

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

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Nothing Good Ever Happens

Since it happened I haven't been sleeping. My friend Imogen said it was a good idea to take up running, so I ran. I ran as far as I could go and it was good but I still couldn't sleep after. My brother Ben gave me books to read; I read all the greats like Dostoyevsky and Hemingway and learned that nothing good ever happens to anyone. It made me feel depressed but normal, like I wasn't any different and the world hadn't changed, ever.

Tony would come round occasionally, mainly to hang out with Ben. But when he found out I couldn't sleep he'd take me out in his car. Some of the other girls in my year fancied Tony and always asked me to pass on messages to him. I never did though. I didn't want to put them into his head while he was with me.

He used to drive me to the coast and we'd smoke on the pebble beach. Tony said he went there most nights. He was practically nocturnal. He'd stay up all night and sleep all day. I didn't know why and when I asked he just said he preferred how everything looked at night. The beach was a popular place and there were always college kids nearer the water setting fires and playing guitar. Tony said some of them were all right but a lot of them were cokeheads. I'd never taken drugs but some of our friends did and I knew what it could do to people. Our friend Steve could be the poster boy for any don't take drugs campaign. My brother Ben was the Anti-Steve. He saw what drugs did to Steve and drink did to Dad so didn't do either.

"How are you holding up?" Tony asked without looking at me.

"Alright."

"I uh... heard about what happened."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Can I bum a smoke?"

"Yeah."

Tony took out a cigarette and handed it to me. People don't know how to handle the conversation about what happened to me. Sometimes I think that nothing really happened to me but it is that something almost did that scares me.

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It was at a school party. This girl Natalie's. She lives up on the rich road, where all the houses have stairs in the middle and wings on each side with too many bathrooms for one family to feasibly use. Natalie was the most popular girl in my year but also knew all the older kids, which made her even more popular. She would throw these parties every time her parents went out of town. The first one I went to, this guy ended up on the roof with the microwave and dropped it onto the patio. It was funny for a while but then Natalie went mad because she didn't know the

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boy and then the hard boys in my year chased him off.

The last party I went to was when it happened.

I turned up with a few of the girls from my class. We'd picked up three bottles of wine from the Threshers and were going to share. I didn't really drink at that time, except for at dinner or out of a glass.

The house was full of people when I arrived and it was only around seven thirty. Unlike most parties Natalie didn't make an appearance until much later. No one knew what she did for the rest of the time but there were rumours, not all of them bad but those were the most believed.

The house was full of people. Each of the rooms was like a separate party with their own music and in the hallway all the music mixed together. I just kind of drifted through the house like one of those long, continuous shots you see on shows like ER or something. Just walking, never stopping and taking a look at it all. Ben wasn't there but some of his friends were. I saw Steve and a couple of the skater boys in one of the rooms, all the blinds were down and there was a strobe light working. In the next room there were some of the boys in my year snorting salt of the kitchen surface and telling rumours of a threesome going on in one of the bathrooms, but which one I didn't know.

Soon enough I was outside with a bottle of wine in my hand and none of the girls in sight. Outside some boys were using the deluxe BBQ to cook burgers and were playing hacky sack. It was summer so it was still a little light out and, even though the sun had dropped a below the tall fences, there was a glow over the whole garden. The wine tasted bad but it was good if I drank fast. It took a little while but once the bottle was drained I could feel it right down to my toes.

I sat down in what didn't look like, but was, a flowerbed. I rested my bottle holding arm on this small garden lamp and it started flickering so I moved my arm and it stopped. I could feel my eyelids. They felt heavy and a little swollen like when you wake up in the morning when your mum pulls back the curtains at ten am, and you've only just fallen asleep.

I saw them at the other end of the garden, laughing, nudging each other and looking at me. They came over and looked me up and down and then looked at my breasts. I tried to say something, but couldn't. I tried to move, but couldn't. They saw me trying and smiled.

One of them pulled on my arm so I sat forward and then two of them helped me up. But I soon learned that they weren't helping me to be helpful. My legs still weren't working so they dragged when the boys guided me over to a concealed part of the garden. One of them lifted up my skirt and they were all laughing.

My eyelids slammed down and I couldn't see anything but I knew what was happening, what was about to happen. The first one was having trouble with everyone watching I guess because he couldn't do it. That's when Steve came round the corner. I could hear his voice. He said what the fuck are you doing and one of them told him to shut the fuck up and then I heard this damp thud, followed by a louder one, and then two or three of them said fucking get him.

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When I next opened my eyes I had blood splattered on my face and Steve said not to worry, that it wasn't mine and he was sorry. Later I heard that he broke the first guys nose and it sprayed blood everywhere. That's when the others tried to attack Steve but he broke another ones knee and they all ran off, though I guess one hobbled.

Steve asked me if I remembered anything, I said I remembered it all and that nothing serious happened because of the impotent one. Steve laughed but stopped as if it would have hurt me. I smiled at him and kissed him. He kissed me back but it wasn't that kind of kiss.

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I could see that Tony hadn't heard all of that. Maybe he just heard that someone did something horrible to me and he wanted me to know he cared about me. He was staring, kind of. Off in the distance, like he was looking for someone out on the waves, or maybe just the right thing to say. I tapped him on the shoulder and when he turned round I kissed him. He didn't move his lips but when I pulled away he lunged and kissed me like in the movies. It only lasted a minute and then he said,

"Shall I take you home?"

"If you want" I said. He did.