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JAMES FITZ GERALD

A Bit about Nothing

I walk outside and light my cigarette. The air is warm and humid, and the sky is black. There are no stars, no moon. The weatherman said rain. He's wrong again. We walk down the hill that descends towards the house. I'm drunk and stumble a bit. I give Theo a cigarette.

I'm a hundred yards away from the house but I can already hear the music. It's the music nobody likes but everyone listens to. We approach the steps of the front porch. A guy in his mid-twenties who never graduated sits in a chair. He's wearing a white polo shirt and khaki shorts. His hair is gelled and his eyes are glassy. He asks for five dollars from my friends and me.

We give him the cash, and he gives us each a red cup from the stack next to him. A couple of girls are smoking on the porch and one sits on the ledge. I flick my butt onto the front lawn and look at her as I walk into the house. She looks back and takes a drag.

The house is loud. I show up with four other guys but within moments they're nowhere to be found. I see Theo nestled up with his girlfriend in the kitchen. The others must have made a dash towards the keg. The air is thick, and a layer of smoke sits below the ceiling.

The girl walks in through the front door. I look at her again. She's not as pretty as she was outside. Her chest hangs out and her skirt is stretched high upon her thick thighs. A charm bracelet jingles from her wrist. There's some fullness to her face, but she's not chubby. Her hair is curly.

A guy bumps into me from behind. The brim of his hat is flat and I can't see his eyes. I don't take note of it. I see the girl again, walking with one of her friends towards the keg. I walk behind them. The line is long. While I wait behind the girl and her friend, Phil comes over and says hello. We talk a bit about nothing. The girl peeks towards me as Phil and I speak. I smile awkwardly as she bites her bottom lip.

Phil leaves and walks towards the kitchen. The girl and her friend take turns filling their cups. I'm not sure if I can take another beer. A bit of vomit sits at the bottom of my throat, and there I am again: it's three years ago and I'm a freshman at my first party.

That night wasn't much different from this one. I had three beers and a shot and tripped coming out of the bathroom. My roommate left early and I was lost. A senior came towards me with a pint of gin and thrust it into my chest. I grabbed the bottle and polished off what was left. Some people cheered. I threw up on the bathroom wall. The senior made me clean it up.

I notice the girl holding her hand towards my cup. She asks if I want a fill. I say yes. I'm not a freshman anymore. I decide I'll try to fuck her.

"Thanks," I say.

She nods her head with a smile. I walk towards the room where Phil is. She stops me and asks if I want to have a cigarette. I don't, but I say sure. We walk towards the back door through the kitchen. There's nobody else on the porch. The music isn't as loud.

"I think I remember you," she says.

"Yeah? Where from?"

"I think I saw you out."

"What year are you?" I ask.

"I'm a freshman," she replies.

She takes a sip from her cup. I look at her and take another pull. She looks prettier.

"You have a boyfriend?"

"I did, he's an asshole. I..."

She goes on about how she had some guy through high school. They were going to get married. After graduation, he stayed home and went to community college. She came here. They were only two hours away, but soon he started getting jealous. He screamed at her whenever she went out. One day she looked at her phone and there was a voicemail from him. He accidentally called her while he was messing around with her friend, who was still in high school. At least, I think that's what she is saying.

"You have anyone?" She asks harmlessly.

I don't reply. Or do I? It makes no difference; you're speaking to me now anyway.

It was summer when I met you. We were teenagers and awkward. There was a breeze that night, and you were wearing a sweatshirt. We were having a bonfire in a backyard, and you must have come with what's-his-name. I went inside to take a piss. I came out of the bathroom door and you were there in the kitchen with a

cup of water in your hands. You held it close to your chest. Your shorts were white. Your skin was fair and your hair was dark. You smiled, and that's all it took. You didn't know me yet, and you were too shy to make new friends. I approached, and you shook my hand gently. Hours went by, and we talked, delved, discovered. We got cut short by your friends coming inside. They said they were looking all over for you. You left with them.

That year went fast. We tried it. It didn't work. Who strayed first? I lost sleep, and you gained weight. I fucked up. I fucked up.

The girl finally takes a drag of her cigarette. I ask if she wants to find some place quiet. She throws her butt towards the grass and I do the same. I finish my beer and open the door for her. She walks through the kitchen and clutches my hand. We walk upstairs and people stare at us.

She opens the first door. Two frat guys are bumping off a mirror and tell her to leave. We walk across the hall and she opens a door. The lights are on. The room is empty and dirty. Wrinkled shirts and a pair of dirt-laden jeans are scattered throughout the floor. The sheets are falling off the bed. She tells me to lock the door and shut off the light.

I oblige. She turns on a desk lamp and starts taking off her top. She ghost dances to the music downstairs. She doesn't dance like you.

I remember dancing some years back when we went to the firework show. There were so many people packed around a large makeshift dance floor on the beach. We had only seen each other a couple of times. I told you I didn't dance. You loved dancing.

I told you I would only dance to a slow song. You danced for a while with your friends before going to the music booth. You whispered into the D.J.'s ear and he nodded in compliance. A slow, melancholic tune began echoing from the speakers. You looked at me and your brown eyes glowed dimly. You smirked humbly and your teeth were white. You put out your hand and waved me over. We danced and the old couples looked at us in reminiscence. I kissed you that night.

“You gonna take that shirt off?” the girl says to me. “Or am I gonna take it off for you?”

She's only wearing a laced bottom. Her breasts are small. Her face is tanner than the rest of her body. She jumps on the bed and I relent. I thrust

and wish I hadn't drunk so much. She screams, and I close my eyes and hope it ends.

I wonder what you're doing. You're probably watching that show you always loved. We would watch that for hours. You would lay your head on my stomach while the low volume of the television broke the beautiful silence after sex.

She's getting dressed and I reach into my pocket for a cigarette. She asks me for one. I tell her no. She straps her bra and reaches for her shirt. It's under my waist. When she grabs it, her hand touches my bare stomach. The rain is coming down hard outside.

"Guess the weatherman was right about tonight," she says, opening the blinds.

I take a drag and tap it lightly towards the side of the bed. She says she'll see me around and walks out of the room. I put out the cigarette on the desk next to the bed and get dressed. I walk downstairs and she sees me, but she keeps talking to her friend. Theo is still in the kitchen. He asks me if I'm going to the keg. I walk with him and fill up my cup. I stare towards the window as the drops hitting the glass scatter like webs. They start at the top but never reach the bottom of the pane. I wonder if it's raining by you, too.