

NOT IN GOD'S EYES

I STILL FELT NAUSEOUS when I got up for school on Monday morning, but I wasn't vomiting anymore and the bleeding had finally stopped. I was so sore that it hurt to sit in the bucket seat of my car on the short drive to school. I was never more aware of my reproductive system than I was when my aching vagina was the only part of my body that I could feel. As soon as I walked through the doors of my high school, I realized that I was not the same person I was when I had walked through those doors just a few days prior. The hallways were dark and convoluted, and I felt a powerful sense of dread weighing down on me. I was fearful of this building in a way I didn't know a person could be afraid of a place so familiar. I saw my best friend, Adrienne, and a few of our other friends standing by their lockers at the end of the thousand-mile-long hallway. My friends were so close by, but it was a huge endeavor to walk over there. I stopped at my locker to drop off my bag and get my books, where I lingered with my fingers on the dusty red metal. I didn't understand why I was hesitant to see the people I was always so excited to catch up with after the weekend. I walked up to the group, and Kelly disconcertingly asked me if everything was okay. I knew I looked sick, and I was planning on telling everyone that I was coming down with a cold or something, but I just shrugged and stood there. I still don't know what virginity looks like, but its absence in a person must be pretty obvious.

“Oh my God, did you lose your V-card this weekend?” Kelly said without delay.

I wondered if that was the typical assumption everyone made about a girl walking into school Monday morning looking like shit. Are people supposed to look like shit after losing their virginity? And is that the only excuse a girl can have for looking like shit? I was shocked that any of my friends would assume that about me. I had never even had a boyfriend, and I was open about my Christian beliefs of wanting to wait to have sex until I got married. Maybe since I started experimenting with alcohol and pot a little bit over the summer, everyone thought my entire moral compass had been destroyed. I wished I had never drank alcohol, not just because I thought that might have prevented me getting raped, but because if I was still that innocent girl everybody thought I was, maybe people would believe that I actually had been raped. But now I was just the girl who drank too much and had sex with my best friend's sleazy ex-boyfriend.



It seemed like the previous Friday night had never ended, and Adrienne and I were still hanging out at her ex-boyfriend's place after going to a movie with some other friends. Adrienne and Jared started dating when he was still in high school with us, but he had graduated the previous year and was now going to the university in town. They always had a tumultuous, on-again/off-again relationship, and none of Adrienne's friends really liked him. Adrienne was still totally in love with Jared, and while nobody was sure of their official relationship status, everybody knew they were still sleeping together. Jared lived in a fraternity house on campus, and we went over there along with Jessica, who was visiting Adrienne from out of town. Jared had a fake ID and asked us if we wanted to go get some beer. Adrienne and Jessica didn't drink, but I was pretty impressed by the fake ID and thought I could go for a couple beers. We all got in his car and pulled up to the drive-thru window at the liquor store, which was equipped with what sounded like a fire truck bell to alert the employees of a car at the window. Jared asked what kind of beer I liked, but I didn't know what to say because the only beer I had ever tried was Keystone Light, and I knew that probably wasn't good beer. He got a six-pack of Michelob Ultra and told me it was some quality stuff. We all went back to his room, which was about ten square feet and furnished with only a bunk bed, dresser, mini fridge, and TV. Jessica was staying at Adrienne's house, so I called my mom to tell her I was going to stay at Adrienne's that night, too. The night wasn't too exciting—we were all just sitting around watching a kung fu movie, but I was having so much fun. I had never hung out on campus before, and I felt like a badass drinking beer at a frat house. After my second beer, I announced that I didn't want any more to drink because I didn't want a hangover for the football game the next day. I wanted to get up early to hang out with Adrienne and Jessica, but Jared perked up when I said I was done drinking.

“Wait, have you ever tried Bacardi Razz?” he asked eagerly.

I had never heard of Bacardi Razz, but Jared told me it was this awesome rum that tastes just like raspberries and insisted I try it. Jared didn't have to twist my arm too much, but still, he pitched the stuff as though he were a used-car salesman. When I agreed to try some, he said it was better if it was mixed with Sprite, so he went downstairs to get cups and soda, and he handed me my drink when he returned to his room. He watched attentively as I tasted his concoction and asked what I thought of the drink. I told him it was really good, and it really did taste like raspberries. Up until that point, the only alcohol I had tried was cheap beer, warm whiskey, and some syrupy amaretto that my mom bought one time to bake in

some cookies. I decided that Bacardi Razz was my favorite alcohol. Who knew liquor could taste so good!

