

The Best Me I Can Be

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A group of college friends navigate their last few years of school together. This story attempts to give a raw outlook into just one group of people's lives as they encounter embarrassing, raw, and often times encouraging moments as they try to discover who they are meant to be... or at the very least, what their major should be.

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CHAPTER ONE

Shay abruptly sat up from her bed, hair ratted and mascara smudged over her left cheek. She mumbled a confused, "what the fuck?" and searched her bed for her phone. The mattress pad was dangling off the mattress and her blankets were shoved on the floor. After finally locating her phone, she winced at the bright light until her eyes adjusted and she could finally read the fact that she had seven missed calls and thirteen missed text messages from the night before.

She repeated her first phrase of the morning, only slightly louder and more frantic this time. "What the fuck?" She shoved her phone under her pillow, ignoring all of the missed calls and texts. She stumbled out of her bedroom and into the living room where she could smell someone in her house cooking breakfast. It was a mix of eggs, hash browns and "bacon"? The smell of meat made her feel nauseous even on her most sober of mornings. "Jess?" She called as loudly as she could muster, "You home?"

Her roommate popped her head out from around the kitchen door, "Sorry it smells like bacon. Brian insisted on a gourmet breakfast and he wanted carcass, I guess."

Shay entered the kitchen and attempted to smile but instead chose to collapse into a chair. "What the fuck?"

Jess's boyfriend, Brian, grinned, "You not feeling the best, champ?"

Shay rubbed at her temples, "I have a feeling something mortifying happened last night. Please tell me nothing mortify-"

"Something mortifying happened last night." Brian interjected cheerfully.

Jess smacked her boyfriend's arm, "Nothing *that* bad. It's just "I haven't seen you that drunk in a while. Do you not remember anything that happened last night?"

Shay thought back to the foggy images that had occurred the night before. "I know we went to Stefan's new place." She paused, "Which, come to think of it, explains why I got so obliterated in the first place. I can't believe we went. What was I trying to prove? And of course his new girlfriend was there and was acting all domestic and put together."

"She looked like poop. And probably smelt like it too. Don't worry." Jess said, poking at the hash browns with a spatula. "So "you really don't remember the rest of the night?"

Shay lowered her head to the table, clutching her stomach. "I know that tone. Something bad happened didn't it- It was then that recognition dawned on Shay. She raised her head sharply; her face had paled significantly. "Oh my lord. I remember. I didn't black out, I browned out. I remember foggy images. Oh my God. Did I really-? Did-? Holy Shit-?"

Jess snorted and tried to hide behind Brian, but to no avail. They had been trying desperately to mask their laughter, but could not hold it in any longer.

Shay was horrified. "Did I set off Stefan's carbon monoxide detector with "flatulence?"

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That was all Jess and Brian could take. They clung to each other and sunk to the floor, laughter consuming them and making it hard to speak.

Shay, on the other hand, was not amused. "Tell. Me. Everything." She uttered through gritted teeth.
"Now."

Brian managed to pull himself off of the floor. He leaned against the counter, wiping tears of laughter from his eyes. "I've been rehearsing the story all morning." He began. "I figure since it's kind of a depressing, mortifying situation, we might as well find the humor in it." At this point Jess had also gotten up from the floor and was now focused on flipping the hash browns, her lip still trembling from attempting to mask her laughter. "Anyway," He continued. "The story goes a little something like this: completely sober you suggested that it was time you and Stefan were friends again. His house was throwing a party, so you figured we should all make an appearance. You knew he had a girl friend, but you claimed to be 'too independent to care'. So anyway, we get to your ex-boyfriend of four and a half year's house and-

"I need a bloody mary if I am going to continue listening to this story." Shay moaned. "Please."

"How about coffee instead? Probably a better idea." Jess suggested, already beginning to pour Shay a mug.

"You're going to want to here the rest of this." Brian continued, "So we get there, and we're all having a good time when you-

"Ope. I remember this part," Shay said, "I had soberly planned it as a joke and never intended to actually do it but it came out because I had a few too many alcoholic beverages."

Jess handed Shay a mug of luke-warm coffee. "I, for one, am proud of you. That girl sucks, and you were so subtly sassy, it was perfect."

"Subtle?" Brian snorted. "You literally went up to Stefan, gave him an inappropriately long hug and then turned to his girlfriend, whom you *know* is named Julie because lord knows you have Facebook creped her enough, and said, 'Hi, you must be Gina.'"

Shay grinned slightly, "I'm clever. Sue me."

"She then corrected you and said, 'It's actually Julie' to which you then continued to say, 'Whatever Gigi. I'm going to go get another drink.'"

Shay raised the cup of coffee to her mouth and then lowered it slowly, the smell being a little too much for a hang over this intense.

"You want me to keep going?" Brian asked tauntingly. Shay responded with a crude gesture, which he took to mean he should continue, "So anyway, we couldn't find you for a while, and then all of a sudden an alarm starts going off and you come tearing out of his girlfriend's craft room with a beeping carbon monoxide detector."

"Stop talki-" Shay began.

But even Jess had joined in. "You ran outside into the snow and we had to follow your footprints to see you in a snow bank trying to bury the detector. He had to switch the batteries."

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“You fried it.” Brian said seriously.

There was silence for a while. Shay swirled her coffee with her finger. “I didn’t do it. That’s not even possible to set off a carbon monoxide detector by tooting on it.” She finally stated.

“That’s what we thought!” Jess said, “But then we googled it and I guess if you drink a lot of vodka and get too close to it, your gas can set it off. And I don’t want to embarrass you, but I came in to give you a blanket and you were right up against the wall.”

There was more silence. Shay had stopped stirring her coffee. “They can go off if you bump into them, too. I probably bumped into it.”

“Yeah,” Jess agreed hesitantly after a moment, “You probably just knocked it off the wall.”

“And fried the batteries!” Brian commented sarcastically.

A: “What girl even has a craft room at her boyfriend’s place? That is the real problem here.” B: “I am going to be sick.” Jess stood and headed for the bathroom, “Wait! No! I’m not. I need to sleep. Oh my God I don’t know what I need.” She looked to her friends for guidance. After another moment’s silence she continued on to her room, audibly mumbling, “What. The. *Fuck*.”

It was mid-afternoon when Shay finally awoke again. Her mattress pad was now completely off of her bed and the house seemed fairly quiet apart from her sound machine that’s sole purpose was to emit white noise and block out the creepy sounds of her college house that she and three other girls were renting. She reached for her nightstand to grab a glass of water but when she brought it to her lips she discovered it was empty. After releasing a groan and stretching a little too theatrically, she heaved herself out of bed and walked into the living room. Two of her other roommates Mallory and Charlie, were seated on the floor pillows smoking a hookah.

“Heard you had an invigorating night.” Her roommate Mallory grinned, offering her the hose of the hookah. “Can I ask what happened?”

“I don’t even know what happened. You can ask Jess and Brian though, they would definitely be willing to give you a play by play.” Shay proceeded smoke the hookah and breathe it out, staring at the smoke thoughtfully.

“You sound like you had a better night than me.” Charlie offered, shaking her head so her red hair covered her blushing face, “I can’t remember anything that happened.”

“You’re lucky.” Shay said, “If I could erase my images from last night I would in a heart beat. Instead I am stuck with them. Forever.” She checked her phone, still not wanting to view all of her missed calls and text messages. “I also work in forty-five minutes. I love my job, but it is going to be a long Sunday. Joy.” She clambered to her feet, “Who wants coffee?”

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