

The Party
by Eric Cecil

You missed fucking some of them. Maybe five or six that you could remember. Plenty others that you couldn't. Still more that you'd fucked once, maybe twice, then never again, abruptly ending it before they got attached. That was the idea. Never let them get attached. Then you, too, could get attached, and soon you'd lose part of yourself to them. They'd do their best to live through you. But only if you let them.

You'd live through them first. Live through fucking them. Like the one you met at that party. You'd arrived there with another. You'd fucked that one the night before. You were both too drunk to enjoy it. You were too drunk to do much of anything. So you'd put your head between her legs instead. After several minutes, she'd pushed you off the bed, her knees quivering.

Jerk, she'd said.

You'd just laughed.

Now you were going to this party together. She was wearing one of your ties. You were nervous. You didn't know anyone. You were hungover. And yet you were already looking for beer. You'd brought some with you, something like two six packs, but you knew it wouldn't be enough. You found more in the fridge once you got there. Way more. You knew you'd be stealing some. You didn't disappoint yourself. You grabbed green bottles in pairs and took them into corners, drinking, watching the people come in, talking, laughing. At one point, early in the evening, you'd retreated to another room. You'd found a couch with some magazines and sat there, looking at them. A short blonde approached you.

You having fun reading those magazines?

I guess so.

You look like you're having fun.

You smiled at her. Someone called her away and she left you alone again. But every now and then she would find you. And every now and then you'd find the other one: the one who'd brought you to the party. It was her party, after all. She was renting the place. She was celebrating her new clothing company. You didn't have a clothing company. You didn't even have a job. Maybe that upset you. Or maybe there were other things that made you tick, like the

weather, or the city, or the weight of life, its feeling of quickly drawing away from you before you could study its finer features. There was no telling.

There was no real point to the party, either. Not for you. You didn't belong there. You had nothing to contribute. So you just surrendered to its inanity. The blonde would chase you. You would chase the other. The other would introduce you to some friends. Then you'd leave her and chase the blonde. What a carousel. What luck. You drank more beer. You found some chips and ate them. It grew dark outside. There were many people there now. They were all gathered around, talking and laughing by a campfire in a stone courtyard out back. You walked outside and looked at them and decided it was time to go.

You found the blonde and asked if she'd like to go to a bar.

Sure.

You chose the bar nearest to your apartment. It wasn't far. You both arrived there, drunk, and found a picnic table outside. She appeared very bored. She removed her jacket and you confirmed something you'd already suspected: she had large breasts. You became excited. You weren't sure how you would swing this. But mostly you didn't care. You got a couple more beers. She asked you some questions about your life, your interests. You asked her to come home with you.

Sure.

You weren't there long before you kissed her. She opened her mouth to you, ready and willing. You ran your hand over her side, reaching up to her breasts. They were glorious. She reached her hand over yours and kneaded both into the heft of her tits. You could feel her nipples under her bra. They stiffened. She moaned. You released your hand and reached for her back, finding a clasp, unhooking it. She pulled your hand to her mouth and sucked and licked your fingers.

Soon you were fucking.

It was fast. Much faster than usual. Then it was over. You both lay there for a moment, not saying anything. You felt fine. Like you'd done something. Anything. Life was close enough to see, if only for a moment. Then it twirled away and disappeared. Guilt and worry set in.

You got up and checked your machine for messages. You thought you'd heard it before. Or maybe it was the buzzer. No. It was the phone. You saw the message. You played it. Her voice

rang out in the hallway. The party, she said, was wrapping up. She would be leaving soon. But soon was a while ago now. You knew she was on her way. She would be back at any moment.

You looked at the blonde.

You have to go, you said. I'm sorry, but you have to go now.

She didn't seem bothered. She knew the score. You helped her gather her belongings. You opened your window, airing out the room. You made your bed. You watched her put on her shirt and jacket. You admired her for a moment. She was something. But still she had to go. This was always the way, somehow. The ones you liked fucking had to leave. They had to make room for the others you'd already fucked. You used to like fucking the others. But somehow they became obligations. You were a real piece of work. You hated yourself.

You walked the blonde down the stairs so you could head off the other, in case she arrived. But when you looked outside, the other was nowhere to be found. The blonde left the building and ducked into the cab. You called out to her: Hey.

She stopped. Yeah?

Can I call you sometime?

Sure.

She returned to the front door and gave you her number.

You saw her a few more times after that. You could tell she found your life sad. Maybe it was. Maybe you were. She was too young and naive for you, anyway. She wasn't like you at all. She was excited by silly things. You weren't excited by anything. You weren't thrilled when she asked you to meet her boyfriend. You told her it was a bad idea. You're a loser, she said, and she left. For good that time. Gone.

But sometimes you'd get phone calls. They were silent calls. Or breathing calls, hangups. Once there was a soft voice, a whisper: How are you? You asked who it was. Nothing. You asked again. The line went dead. You never heard back.

Back home: that's where the first one went. You saw her whenever you blew through her town. You didn't go there often. You never knew why you were there in the first place. Sometimes you'd find yourself there, listless, drunk, roving around her neighborhood, cruising past her

favorite bars. Once you found her and walked her to her building. She kissed you on the cheek. You smiled and said goodbye. She crept up the stairs and out of your life. You thought back to the party. You remembered that she still had your tie. It was too late to get it back. She was already up the stairs and into her apartment and you'd never find her again.