I don't remember the kung fu movie ending or much at all over the next sixteen hours. Within minutes of drinking that raspberry elixir, everything around me seemed to be moving so quickly, but I was stationary, like I was looking out the window of a moving train. One minute I was downstairs in the common room vomiting in a water fountain, and the very next second I was up on the third floor vomiting out of a window from which somebody (probably me) had pushed the screen out. I remember thinking that I was having fun, but being so confused about why I was sick and unable to walk straight or even stand up. With my back pressed so hard against the hallway wall, I slid down to the carpet that had stains to match the yellow paint, and I watched the outlines of the bodies towering over me quickly fade away to black. I hadn't had a lot of experience with alcohol, so I assumed this was just what was supposed to happen. I don't remember Adrienne and Jessica leaving, abandoning me to my fate.

I woke up, fully clothed, flat on my back, arms to my side in the bottom bunk of a bunk bed. I saw the glowing red numbers of an alarm clock glaring at me from across the room that read *1:00*. One o'clock—was it one o'clock in the morning? I tried to think of the last thing I remembered, which was watching a kung fu movie around nine o'clock the night before. Then I noticed the blinding sunlight peeking in from behind the dark fabric curtains. *Oh my god, it must be one o'clock in the afternoon.* I counted the hours backwards and realized that the last thing I remembered was sixteen hours ago. Unless it was one o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday. Or Monday. I had no idea what day it was; for all I knew, a week could have gone by. I knew something wasn't right. I was unsafe and terrified. I had to get home, but when I tried to get up, my body was completely paralyzed. The feeling was similar to when you wake up in the middle of the night and your arm is asleep, and you can't move it for a few seconds until it starts tingling again. Except this was my entire body, and it didn't start tingling after a few seconds. I tried to scream *get up!* inside my head, but I didn't even have the strength to do that. Not being able to move my body when I willed it to move was one of the most horrifying feelings I had ever experienced. Had I had a stroke? I imagined that this is what it would feel like to wake up strapped to a cold gurney in a strait jacket, peppered with electrodes and needles, having no idea why or how I ended up in the hospital. I could only move my eyes and twist my neck a little bit, and I saw that Jared was lying next to me. I felt a little relieved to at least know where I was, so I fell back asleep.

When I woke up the second time, a couple hours later, I was able to get out of the bed. Keeping my balance by holding on to the posts of the bunk bed and leaning against the walls, I stumbled into the tiny tiled bathroom adjoining Jared's room to his neighbors' room, and I vomited in the toilet. Moving my body was extremely difficult. My balance was off, even with trying to look at the horizon—a seasickness remedy my aunt had taught me on a boat tour of the Chicago River. I had to think about moving each of

my legs, which seemed to weigh a thousand pounds, step by step. I plopped myself back down on the bed and wondered why I wasn't at Adrienne's house and where Adrienne was anyway, and I wondered whether my mom was worried about me. I needed to get home immediately. Jared woke up and rolled over to me.

"We need to get this shirt off of you," he stated.

"No. Home," I managed to squeak out. Talking was difficult.

"You have vomit on your shirt. We need to take it off," Jared pointed out.

"No, I need to go home," I said, my eyes barely open. I was drifting back to sleep.

"You're still too fucked up. I'll take you home later." It was neither an offer nor an option.

When he tried to take off my shirt again, and I told him to stop, Jared said, "It's my bed, and I don't want vomit to get all over it." I guess I could understand why he wouldn't want vomit in his bed, but little did I know that he didn't mind getting blood all over his sheets.

He took my shirt and bra off, propped himself over me and started kissing me. I was in and out of consciousness, and I didn't understand what was happening. It felt like I was in a dream, except this large, hairy man would have never appeared in one of my dreams. I couldn't tell if I was kissing him back or not. I didn't know what was really happening and what I may or may not have been dreaming as I kept dozing off. I didn't want this to be happening. I just wanted to be home, safe in my own bed. At some point when I woke up from dozing off again, I was completely naked, and Jared was down at the end of the bed, inserting his fingers into me. I couldn't feel anything, but I could see his hand moving in and out of view, and I could see that it was covered in blood.

