
1.

TEQUILA, LIME JUICE, AND ADDERALL

“Name?” he asked.

“Taylor Bell.”

He pretended to squint down at his clipboard, using it as an excuse to give me an up-down scan. Mirrored Ray-Bans sat low on his nose and LEGALIZE COCAINE was printed in bold black letters on his neon green tank top.

“Hmmm . . . Taco Bell,” he said, smirking and still eyeing me, “I don’t see any Taco Bells on the list, but you have an honest face and an honest . . . ass, so I’m gonna go ahead and let you in.”

“I’m honored, thanks.” He opened the door to the house, and I could immediately feel the mayhem booming inside. There was

no turning back. I was going to a frat party, the end. I took a deep breath and stepped into the madness.

The house was a massive Victorian mansion with a vaulted foyer that featured one of those huge curved staircases that you only see in movies. There were two hallways, which must've led to the first-floor bedrooms, branching out from either side of the main room. It wasn't hard to imagine a century's worth of kids getting hammered in here, hiding behind the illusion of public service. The general scent of the house, however, was equal parts locker room and Victoria's Secret, and my sandals were sticking to the booze-soaked floor (#gross). My plan was to smile at all the drunk people, stay for ten minutes or until I found Jack, and get the fuck out.

I smoothed my dress and gauged the vibe of the party—it was a raucous symphony of electronic music and the wild screams of college kids in the prime of their lives. Decorations were sparse except for fog machines in every corner and one enormous disco ball. A DJ booth had been set up, and some Skrillex song was blasting from enormous speakers that hung from the ceiling. There were girls everywhere. Dancing on tables, grinding on guys, and taking selfies. Two of them were making out with each other while taking selfies.

“Boom! Those are some gold-medal gazongas!” an overweight, overly confident bro slurred in my direction. He was flanked by two other kind-of-fat guys who raised their Solo cups in my direction as if to congratulate me.

“Thank you?” I said, offering up a half smile. Even though he was clearly drunk, it seemed polite to accept his compliment.

Obviously the party was not designed with sobriety in mind,

so I went looking for a drink. Luckily, lining the walls of the main room were a bunch of lanky boys with mediocre faces holding silver trays with Solo cups filled to the brim with a suspect red liquid. They looked like twelve-year-olds. A shirtless, kind-of-cute blond dude with big teeth leaned in toward me and grinned.

“Sup, hot stuff? Drink?”

“Sure. Thanks,” I said, grabbing a Solo cup off the tray. I took a sip. It tasted like rubbing alcohol, sugar, and sadness. Downing one would’ve been blackout city, so I put the cup back on his tray. “Just kidding. What else you got?”

“Keg’s in the back,” he said, motioning with the tray. A few cups toppled over, sloshing red punch down his arm. “Shit!”

“HEYYYYY, RUSSELLSPROUT!” a familiar voice shouted. “What’d I tell you about spilling?” Suddenly, Jack Swanson, the reason I’d come to this godforsaken party to begin with, appeared in front of me, even more handsome than I’d remembered. I’d only met Jack two days earlier, when he sat next to me in my women’s studies class, but I’d spent almost every hour since then wondering if he’d invited me to this party because he liked me or because it was his job as a frat boy to get wide-eyed freshman girls to the house. I was never the type to obsess over guys, but I was going with it. Jack had the type of smile that stuck in your brain for days on end.

He slung his big arm around Russell, who was shitfaced. Cute, but shitfaced, and he suddenly looked almost scared.

“Sir! Um . . . uhh . . . don’t spill?” offered Russell.

“Correct. Now, please apologize to my friend Taylor here.”

“Sorry, Taylor.”

“Also, Sprout, do you mind doing one more little favor?”

“Yes, sir.”

“So, you do mind?”

“No, sir. I meant no, sir, I don’t mind.”

“Great. Drop and give me fifty.”

Without even a moment’s hesitation, Russell turned, handed his tray to the pledge next to him, dropped to the floor, and started doing push-ups.

“I’m gonna need to hear you count,” Jack said, crossing his arms and taking a step back to survey the push-ups. Russell looked like he was having a hard time. His face was turning red and he was panting.

