

While I was gathering my books for science at my locker, my friend Kate came up beside me.

"Hey, Kristen."

"Hey. What's up?"

"A party."

"A party?" I asked.

"Yeah. Guess who's?"

"Who's?"

"Zach Linkers. You know the most popular guy in school?" She was acting like I didn't know who that was. I mean, who didn't know who that was?

"So, when is it?"

"Well, it's tonight at his house, of course. They say it's going to be off the chain!" she said, jumping up & down.

"Calm down." I said, putting my hands on her shoulders trying to calm her. "OK, OK, OK."

"Listen, I think that we both need to get ourselves into a classroom, because the bell is about to catch us."

"Right. See you later."

"Bye."

When I got home from school that day, I was pretty hesitant to ask my parents about the party. We live in a pretty small town & everyone knows everyone. They know my parents by them raising kids to the best they can be. Me, on the other hand, I never disappointed them in anything I did. Never wanted to. It's like my job is to make them proud & nothing else. It's not easy, that's what I can tell you. When I walked into the living room, I saw my parents

watching the latest breaking news. They noticed my presence by my heavy footsteps. "Well hi honey. How was school today?" my mom asked.

"It was good."

"What was so good about it?" my dad asked, concerned.

"You may or may not let me go, but Kate asked me to go with her to a house party. This would be my very first house party. Can I please go?" my parents shot glances at each other for the moment being. "Me & your mom will talk about it more & get back to you at dinner."

"But the party is tonight."

"You could show up a little late."

"OK. I guess as long as I can go then it'll be fine." I ran to my room & texted Kate about what my parents had said about it all. I should be doing what she was doing at the time. Getting ready for the party. She told me that she would swing by to pick me up when she's done getting ready.

I ate dinner really quick, because my parents had confirmed that I could go to the party. It was going to be my first house party! I rushed myself to get ready, so when Kate comes around the block, I'll be ready to roll. Kate got to my house about twenty minutes after I finished myself up. My parents were passed out on the couch with *The First 48* playing on the T.V. so, I sneaked out of the house & into Kate's Chevrolet. "Hey, Kristen. What are you wearing?" Kate asked.

"I was thinking about simple for my first house party."

"OK."

"You look like you belong on the streets." I said, jokingly.

"It's a house party, girl. It's what you're supposed to wear."

"Oh. Then next time I'll wear something like that."

"Fine."

Entering the house full of people smelling like alcohol, smoke of every kind, & straight up weed was a new atmosphere for me. I gave Kate a strange look & she looked like she had no problem with being here. Like she was born in this environment. "Come on, let's get some beer." She ordered. I followed her into the kitchen & there were boys standing all around. I never really had alcohol before. I was scared to even try it, because I didn't want to come home smelling like it. Specially knowing that I would get in deep trouble for it. A guy from the football team that I recognized from my history class, was handing me a cup of beer. I looked at him then at the cup. "Come on, try it. It won't kill you. Well, at least just the first time it won't."

"I think I'll be just fine without it."

"A party isn't a party without beer, Kristen. Come on! Don't make me tell everyone in here that you're scared of a little beer." He threatened.

"No, I really think that I can have fun without it.", trying to sound calm & cool about it. He turned his back & started to yell. "Hey guys! Guess what? Little Kristen is scared to try a little beer. Guess we won't invite her & her friend, Kate to our parties anymore."

"Yeah!" they all said in unison. Kate came up beside me & whispered in my ear. "I swear if you don't drink that cup right there, I'm never going to be your friend again. Stop making me look like a fool. Now take the damn drink & drink it." She commanded. I did not once put my hand on that cup. Instead I put my hand on the doorknob to the front door & walked out. My house wasn't far, so I just decided to walk. I walked all the way back to my house. When I reached my house, I went straight for my room & plumped on my bed & fell asleep forgetting what had happened that night.

That morning felt strange. I felt some tension in the house. I walked into the living room & on the screen was the latest breaking news as always. When I took a glance at it, it wasn't a glance anymore. The news anchor was talking about how a house on the other block had been set on fire. It was Zach's house. She said that at least four people were too drunk to escape the fire on time & didn't make it. I didn't know what to think. But what I do know is that I'm glad I left when I did & I'm glad that I didn't take that cup & drink it like Kate had told me to. That I know now, I have been a victim of peer pressure & I know that I survived it with pride!