Nothing had ever been inside me before—not a finger, not a tampon, not a penis. A few years earlier, I was at Disney World with my mom, and I was on my period. I wanted to go swimming, and she told me to try one of her tampons. I couldn't figure out how to get the tampon in, and my mom tried to help to no avail. I tried to at least get my finger in there, but my vagina was like an iron vault. In high school, I got sick of wearing pads, and I tried to break into that vault a couple more times, but it was sealed off to the world. I had heard stories of girls' hymens breaking while horseback riding or strenuously running, so I decided to just wait for my hymen to break on its own. I never envisioned Jared's dirty, chubby fingers doing the job.

Jared stayed down at the end of the bed for what seemed like hours, and when he came back up to my face, his pants had been removed. He tried to put his penis in me, but he couldn't get an erection. I had never seen a penis before, and I didn't know what the difference between an erect one and a flaccid one was or that it needed to be hard in order to go into a vagina.

"You're gonna have to help me out here," Jared said flatly.

I didn't know what he was talking about or how I could possibly help him in my helpless state. I could barely stay awake, let alone move my weak limbs. He placed my hand on his penis and told me to rub it. It reminded me of a miniature roll of Pillsbury cookie dough that had been sitting out on the counter too long. I didn't have the strength or physical dexterity to grasp anything, and I definitely didn't want to be touching Jared's penis. I tried moving my hand around his crotch, but I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing or what was supposed to happen with his penis. Then he grabbed my torso and lifted me up so I was straddling him. I couldn't maintain my posture, so Jared had to hold me up to keep me from just slumping over on him. Even nine years later, I could still feel Jared's hands burning into the sides of my ribcage. I don't know if he got an erection or was inside me at that point, since I still couldn't feel anything, but he was moving my body around a lot. My forehead kept bashing into the wooden frame of the bunk bed as he was maneuvering me. After my head hit the bed frame a couple times, I tried to shift my weight so I could just keep my forehead firmly pressed against the splintered wood, and I realized that something was not right. I had no idea how long this had been going on, but with all the bleeding and head bashing, I began to become more aware of what was happening. Jared laid me back down and grabbed a condom from the end of the bed. Something about seeing that condom in his hand made me realize, for the first time, that I was having sex.

Oh my God.

I'm having sex.

This is my first time having sex.

I had always heard that your first time having sex would be awkward, but being the good Christian girl I was, I had planned on saving myself for marriage. I started to feel that I had done something incredibly wrong because I would never be a virgin again, not in God's eyes nor my own. I started to feel how much pain my body was in—my muscles ached, my forehead was pounding, I was nauseous, and my vagina felt like it had been repeatedly stabbed with a machete. I had no way to reverse what Jared had already done to me or to stop what was about to happen with the condom he was putting

on his half-erect penis. I had already been permanently damaged, and I was never going to be the same person again.

I can't recall exact details of what happened next because I retreated so far into my own head. Once I realized I had no control over the situation, over Jared, over my own body, and that I was slowly and painfully losing my virginity whether I liked it or not, I decided I should at least try to enjoy it. Try to make it good. Sex was supposed to be good, right? I had a responsibility to make this experience enjoyable for Jared, and I didn't want him to know how horrible it was for me. I thought if I could give him what he wanted, it would be less painful for me and end more quickly. But I didn't know how sex was supposed to work other than what I had seen on TV or movies—in the time of dial-up internet, the abundance of all the high-speed free porn to satisfy any teenager's curiosity was just a far-fetched dream. I remembered that fake orgasm scene in *When Harry Met Sally*. And I thought of those orgasmic Herbal Essences commercials. I pretended I was that girl in the shower washing her hair with Fruit Fusion shampoo or Meg Ryan with Billy Crystal in that deli.

Yes.

Yes!

YES!!

"I'll have what she's having," said the old woman at the table next to me.

I don't know how it finally came to end, but I must have performed well enough that Jared decided we were done. He never even took off his dirty white t-shirt. I went to the bathroom to try to clean up the blood that was all over my legs, and when I realized I wasn't going to stop bleeding anytime soon, I just put my clothes on and told Jared to take me home. Jared refused to drive me home, but he offered to take me to Adrienne's house. Adrienne was the one person I wanted to talk to about what just happened to me, and Jared must have read my mind.

"How about we don't tell Adrienne about what just happened?" Jared said offhandedly. "You know, because she's still in love with me. It would just upset her."

