

## Another Night

By Jason Sellers

People tell me I have a problem but that's not the way it is. I just like to have fun. I like to enjoy myself. Like this cigarette I'm smoking. I'm enjoying the taste, the flavor, and feeling the black smoke release from my lungs. I blow it out my passenger window and watch it escape into the night sky. Then my girlfriend's shrieking voice brings me back to reality. "CHET!" She shouts over the music that I've turned up way too loud. I look over at her and smile. She turns the music down. "How are you feeling about tonight?"

"Never better!" I put my hand on her free hand. "Pretty excited to see some old friends."

"But are you sure you're ready to be around them again? You've just made such great progress and I'd hate to see you fall off the wagon."

I look her in the eyes and squeeze her hand. "Trust me babe. I'll be just fine." Megan smiles at me. I look back out the window and continue to enjoy my smoke. I feel my pocket start to vibrate. I take out my phone to see a new text from my brother.

"I'm excited to see you at Jan's party tonight! I know she's excited about seeing you too." I text back "Me too bro." and then lay my head back in my seat as I flick the cigarette nub out the window. It's been ages since I've been to a party. Megan rarely lets me go anywhere these days especially if there's going to be booze. I guess I can admit that I used to drink a little too much but who doesn't. We all like to spend some time forgetting our troubles with a little help from the bottle. Maybe I had a little too much that night but it wasn't my fault. It was David. He's the one to blame. Him and his fucking mouth. That's what got me in trouble. Stupid fuck.

Anyway like I said some people think I have a problem. I quit drinking for a bit cause Megan asked me to and I don't want to lose her. But at the same time I can't help but want to drink. I've been pretty good about being on the wagon the last month or so but I just miss the feeling that the liquor gives me. There's nothing I can do that gives me the same rush and the same thrill. Fucking hell I've been looking forward to tonight because I think I can get a couple more in than I agreed to with Megan. She told me I could have two but what's a couple more going to hurt? Two, three, five is it really that big of a difference? Besides what she doesn't know won't hurt her.

I know Megan cares about me and wants me to stay on the wagon but she just doesn't understand how this makes me feel. I need to drink. If only she could understand how that feels to me then I know she'd be ok with it. While I won't be able to convince her tonight I might have more luck in the future. She told me she'd leave me if I break my promise but I'll be smart about it. She'll never know.

The car stops moving and I sit up. We're parked on the lawn of a two floor white house. I get out of the car and wait for Megan to join me. She looks cute tonight in her Blondie shirt and tight blue jeans. I'm wearing a pair of khaki pants and a flannel shirt.

I put my arm around her as we walk to into the house. The party has already started by the time we get there. Groups of people sit outside smoking. I wave to a few people I recognize on our way in. When we get in the first person I see is Jesse. "Dude! What's up?"

Jesse turns and when he sees me a big smile grows on his face. "Chet! It's good to see you! It's been such a long time. I didn't think you still came out to these things?"

I smile. "I do when this one" I gesture to Megan "lets me out of the house." Megan looks up and laughs.

"He can be quite a handful but he's been making such progress that we thought we'd come out and celebrate."

Jesse scowls "Oh yeah man, I heard about what happened between you and David. I'm sorry. That really sucks dude. What a prick."

I laugh. "Don't get me started. Hey where are the drinks at?" Megan shoots me a look. "Don't worry! We agreed I could have two and that I'd only have two."

"Yeah Chet! You gotta live a little bit. The drinks are in the kitchen over there." Jesse points to another room. I thank him and start walking over to the table with a big punch bowl on it. Jesse's a good guy. We've been friends for the last couple years or so. We both tried going to community college together after high school but realized that it just wasn't for us. We weren't made to pursue higher education. My teachers told me I could go places and that I was going to have a great college career. I did well in high school but I wasn't really happy. I want to live a good life and have fun. I felt like really pursuing a college career would've been a repeat of middle/high school so I quit. We both got work at the machine shop in town. We spend our days fishing out pieces of steel from the massive pile of metal that we call the boneyard. It's not easy work but it pays alright and we make a decent coin.

I find the punch bowl sitting in the back corner of the kitchen. I take one cup and quickly chug it down. It's pretty weak. I look around and find a small makeshift bar on the counter and take out a half pint bottle of vodka. I walk back over to the punch bowl and get another cup. I add in some vodka to give it a little kick. I make my way back over to Megan and Jesse. She gives me an intense look and I hold up my index finger. "First drink." I say in my defense. "First of two."

