

Caroline Waring

In the front seats of his car, my drug dealer, RJ, showed me pictures of his daughter. “She just learned to crawl, man, and it’s adorable. And her hair is unreal. My parents are from Jamaica, and you can tell she’s got my Jamaican hair. I don’t know. I feel like genetics have so much to do with how we grow up, y’know? Where are you from?”

“I think most of my ancestry goes back to Ireland. My parents are Catholic.”

“That’s real interesting. You’re in Pike, right? Man, I feel like most other frat guys I ask, they’ve got that Protestant aristocracy blood. At least their dads, I mean.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s the classic thing.” I watched the empty tennis courts through the windshield. We sat under an overcast sky, grey and humid, sweat sticky under my pits.

Apparently, this was the hurricane. “How much is the coke, again?”

“Oh. Three hundred.”

A week ago, we got an email cancelling classes from Tuesday to Friday. Later that day, in the Harris Teeter, I couldn’t find a single can of soup, let alone any plastic water bottles. Anyway, Florence was supposed to be fuckin’ bad, like flooded house, power outage, shattered windows bad. The flimsy cardboard walls of my room were going to blow right out of the foundation. But today was Wednesday, and we had nothing but drizzle. For the Hurricane Party, Mitch, Welton, and Nick skipped out on their last-minute flights home, and now I had to deliver on something. I took the cash out of my wallet and handed it to RJ. “Thanks,” I said. “Hey, you don’t sell anything else, right?”

“Nah. Honestly, I don’t fuck with anything dangerous. Y’know, some sorority girl, young girl, just last week, asked me about heroin. She looked bad. I felt bad. But I can’t be responsible

for that shit anymore, y'know? She was so young. Probably eighteen. She told me her family's royalty from Jordan. Crazy shit. I don't know how rich kids like you get into this stuff."

I nodded. I had meant acid. "Yeah, I got you, no worries. I'll see you later. Hey, happy hurricane." RJ smiled at me, all big. Then I got out of the car and walked off the parking lot, towards home, wondering the whole way if some Jordanian princess had ever gotten high in my basement. Something about the image of her, at once shaking and blissed out, made me hope she did. Well, certain people deserved it. Besides, it wouldn't affect her the same way.

The house we lived in was small, four bedrooms and two floors. We didn't even have a chef or anything. Out on our back porch, Nick had set up a tarp and some garbage-bagged speakers for tonight, plus someone had run to Sam's Quik Shop to buy a keg. I walked through our entry way, into our living room, and flopped onto the couch. Robbie, Mitch, and three girls sat on the floor, passing around a bong. I refused to look at Robbie, personally. He was a real burly guy, all Vineyard Vines, and he'd slammed me into the wall of our house more than once. Anyway, I pushed him right back, and fucked the girl he brought to semi. "Hey," I said, straight into the couch pillow.

"Hey," said Mitch. One girl, blonde, smiled at me, round chin, odd look, like someone had sculpted an American Girl doll face onto an adult body. She moved with familiarity: I had met her before, briefly, at a mixer. Christian Laettner's vegan daughter. I sat up, looking down at their circle of red-faced, light-skinned bodies.

"Basketball daughter, you into heroin?"

"Huh?" She furrowed her eyebrows. "No?"

"Okay." Then I knocked out, right there.

A couple hours later, I woke up to rain pelting against our window and Nick asking me if I had the coke. I handed him the baggie. I wondered what RJ thought of me, if he thought I was sad, or maybe stupid. Then I wondered if his house was up on a hill, like ours. He told me he used to live in the Swift apartments, before the university bought them up last year, but I didn't know where he had moved. Anyway, I had just given him three hundred dollars, so I figured he would be okay. Nick did a line of coke on our coffee table and made a face. "Fuck," he said. I could hear the house rattling with the wind. I moved to the kitchen and made myself a protein shake for dinner. Someone had moved all our porch furniture into this dingy kitchen, so I had to maneuver through a swarm of chairs. While I was sitting at our dining table, I tried to calculate the median income of every person I had ever fucked. Someone turned on the speakers, outside, in the hurricane, to Post Malone.

The thing was, almost everyone was getting drunk and/or high during the hurricane, and no one minded the music. I was friendly, so I knew this. Nick lit up some candles in the living room, placing them all along the mantelpieces. Through the doorway, I asked him, "Hey, Nick, where are you from, heritage-wise?"

"Mostly Dutch and German, I think."

"Cool." I thought RJ had a nice sliver of an idea. I wanted to build a map of every person I had ever met and follow them as they grew old in a dignified sort of way. I knew Nick's dad ran the PGA and that Nick had never once done his own laundry. I knew Mitch's dad directed block-buster children's movies and that Mitch used his credit card. I knew Robbie's parents owned restaurants across Virginia and that they endowed a chair of economics. My parents lived in the boring sort of way, managing real estate throughout Houston. I looked outside, watched as

the trees got bent and the road got soaked. I knew we would never see a hurricane, not in our lifetimes.