can see people as long as we stay six feet apart, but then night comes and I'm alone. I'm alone to think about all of the fucked up shit that's happening, all the fucked up shit that has happened. I can't help but think about what I didn't do, what I did, and wish I hadn't. It sounds cryptic and aloof, but nothing is clear these days. We aren't getting answers, people are leaving as the days go by, and I'm still here.

I didn't want to go home, I still don't, but maybe I should? I have my lease until June and my dad is older and my mom is sick, these are the three facts that seem to be keeping me here. It's just strange. The ebbs and flows of what sobriety makes you feel. I was finally becoming okay with the strange loneliness, the open hole that seemed to be inside of me that I was no longer filling with drinking. It didn't feel so gaping anymore, but it's starting to feel big again. Quarantining alone might be... harder than I thought.

March 20, 2020

My best friend is leaving back to San Francisco. My crush left. This is getting bad. A lot of people are getting sick, more are dying, and there is no end to be seen. I'm all alone so who would know if I drank? Me, I guess... but... No. There are no buts, this is the time that it really counts. The moments alone are the moments that make it count. It's like in Soul Cycle when the instructor is having you go really hard, and they start screaming at you saying, "What you do when no one is looking, that's who you really are! What you do when no one is looking, that's what you're bringing to the team!" And while that never worked on me in a spin class because my options were either keep going or vomit on the person in front of me, the sentiment is what matters here.

I can't go to my meetings anymore either. And if I'm being completely honest here I was just getting comfortable enough to try and ask one of the older women in the group to be my sponsor, but I was going to give myself a few more meetings. Guess uh, that's not happening. I'm going to look for online AA meetings though. I don't know why I've been hesitating? Yes, I do, what am I saying? Playing dumb gives me an excuse to not find one. I feel detached. It's funny I always dreaded going to the meetings, not a lot but there was something in me that was still, not against going, but didn't fully enjoy it yet. Once I got there it was great, kinda like working out, but it was always getting there, and getting there was finally starting to get easier! Maybe there's a Facebook group for my meeting? I mean that kinda defeats the purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous, but it's a small town maybe...? I know there are zoom meetings, but I liked my small town group.

Silver lining is, I can still go on walks with my friends and I am safe and have my health.

March 24, 2020

Day 3 of quarantine. I set up a little space in the corner of my living room and I have not moved in 2 and a half days. I am talking to my puzzle. I don't think I have had a real thought in I don't even know how long. Am I breaking? In some ways, yes, but aren't we all? No one has ever experienced something like this before, at least not anyone who is alive today.

The silver lining, my lack of movement has also meant a lack of wanting to drink. That's a lie, I still want to drink, but I haven't moved so how would I get a drink? There was no Facebook page for the AA meeting. I should ask a friend of mine to be my sponsor but I don't want that, I liked the idea of my sponsor being someone I only knew from AA, no other strings. I talk to my friends and family every day, but I want to hug them. I want to be touched, in any way, not even sexually, just a hug, a simple pat on the back would be nice. But I shall stay sitting in my living room, doing a puzzle, eating dried mango, and trying to not feel so alone.

March 28, 2020

It's 9:45 PM on Saturday, day 7 of quarantine. Day 7 of the official start of everyone's social distancing. I am also 2 months sober! Again. I can't stop listening to You and Me by Penny and the Quarters. I know it's cheesy, but it makes my heart feel a little lighter, and honestly, anything that has the power of doing that right now, I'll take it plus 7. It was cold today, but yesterday was perfect. It felt like summertime, warm all day, the air slowly getting stickier and heavy with rain. At 5 PM the clouds finally gave in and it poured and poured, the setting sun poking through the saturated clouds wherever it could. It stopped around 8, it was still warm so a few friends and I met up in the center of town. Cigarettes were smoked and air hugs shared by all. It made everything feel a little bit lighter. Even the crickets wanted to be a part of

the action last night, chirping their surprisingly calming song outside of my window, I listened until I fell asleep.

I woke up in the middle of the night covered in sweat but my room was cold. I could still hear the crickets outside my window. I convinced myself I was sick so I laid in bed for what felt like an hour trying to figure out what to do. I then had the brilliant idea to go and actually take my temperature and not allow myself to fall into a state of psychosis. I was fine, 98.1. I got back in bed and fell asleep quickly, the crickets were suddenly quiet.