“Five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight . . .”

“That’s better. Hey, Taylor.” Jack smiled, turned toward me, and placed a foot on Russell’s back, crossing his arms. “Glad you could make it to our little get-together. I thought you weren’t into the ‘frat scene,’” he said, making air quotes.

“I’m not, but I thought I’d try something new.”

“Well, I’m glad to see you have an adventurous spirit.”

“Adventure’s my middle name.” I smiled back at him, immediately regretting my words.

He laughed a bit. “Alright. Noted.”

Jack was so not my type, but there was something about him that gave me serious butterflies. He was dreamy, and I never say guys are dreamy. His skin was golden, maybe from being on a boat all summer, and his eyes were blue and kind. Even though Jack was acting like a typical bro, I could tell there was something else there. It was actually kind of confusing.

“Where’s your drink?” he asked.

“Well, I did have the pleasure of sampling the rape juice, if that’s what you mean. It was delicious but a bit too sweet for my taste. I’m gonna grab a beer. You want one?”

“No, no, no, that’s not how this works. I retrieve the beers; you drink them. Not the other way around.”

“Well, then, yes, please.”

“Dope. Be right back.”

And with that, Jack took his foot off of Russell’s back and disappeared into the mass of bodies.

Russell made a loud guttural sound mid-push-up and a fountain of pink vomit shot out of his mouth onto the floor in front of me. I jumped back, barely dodging the spray of puke headed toward my sandals. As much as I wanted to wait for Jack, the toxic odor rising from Russell’s mess encouraged a change in locale. Standing next to a puker is not a good look for anyone. I slowly backed away, mumbling, “Feel better.”

“HEY, FRESHMAN!” I heard a voice scream. I turned around to see a kind-of-pretty, kind-of-short brunette making a beeline for me with a smile on her face. She was sporting a short J.Crew skirt and a polo. She hugged me and laughed. “I’m Meg. How autistic is this party?”

“It’s definitely on the spectrum.”

“What?”

“Um . . . nothing. Sorry, have we met?” I asked her as she pulled me into a corner.

“Nope, but it’s your lucky day. I’m gonna be your Big Sis. Or at least I’ll probably be your Big. Or at least I reallllly think I should be your Big because you’re fucking cute as fuck.” She grabbed me by the elbow and started weaving us through the

crowd, hopefully toward the kitchen, because I still needed a drink. “Please tell me you didn’t drink the jungle juice.”

“Um, no, but you must be mistaking me for someone else. I haven’t rushed or gotten a bid to pledge or whatever. I don’t really—”

“Oh, it’s okay. No one has yet.”

“Rushed?”

“Yesssss,” Meg whispered.

“Oh.”

“But you def will. Rush Beta Zeta, that is. Aaaaaand we’re totally not talking about this now because we don’t want to be involved in a dirty rush scandal. Dealing with the Panhel is never cute. Trust,” she said as she pulled out her phone and quickly responded to a text message. “Excuse me!” she yelled at a guy and girl attempting to dance while eating each other’s faces on the dance floor. The girl looked up at us, squealed, and went in for a drunken hug.

“Meg!”

“Sabrina! Please stop dry humping Benjamin on the dance floor. It’s gross. You need to set a good example. There are children present,” she nodded in my direction.

The girl looked at us sheepishly.

“I kid! I kid!” Meg roared with laughter. Then, without missing a beat, she put her free hand on the girl’s shoulder, got up in her face, and calmly said, “Please use a condom tonight, love.” As we walked away, she turned to me, “That’s Sabrina. She’s a junior BZ and has been with her boyfriend, Ben, since high school. They fuck anywhere and everywhere and have had, like, ten pregnancy scares. So retarded.”

“Cool?”

“Yeah!” Meg said enthusiastically. I had no idea how to respond to this.

“So what’s this about me rushing?” I asked instead.

“Wait, you’re Taylor Bell, right? The girl with, like, a three-generation legacy?”

“I guess that’s one way to describe me.”

“Your sisters, Kelly and Jess, are fucking Beta Zeta legends. I never met Jess, but Kelly had the best tit-to-waist ratio I’ve ever seen. Yours isn’t bad either.”