Jared assured me that he has sex with other girls all the time, and that he and Adrienne weren't dating anymore, so what happened between us was okay. But he said I still shouldn't tell her because she might get mad at one or both of us. Now I was conflicted—I hadn't taken into consideration that it was

Adrienne's ex-boyfriend and current lover who just raped me, if I could even call it that. I just wanted some comfort and advice from the person I considered to be my best friend. He drove me to Adrienne's, and I sat down in the living room. I felt like death as I sunk into a plush loveseat, and I could tell that I was still bleeding. I decided that I just needed to go to bed, and I would figure out what to do about talking to Adrienne when I felt better. When Adrienne came into the room, "Why did you leave me there last night?" spurted out of my mouth. It was the only thing I could say when I saw her. I wanted some answers. I wanted to know how I got so fucked up.

Was it really just from a few drinks? Did I smoke pot? Did I drink a lot more than I realized? What time did Adrienne leave? What happened before she left? Why didn't Adrienne take me home with her? What happened in the sixteen hours I don't remember? What about Jessica? Maybe she knows what happened. Should I ask her? Was anybody else in the frat house? Why do I have incoherent voicemails on my phone from myself? Did I call myself? Was I trying to call someone else? Did we order pizza? Why was I paralyzed when I woke up? Is that what happens when you drink too much? What am I supposed to do now? Should I call the police? Should I go to the doctor? Was I really raped? Or did I just have sex? Is this just what happens when you drink a lot?

I never got the chance to ask anyone any of those questions.

"You were really fucked up," Adrienne answered. "Jared said you could stay there, and he would take you home when you sobered up, so we left," was the last thing Adrienne ever said to my face and the only answer I got to the million questions I had.

Adrienne drove me home in silence. I don't remember the encounter with my mom when I walked into the house, or if she wondered where I had been. Normally, my mom would have been worried sick over my whereabouts, but my mom and Jim were getting married in six weeks, so she had been preoccupied with her new relationship. I made a beeline for my bed, but it didn't take too long for my mom to come in to ask me what was wrong.

"I drank too much. I'm never drinking again. I feel so sick," I moaned.

My mom said she hoped I had learned my lesson and stayed away from alcohol, and she told me she was glad I was okay. But I didn't feel like I was okay. Nothing was okay. I stayed in bed the rest of that Saturday and all of Sunday, and I was vomiting and bleeding for two days. I thought I was going to die. All the questions I had about what really happened to me were constantly going through my head like

a broken record that just kept getting louder and louder every second. I still wondered if part of it could have been a dream, or at least that's what I had hoped. I listened and re-listened to the incoherent voicemails I had left myself on my phone from that night. I could hear people laughing in the background. I could hear Adrienne saying she loved me and me telling her I loved her back. I listened to Adrienne's giggly "I love you" over and over, and each time I heard her voice, I wanted to cry. But I couldn't cry—I couldn't really feel anything.



When I couldn't vocalize a response to Kelly's inquiry about my virginity, Adrienne immediately took off down the hallway to call Jared. The rest of that school day seemed to last an eternity, and Kelly mediated conversations between Adrienne and me via text messages because Adrienne refused to look at me or even text me directly. I told Kelly that Jared and I did have sex, but I was really fucked up and didn't want it to happen at all. Kelly said Jared told Adrienne that he didn't remember having sex, so if I said that happened, it must have been when he was passed out. Great, now I was the rapist.

This back and forth texting was getting tedious, and I just wanted to talk to someone face to face. I was hesitant to tell Rebekah about what had happened because she was my pastor's daughter, and I didn't want her to know that I wasn't a virgin anymore. But I figured she was going to hear it from someone eventually, so I gave Rebekah a brief synopsis of the story. "Well, you probably shouldn't have been drinking over there" was not the support I was looking for from my other best friend.

I knew it. This is just what happens when you drink too much. I shouldn't have been drinking. It was all my fault. I realized I was the one to blame for what happened to me, but I still didn't want people thinking I raped Jared while he was passed out drunk. That was untrue and just ridiculous, so I asked Kelly for Jared's phone number and went out to my car to call him. Hearing his voice on the other end of my long-antenna'd flip phone sent painful chills down my spine.

I frantically asked Jared why he would tell Adrienne that I took advantage of him while he was passed out. He knew we had sex—he put the condom on himself. Jared confidently told me that he didn't remember anything about a condom, but he suddenly believed me when I told him I pulled part of the broken condom out of me later.

