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Pool Party

Abstract

Gretchen and Amy and I pedal our bikes down the side street single file, our hair flying as we speed through the green light, coasting down a small hill that will take us past the railroad tracks where we'll take a left to the house of a guy named Bunker.

Keywords

dating, socializing, assault



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May 27, 2011

Pool Party

Fiction by Kim Chinquee

Gretchen and Amy and I pedal our bikes down the side street single file, our hair flying as we speed through the green light, coasting down a small hill that will take us past the railroad tracks where we'll take a left to the house of a guy named Bunker.

Bunker is tall and almost sixteen, with brown hair, green monster eyes and a smile that is electric. His bright teeth are almost as shiny as his eyes. He's been dating Amy since meeting her last weekend.

Some nights, Amy and Gretchen and I go to Visions—a dry dance place for teens—where we wear lots of make-up and low tops, hoping to find nice boys to dance with, in hopes of being their girlfriends. Sometimes before we go there, we drink berry wine coolers at Amy's older sister's.

The other night Bunker asked Amy to dance, and later they left for a walk. She told me they went to the woods and sat on a log, mosquitoes nipping their ankles, and she let his hand slip under her skirt—she said it was the first time any boy had moved his fingers inside her like that. He'd asked

her to go steady, so she let him do what he wanted. He left two hickeys on the back of her neck. After that, he walked her to the curb.

Now Gretchen and Amy and I ride over the railroad tracks. Bunker called Amy the day before and invited her to the pool party, giving her directions, telling her to bring friends.

Bottled water sloshes in my bag, where my towel is folded. Amy's towel sits over her shoulder. She says that Bunker has cute friends, but I'm thinking about this guy Dave that I like. How I wish he'd call, but I hear some guys are like that.

Amy speeds in Bunker's driveway. Gretchen and I ride behind.

"What if they don't like me?" Gretchen says.

Amy says to stop. She reminds Gretchen that she's pretty.

"We don't have to go," I say.

Amy turns to me, asking me to retie the top string of her bikini.

Bunker opens the front door, asks what we're doing.

"She's tying up my suit," Amy says. "You wanna do it instead?"

We leave our bikes standing in the driveway.

The sun is hot. Bunker lets us in, offers us his beer stock.

We go to the back yard, where Bunker's friends sit outside in lawn chairs sucking on small rolled-up sheets of paper, closing their eyes and holding their breaths. Then they finally exhale.

Bunker introduces everyone. His friends: Mark and Darren. Gretchen

giggles. I wave to Bunker and he turns his chin up.

Bunker and Amy go back inside, and Gretchen and I sit on the edge of the pool, dipping our feet in the water, holding our beers. I'm thinking about Dave, how I called him. He says he's pretty busy.

Darren and Mark sit around the table, sucking on their paper. They take off their shirts, exposing some burn that makes their skin peel. Some guy named Angel comes over. After another beer, Gretchen and I sit with them. The boys smoke their pot. We take a couple drags, coughing.

Outside, the three boys sit around the pool and Gretchen and I strip down to our suits. Gretchen's bikini is pink with white flowers. Mine is neon orange with blue stripes. I suck in my stomach. Everyone holds bottles.

The boys talk about football players and training camp, while Gretchen whispers to me that she thinks Mark is cute.

"I wish Dave was here," I say. We smile, watching the boys. We sink our feet in the water.

"So what're you girls doing all summer?" Mark says.

"Hanging around, I guess." Gretchen crosses her legs and takes a beer sip.

"We usually go to Ashwaubomay," I say.

"We know the place. We were there all last summer before Bunker got the pool. Funny we didn't see you. We would have remembered you."

"We look different now," I say.

The boys look at each other. Gretchen and I blow in our bottles, making sounds.

After Gretchen and I finish another beer, we go inside and throw our

empty bottles in the trashcan. I can hear the glass, their noises.

“Let’s get in the pool,” Gretchen says.

I say, “I think I’m getting wasted.”

Amy joins us too, serving herself.

We go back out, to the boys. A gray-haired neighbor waves to us and we wave back, then Gretchen and I pinch our noses before jumping in the deep end. We come up for air, treading water.

After laps, we all sit on edges, drinking beer and talking. Bunker sits by Amy, putting a hand on her knee. I sit by Angel, with Dave on my mind, wishing him here. I wonder what he’s up to. Angel keeps asking me questions and finally I just say I have a boyfriend, though I start to feel confused because I’m not sure I’ve ever been anyone’s girlfriend. Mark shares a beer with Gretchen. Darren sits alone until two other guys come to join. I don’t know them. The neighbor peers over.

We drink.

People splash.

We get in and out of the water.

I sit on an edge. Then Bunker comes close and pulls me till I’m in.

I feel his hand on me, on my bikini bottom, trying to get under it. I try to move away, but then Angel’s there beside him.

They’re holding me. I kick and scream, calling for Gretchen and Amy, but when I look, I see they’re gone like me. I see Amy’s head, bobbing. Gretchen: her strong arms not getting her anywhere.

I feel fingers inside me in a way I’ve never felt. I’m kicking. I’m screaming. I’m kicking. I’m screaming.

I close my eyes, hearing laughing, cheering. I scream and kick. I feel different things. I open my eyes, seeing the neighbor, watching, him

drinking something, too.

I see the boys, swimming and bobbing.

I keep hearing someone laughing.

I'm not sure where we are. I can see my friends. We get out and find each other. We hold hands. We make it upstairs, to the bathroom.

I see my arms, bleeding. I see my friends' are too.

We rummage through the cabinet. We try to find stuff.

We get back on our bikes, weaving through the streets again. I feel the air on my face. We go downhill, letting it take us.

Kim Chinquee is the author of the collections Oh Baby and Pretty. She lives in Buffalo, New York.

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