I looked down at my white dress and back up at Meg. “Thank you?”

I was a little weirded out by Meg’s knowledge of my family’s history, but she was totally right. I was the fifth woman in my family to attend Central Delaware University. My grandmother, mom, and two sisters had all graduated from CDU and were all proud members of the Beta Zeta sorority. I was a legacy, I guess, but my decision to come to this school had nothing to do with a sorority. I’d been accepted to a bunch of great colleges besides CDU, but this was the only one that offered me a full academic scholarship, and the idea of having zero student loans to pay off when I graduated was just too good to pass up. So, ironically, here I was, following in the collegiate footsteps of basically all the women in my entire family. At a fucking frat party.

Meg pushed our way through a line in the kitchen and started pumping a keg. “So you’re definitely rushing. You’d be retarded not to. God, I’m sorry for saying ‘retarded’ so much. I know I’m not supposed to say that word. I mean, for all I

know you have a very retarded cousin or something. But, like, it's the most accurate way to describe something that's actually retarded, you know? Like this party. And the thought of you not rushing a sorority you can clearly get into and pull serious rank."

"Rank?"

"Yes, retard. Rank." Meg handed me a beer.

"What do you mean?" I asked, genuinely intrigued.

"Look, you obvi didn't hear this from me, but if you rush Beta Zeta, not only will you get a bid in, like, five seconds, but you'll basically be able to do and say whatever you want. Colette will have no choice but to be nice to you, which is not easy for her. And besides, you're super fucking cute and you look smart but not in an annoying way."

"Thanks," I replied. "And Colette is who, exactly?"

"Oh, Colette Winter's basically the unofficial boss bitch of the Beta Zeta chapter here at CDU. She doesn't hold a title, but everyone listens to her anyway. She can be a cunt fucking whore sometimes, but I get it. That's how it works in sororities—you'll see. Presidents do paperwork and go to meetings, Colette gets shit done and makes girls cry in public."

"Heavy is the head that wears the crown," I said half-kidding.

Meg looked at me as if I'd just said something to her in Mandarin, before responding with a loud, "Exactly!"

I took a sip of my beer and looked around the party. There was a boy drunkenly trying to break-dance on the kitchen floor, alone. He was shirtless but appeared to be wearing some sort of boobie-tassels over his nipples.

"No offense, but all of this isn't really for me. I think it's

sweet that you guys would want me to join, but I'm not my grandma or my mom or my sisters. I'm not really sure that, um, Greek life is my scene."

"Then what is your scene? Because at present, it's a frat party."

"The truth is, I kind of just came here to see a guy, who I think I'm gonna go try and find now. Thanks for the beer, though."

I had walked away from Meg and back into the throngs of bodies dancing when I started to notice just how sweaty everyone at this party was. I'm not a big fan of sweat, sweaty strangers, or plumes of pot smoke blown into my face, so I decided to remove myself from the dance floor pronto and check out the rest of the house and maybe (hopefully) run into Jack again. I spotted a tight, dark hallway that seemed to lead to a rear living room, and headed in that direction, pulling my bag closer to me because it was so packed in there. My phone was buzzing. I managed to pull it out and saw that I had three texts from Jonah, my best friend from high school who was also now a freshman at CDU. We didn't exactly plan on following identical academic trajectories, but we'd done almost everything together in high school, so it made sense. Most of our friends from home thought that we'd end up getting married, but most of our friends also still thought Jonah was straight.

Jonah 10:15PM Where r u? I'm bored.

Jonah 10:16PM My roommate keeps farting in our room and not saying anything. So awk

Jonah 10: 29PM where are u??????

Shit. Fuck. Shit. I'd totally flaked on Jonah. We were supposed to hang out, and then I decided to take up a virtually random frat guy on his invite instead.

Taylor 10:30PM Are u sitting down?

Jonah 10:31PM Yes

Taylor 10:31PM I'm at a frat party. U wanna come?

Jonah 10:32PM Are you ok? Is this a joke? What happened to getting wasted and watching Rosemary's Baby?

Taylor 10:34PM I ♥ you. But this is just as fun and scary as Rosemary's. So just come.