Jesse slaps me on the back. “You got to have a little fun now and then otherwise you’ll go crazy.” I smile.

“You can say that again.”

“Hey guys I’m going to go over and talk with Sarah. I’ll be back in a couple minutes.”

“Sounds good.” I smile. “I think I might go have a smoke. Jesse you wanna come with?”

“Yeah dude!” We make our way through the crowded house and head outside. I light up a cigarette and inhale deep on the smoke. As I exhale I hear Jesse “How are you really doing? I know shit got fucked up with David.”

I shrug. “I know. It’s been tough but I’m doing better. Megan’s been keeping- helping me keep myself under control and fight the urges I get. When I’m having a really hard time she sits up and talks with me or gets me to play a game or something to take my mind of it.” I sip my drink. “It’s still tough though.”

Jesse nodded. “I bet it’s tough. But it’s probably gotten better for you too right? I mean not to be so fucked up all the time?”

“Yeah I guess. I just miss it though and it wasn’t even my fault. It was fucking David’s!”

“Prick.” Jesse muttered. “

I nod and take one last drag on my cigarette before I throw it on the ground. “I’ll meet you inside. I need to grab something from the car.” I wave and walk towards Megan’s car. Once I get there I sit on the hood and pull the tiny bottle of vodka I’d taken from the kitchen out of my jacket pocket. I pour a bunch of the bottle into the cup and swirled it around. Megan doesn’t need to know about this.

I'm allowed to have my fun. I'm allowed to enjoy my night. Megan doesn't need to know. I start sipping from my cup. After a few minutes I refill the cup with vodka and walk back in throwing the empty vodka bottle in the trash on my way in. I look around feeling buzzed and walk smoothly over to place my arm around Megan. She's chatting up one of her girlfriends while I sit back and enjoy my drink which is beginning to near empty.

I give Megan a little squeeze on her hand and walk back into the kitchen where I pour a little bit of punch into my cup. There's some liquor in the punch but not enough to satisfy my thirst. I look around the bar and find another lonely half pint bottle of vodka. I grab and pour it into my cup and slide the bottle into my pocket for when I run out again. I continue to sip my drink as I walk back out into the party. I see Megan so I walk over to her. She's still talking to her friends. I put my arm around her and just smile. I'm just enjoying myself, nothing wrong with that. I look around for people that I know.

I see John. I can tell he's ignoring me. The last time I saw John I was really hammered and some friends and I burned an anarchy symbol into his front yard. That was a great night. He wasn't too happy about it though. I should probably just stay here and enjoy my drink. Fuck him. He's not going to ruin my night. I continue to look around the room for people I know. I see Louie and start walking towards him.

"Hey Louie! How are you doing man?"

"Oh hey Chet. I'm good man." He seems nervous. "I'm good. How are you?"

"Can't complain man." I hold my drink up and take another sip.

"I saw you come in earlier. I didn't think you'd come over here."

“Oh yeah? Why’s that?”

“Well because last time I saw you took a shit on my car.”

I frown. “What? I don’t remember that.”

“I’m not surprised. You were pretty drunk but you were shouting and screaming about how no one could keep you down and then you ran out and, well, you shit on my car.”

“I did?” I don’t remember this or I don’t remember shitting on his car. I thought it was someone else’s.

“Yes. It was definitely my car because I had to clean it off the next morning. It was really tough though since it was the middle of winter and a lot of it had frozen onto my windshield. I had to get an ice scraper and scrape shit off my windshield for an hour.”

I sip my drink. “Well geez man I’m sorry about that. I definitely did not mean to shit on your car. I was really drunk though, so I’m sure you can understand.” I laugh and slap Louie on the back. “Alright I’m gonna let you get back to the party. I’ll see you later.”

“Yeah man, see you around.”

I turn and head back towards Megan. I feel bad for shitting on his car. I thought it was some guy who had been bugging me all night. I guess I just made a mistake. I see Jan has joined her group. I wave as I walk over.

“Oh! Hey Chet! Long time no see. What have you been up to?”

I take a sip from my drink that is starting to feel empty. “I’ve just been working. I don’t know if Megan’s told you but I finally quit school. It’s just not for

me.” I’m just spending my time trying to enjoy life and be happy. What have you been up to?”

“Oh the usual. Just working. Keeping busy.”

“Cool.” I smile. That’s when I see my brother. I tell the ladies I’ll be right back and wander back into the kitchen. I drink what is left of the second bottle of vodka and return to the bar. I find a liter bottle of whiskey. I snatch it up and pour some in my cup. It tastes like shit mixed with the punch but it’ll do the trick. I walk over to my brother and give him a hug.