April 1, 2020

Here's the thing, I thought that all of this would be over today. In the timeline that I created for myself, we would quarantine for two weeks and then everyone would come back and life would continue as it did before COVID. April fools to me!

I have had to take apart my little living room nest. Sitting on the floor every day for two weeks was not only horrible for my lower back pain, but horrible for my mental health. I still toy with going out and getting a beer. I won't do it, but I think about it. I'm still putting off finding a Zoom AA meeting. I see my friends during the day sometimes but still, come home to no one. No one but me! No one but me.

April 12, 2020

3 months.

April 19, 2020

Sober in quarantine. 10 weeks sober, in quarantine. Almost 100 days sober, in quarantine.

April 24, 2020

Today is a bad day. Today is one of those days where the loneliness attaches itself to everything I do. I am almost 3 and a half months sober, I am about 6 weeks into quarantine, and I feel. I feel. I wish I could feel. I don't know what I fucking feel! I want to see my friends I haven't seen. I want things to go back to normal. I want to be celebrating the end of college outside, late at night, surrounded by the people I have gone through this with. Those I am close to and those I am not. This was not how this was supposed to happen.

It's funny, well, not funny, but I can't help myself but think sometimes, why me. Why did this have to happen to me, during this time of my life, this pivotal moment, why me? Then, of course, I step back and remind myself it's not just you, you asshole, it's everyone. This is an everyone thing, this is affecting millions and millions and so many in ways that are SO much worse. I'll let myself have it for a moment, I sit in the melancholy and feel it covering my skin in its cold warmth, in its familiarity, the sadness of depressed days past. Then once I've had my fill and the feeling gets too cold and too comfortable I make myself snap out of it and put things into perspective. I am okay, my family is okay, my friends are okay. I am missing out on a once in a lifetime experience, sure, but I'm okay and that is all that matters.

I am okay and I am staying sober. I hate it sometimes. No, I don't, that's a lie, but it's hard! I've been looking for an online AA group. I haven't settled on one yet, but I have a feeling that I'll enjoy it once I do. There's less pressure. It's online, it's separate, I'm safe within my own home. One goal I've set for myself will be to finally say something. To finally say those magic words...

Support is nice right now, support from people who are going through the same thing that isn't COVID. It's getting harder to see people here, not because anyone is sick, but because all

anyone wants to seem to do is get drunk. My friends always text in our group chat, Who's ready to get fucked up! ME! I want to reply. Me me me! I am! But I don't, they wouldn't let me even if I wanted to, but that doesn't stop them. And it's hard to be around, it's never felt hard like this before, and maybe that has to do with the isolation, but it's really hard. I just wish we could hang out and watch a movie without drinking. Then I don't see them for a few days and my social anxiety starts to go crazy and I think that everyone hates me and... and it's a cycle and I don't leave my room.

It's not their fault, it's no one's fault. It just makes things harder and I don't want anything to be harder. I just want to feel normal and nothing feels normal and not drinking doesn't make me feel abnormal but it doesn't feel normal. I need to say something, to my friends or the group or just anyone. It's just more of the empty hole, and I don't want to seem like a downer, and I know everyone needs to cope right now. Maybe, tomorrow.

May 3, 2020

A friend decided to start hosting a women's meeting over zoom and she asked me if I'd like to join. I figured, since I'd been heavily putting off finding one and instead choosing to watch hours of a TV show about Vampires, this was a sign. It was at 11 PM. I was 10 minutes late. I was late because I was sitting on my couch. But, that's quarantine for you! I didn't miss the speaker which was good, but what I didn't realize was that after the speaker finished everyone got a chance to share. Everyone had to share.

I guess no one HAD to share, but everyone did have to introduce themselves. “Hi, I’m ___ and I’m an alcoholic.” I was the second person to be called on. The two-minute timer started and suddenly I wasn’t nervous anymore. Maybe it was being surrounded by women my own age, some of whom I happened to actually know. Maybe it was the fact that even though I may be finally saying those 7 words out loud I was still protected by the distance my screen provided. I thought I was going to cry but in a good way. Like I was finally releasing something I had been needing to release for a long time.

Hi, I’m an alcoholic.