Jared told me to get the morning after pill right away, but I had no idea how to go about doing that, so he offered to meet me at the county health clinic as soon as I got out of school that afternoon. I dreaded having to see him again, but I was willing to go—I was relieved that somebody was finally telling me what to do. I didn't know what to do while Jared was raping me. I didn't know what to do afterwards about telling Adrienne or my mom about what had happened. I didn't know what to do about

calling the police, going to the doctor, or what to do to prevent this from happening again. I felt this immense pressure to do something about what had just happened to me, *just do something*, but I didn't know what had just happened and I certainly didn't know what to do about it. That panicked *I-don't-know-what-to-do* feeling followed me around for the next eight years. I just needed somebody to tell me what to do because I was completely helpless, and I welcomed Jared's offer to take me to the health clinic.

I met Jared at the health clinic right after school, and I wanted to vomit as soon as I saw him, but I knew I just needed to survive this short encounter and I would never have to see him again. I don't remember what I told my mom when she called asking why I wasn't home from school yet, but I felt guilty about lying to her. Jared told me exactly what to say to the receptionist, including the time and day that we had sex, which he told me to lie about because it would ensure a better chance they'd give me the pill. My life was suddenly becoming a web of lies. In the waiting room, I saw my stepmom's niece, Laura. We were the same age and used to see each other occasionally when I visited my dad. Apparently there was only one reason anybody went to this part of the clinic because she just looked at me and said, "Morning after pill?" I nodded, and she smiled and said, "I won't tell if you won't." We both laughed, but there was nothing funny to me about this. Then, a girl from my church walked in. *Shit*. I definitely didn't want anybody from church to see me there. When I told her I was getting the morning after pill, she said, "Eh, it happens." I told her not to tell anybody, and then a concerned look came over her face, and she asked if everything was okay or if I needed to talk. I didn't know she would have been the only person to offer me help when I desperately needed it most. I wish I would have just told her everything right there in that harshly lit waiting room, in front of Laura, in front of the nurses, and in front of Jared, who was sitting on the other side of the room with his hands folded behind his head looking like Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. I wish I could have told her that my virginity, my innocence, and my free will were stolen from me, and the man who took them was sitting right across the room from us. Instead, I just assured her that everything was fine. I needed to wait until it was safe to tell anybody about what happened to me, but I didn't know it would take more than eight years to reach safety—or maybe it was just a breaking point of desperation that I reached.

I hoped the nurse would notice that I was in distress or at least inquire about why I needed the morning after pill, but she just gave me the pills and charged me twenty dollars. I went back out to the waiting room to find Jared being loud and obnoxious talking to everyone. I realized that I hated Jared, but I immediately felt guilty for feeling that way about another person. The receptionist offered him some condoms, and when he saw what kind they were, he raucously proclaimed that the condoms he uses with spermicide are far superior to whatever they were offering. I gave him my *shut-the-fuck-up* face, and he

just looked at me and said, “What? I just like to leave my mark wherever I go.” From then on, it was my mission to erase whatever mark he may have left on me.

I was instructed to take one pill with dinner that evening and the next pill twelve hours later. I brought the packet of pills home and put them in a box that I kept on my dresser, hoping my mom wouldn't see them. My mom had given me the small box that was covered in faux cow fur several years earlier, and I had always taken the cow box with me when I would travel away from home to conventions or concerts with my youth group. Along with my lip gloss and nail polish and makeup, I kept an Oscar Mayer wiener whistle and two rubber smiley-faced hot dogs that reminded me of my childhood inside the box. As I placed the box of morning after pills in my cow box, I remembered all the trips I had taken with my youth group and all the hotel nightstands on which I had kept the box, all the sparkly fruity flavors of lip gloss, all the times my friends petted the cow fur, all the times I accidentally spilled the contents of the box in the church van, all the times I played the Oscar Mayer jingle on the wiener whistle—I remembered all of my innocence and realized how quickly it had been taken from me as I was now putting emergency contraception into a box that I had always associated with laughter and fun and friends. I had never imagined myself as someone who would ever need to worry about unwanted pregnancy, and I felt like I had become a completely different person overnight. I never took any more trips with my youth group, and I threw away the cow box shortly after I took the morning after pills. I replaced the cheery cow box on my dresser with the dark wooden box inside which my mom used to keep her marijuana. The box reeked of pot, and along with my social security card, I would also store drugs in the box throughout my college years.