“Hey brother! How are you?”

“Hey Chet! I’m good man glad to see you! I was just about to go have a smoke. Would you come with me? I wanted to talk to you about something.”

I nod and we head back outside.

“So Chet what have you been up to? How are things going with your drinking?”

“It’s going well.” I take a sip from my drink. “I’m only allowed two drink tonight and I’m sticking to it. This is the first I’ve had in a couple weeks and I’m just trying to enjoy myself.”

“That’s good. I’d hate to see you lose all the progress you’ve been making. Have you talked to mom at all?”

“Yeah I called her a week ago. She seems like she’s holding up alright without dad.”

“She’s a strong lady.”

“Yeah, I mean she raised both of us.” We both laugh. My brother rubs his hands together and I look down. We both have a nervous tick. When we are concerned, we rub our hand together.

“Chet you know you shouldn’t be drinking.”

“Excuse me?”

“Seriously man. After what you did do you really think you should be around alcohol?”

“It wasn’t my fault man it was David’s fault.”

“It’s not David’s fault. All he did was call the cops on you. He didn’t do anything wrong. Hell if I’d been there I’d of called the cops on you. You were out of fucking control and someone needed to stop you before you hurt-”

“Before I what? Huh? I knew what I was doing and I didn’t do a damn thing wrong.” I stay quiet for a moment after that taking a drag on my cigarette. It is too David’s fault. If he hadn’t called the cops I wouldn’t have had to spend the night in jail or pay that fine or be in AA. It’s David’s fault. “Whatever man.” I throw my cigarette on the ground and walk back inside. I hear him call after me but whatever. It wasn’t my fault. When I get back into the party Megan comes running up to me.

“Chet we have to go. Right now.”

“What? Why?”

“We just need to go. Come on lets go get in the car. I’m sick of this place.”

That’s when I see him. David. He’s standing across the room with a shit-eating-grin on his face. His brown hair is combed up to make himself look cool. He’s wearing that stupid jean jacket and has a cigarette in his ear like you might hide a

pencil. He's chatting up some girl. I can't believe he's here. I can't believe he's around me.

"The hell is he doing here?"

"I don't know but we need to leave before something bad happens. I don't want you to do something you'll regret."

I drop my cup of punch and head to the kitchen where I pick up the bottle of whiskey. I start drinking the whole bottle down. It burns my throat in a good way on the way down. Megan looks in horror as I finish the bottle off. "Stay back Megan." I push her out of the way and start walking towards David. I can hear my brother calling after me but I ignore him. I walk up to David.

"Hey David." He turns around to look at me just as I slam the glass bottle on the side of his head. He falls down and I climb on top of him swinging my fists into his head. I can feel his wet warm blood on my knuckles. I can feel the crunch of his bones break as I lay into him. I can feel my own skin on my knuckles start to tear as I continue to beat the bloody pulp that used to be his face. I can hear his screams and cries slowly start to fade from my ears. I continue to beat him raising my fists up and slamming them back down on his face. I can feel his teeth tearing my flesh but I don't care. This is payback. This is revenge. This is what he deserves. Then everything goes black.

I wake up what I assume is a few seconds later. My brother is standing over me holding a broken chair that he just smashed over the back of my head. Megan is holding onto him. She has a look of horror on her face. I look over at David. I can't tell if he's breathing or not. All I know is I fucked him up good. I can see Jan on the phone yelling her address and saying they need to come quick. I know what that means and I bolt for the door. David's not getting me arrested again. I run out the front door and keep running. I run down the street and jump across fence after fence

to get some distance between myself and David. I feel like my body has stopped pumping blood and started pumping acid. When I can't take it anymore I flop down in someone's yard. I pull out a cigarette and light it up.

Even though I'm drunk I know, I know deep down, I did some bad things tonight. I've done things that will impact people for the rest of their life. I've hurt David in a way that I'll never be able to undo. But for me, it's just another night. I just want to enjoy myself. I just want to live my life. I want to drink. I want to feel good. I don't want to feel the pain or the sorrow that comes with sobriety. I can't stand it. I'd rather drink. I continue to smoke my cigarette as I hear sirens of what I know are cop cars and an ambulance approaching. They'll be looking for me. All of a sudden I feel the cool rain of water splash on my face. The sprinkler system is going off around me and all I can do is just lay here waiting.