Jonah 10:37PM I hate you. Where is it?

Taylor 10:37PM Omega Sig

Jonah 10:38PM As if I know where that is

Jonah 10:38PM Address?

I sent him a pin of where I was, shoved my phone back into my bag, and continued to push through the packed hallway. My plan to snoop around was thwarted when I walked into the living room and realized I was going to have to somehow avoid getting roped into playing Twister with a group of bikini-clad, slutty-looking freshman girls and some fraternity dudes. I had no idea people still played Twister. One of the frat guys waved at me to join in. Fortunately, a girl's tit fell out of her top as she was reaching for a green dot, which distracted him, allowing me to snake back out of the living room past a group of kids bonging beers. I wondered whether the girls had brought their own

bikinis or if the frat had provided them. On closer inspection, I noticed that the bikini bottoms were stamped with OMEGA SIGMA across the ass. Wow. That answered that question.

I walked into a quiet, dimly lit hallway that was surprisingly not crowded. Then, out of nowhere, I heard something very loud and very fast coming toward me. I quickly threw myself backward against the wall and hoped for the best. A beat-up shopping cart crammed with dudes came flying past me, stopped short, and launched its passengers into an inflatable kiddie pool filled with Jell-O in the kitchen. A crowd surrounding the pool exploded in excitement.

Was this a real party, or a movie about a frat party? I couldn't tell the difference anymore. It also occurred to me that wearing a white dress had been a huge mistake. When my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I spotted an exit sign at the end of the hallway and started running toward it, hoping for a good, clean escape. But as the door swung open and I stepped out of the house I saw Meg and a hot, model-y-looking guy standing right in front of me, making out. Meg noticed me and freaked.

"Taylor! Do not tell me you're actually trying to leave."

"Ummmmm . . ."

"You're not even tipsy!"

"Okay."

Meg pulled a small flask out of her Michael Kors Monogram clutch, took a shot from it, and offered it up to me.

"What is this?" I asked.

"Tequila, lime juice, and homemade Adderall solution. It's my secret recipe. Go ahead, you'll like it."

"Text me," said the model-y guy.

“Shut up, Mark. Can’t you see I’m fucking busy?” said Meg.

I took a small sip. It wasn’t horrible.

“See? Now come the fuck on, you didn’t think this was the actual party, did you?”

I guess I wasn’t going home quite yet . . .

After walking back into the house and weaving through a labyrinth of hallways and strange, packed bedrooms, Meg and I arrived at a closed green door.

“You ready?” she asked slyly, taking another swig from her flask and handing it back to me. I took another, slightly bigger, sip.

“Not really.”

She pushed the door open and we walked down a long spiral staircase with cold stone walls on either side. As we descended, I heard girls laughing and the thumping bass of that Kendrick Lamar song every white person I know is obsessed with. We walked into a room full of scantily clad bodies. Some of them were dancing, some of them were sitting at tables playing cards and drinking. This crowd was much more attractive than the rest of the party upstairs. It was like I’d been upgraded from coach to first class.

“Meg!!” two identical girls screamed in unison. They were both in jeans and tank tops and they were coming right for us.

“Ladies! You look amazing!” Meg screamed back at them. The music was insanely loud. “This is Taylor Bell, Kelly’s sister. Third-generation legacy, and honestly, how fucking cute is she?!”

“Love it!” said one of the twins. I hadn’t realized it until I was standing next to them, but they were both so tall.

“I’m Stephanie and this is Olivia, we’re twins. Obviously,” said the other as they both laughed. I went in for a handshake, but both of them just looked at me, confused. It was weird.

“So, Asher texted me two hours ago and said he was probably coming,” Stephanie said, smiling. “Then I texted him back ‘Can’t wait to see you’ with a smiley face, and now he just has his little thought bubble there. It’s been like that for at least an hour. Is this, like, a power move? Should I just kill myself?” She made a pouty face.

For some reason, her question made me laugh really hard, which made them all start laughing. Their closeness was kind of charming.

“As you can see, Steph is an actual insane person,” Olivia said, putting her arm around her sister. “Have fun tonight and ask us any questions you want. We’re good girls, we promise!”

“Nice meeting you guys,” I said to the twins as they turned and danced their way across the room.

“Okay,” Meg said, grabbing me again by the elbow and walking me through the room. “Those are our twins. They come as a package. Steph’s not a slut but she loves to fuck, so that would explain this Asher person she mentioned—always a new guy with her—very liberated when it comes to the sex. Olivia is the brains of the operation. She’s literally a genius. She had the idea for Facebook before Facebook was even invented. She was six. I’m not even joking.”

“Wow, that’s amazing—”

“And that over there is Colette. You want her to think you’re pretty and you want to be friends with her. She was basically your sister’s bestie last year. They co-chaired our biggest annual

event with the children's hospital. It was amazing. Babe Walker did the keynote speech, Diplo deejayed, and a lot of cancer kids lived because of them. I'm sure she'll love you."

We slowly walked toward a very tall, very thin girl who had her back to us. She was wearing a cropped sweater with a short skirt and suede ankle boots and had the shiniest hair I'd ever seen, tied up in a tight ponytail. She must've sensed our presence, because as we got a little closer she turned around to face us.

"You must be Kelly's skinnier, prettier sister," Colette said, staring right at me. "Just kidding." She smiled.

It hit me immediately that I'd seen this girl once in the Beta Zeta house when I was visiting Kelly. She was unforgettable.

"Um . . ." I was speechless. Colette was one of those girls who knew that she was gorgeous and loved it. I was in awe. Her Chloé perfume was intoxicating.

Luckily Meg chimed in, "Yup, this is Taylor, Kelly's little sister. The new face of Beta Zeta."

"Is that so?" Colette raised an eyebrow. This girl had obviously spent hours in front of the mirror perfecting her bitch face.

"Well, I don't know if I'm going to rush yet. I'm still figuring it out."

"Don't be an idiot. This school is boring as fuck if you're not Greek," said Colette.

"Totally," added a very excited Meg. "Beta Zeta is the main reason I came to this school. We're good girls, and honestly, once you're a sister, you're kinda set for life. But you already know that, Taylor. You're a purebred, babe!" She turned to Colette, who was making eyes with a linebacker-looking guy across the room.

“How *is* your sister, by the way?” Colette asked, seeming very uninterested.

“She’s great. Still in Zambia, interning away.”

“Oh . . . right.” Colette seemed confused. “That’s great,” she continued, “good for her.”

“Yeah. I’m really impressed by the work they’re doing out there,” I offered.

“Well, this all sounds amazing, but would you guys excuse me for just a second?” Colette asked as she gave us each a limp hug before walking over to the baby-faced bodybuilder in a trucker hat. Someone tapped on my shoulder.

“Looks like you made it into the cool kids’ club.”

It was Jack, looking a little more disheveled but no less hot.

“Is that what this is?” I was so happy that he’d found me, but did my best to hide it.

“I walked around with your beer for about ten minutes looking for you, but I see you’ve already been adopted by the one and only Meg Landry. What’s up, Meg?” he said, pulling Meg in for a bear hug and kissing her on the cheek.

“Jack and I bonded freshman year over a joint appreciation for Fleetwood Mac and Miller High Life, didn’t we, Jacko?” Meg said, taking a sip of a vodka rocks that she’d managed to grab somewhere.

“That is technically a true statement,” Jack said, looking at me. “Although I don’t like to publicize the fact that I wanna bone Stevie Nicks. So, thanks for that, Megs.”

God. He was beyond cute. His smile was so disarming and genuine. I couldn’t help but imagine what it would be like to

lay around in bed with Jack all day, drink some beers, and let “Landslide” play on repeat.

“Jack!!!” The sound of a shrieking voice coming from behind me snapped me out of my daydream. I felt two hands shove me from behind. Hard.

I lost my footing and went flying past Jack and Meg, crashed through several full drinks that spilled all over me, and then snagged my foot on some wires that were apparently connected to the speakers, abruptly cutting the music and silencing the room as I careened face-first into two nasty old couch cushions. I saw darkness and smelled a nauseating mixture of sweat, mildew, and farts. I didn’t lift my head, but I could feel that everyone in that basement was looking at me.

FML.