

Just Flying By (Word Count: 749)

Imagine finding it at the bus stop. It was there at my feet, the corners frayed, and the paper crumpled. The ink was splotchy, running streaks of translucent black down the page.

“Alcoholics Anonymous,” it read in bold letters. “Is alcohol costing you more than money?” A number was written at the bottom of the flyer, almost smudged to the point where I could no longer make out the digits. I stepped on the piece of paper with the soles of my shoes, making my way to the bench.

I looked up as the traffic continued flying past me. Before I sat on the cold metal bench, waiting for the 8:30 pm bus, I slipped a small bottle out of my back pocket and into my hand. I glanced around. Nobody was there except for Mrs. Davis, a woman who lived across the street. She was smoking a cigarette and swearing on the phone. She gestured with her hands passionately, and was not paying any attention to me.

I took a sip from the bottle, smelling the harsh scent of ethanol spewing from the glass. The familiar feeling of liquid pouring down my throat made me cringe. After the burning subsided, the warmth in my stomach grew. I took another sip, and another, until the warmth felt like a campfire. At this point, the bottle was empty, but my head was not spinning. I wished I had brought another.

I checked my watch and it read 8:38. Sighing, I opened my backpack hoping to find my water bottle. As I rummaged through the bag filled with scrapped paper and ballpoint pens, I saw another mickey of gin at the bottom of my bag. I looked across at Mrs. Davis, smoking her second cigarette, still on the phone. She looked tired, the kind of tired sleep would not fix.

I was the type of person who cared. When I was younger, I would drive my friends home and take away their keys. People who didn't know me thought I was bland and undaring, and I didn't mind this because I knew who I was.

I remembered not a lot about that night, just fragments. Music was playing so loud that the walls in Macy Richardson's parents' house were shaking. I came with two friends, and they were the type of people who played drinking games and danced all night, only to be found on the bathroom floor later. I drank iced tea and bopped my head along to the rap music. I smiled and made small talk

with people from school as we discussed where we wanted to go the next year. I wanted to go to Western. Paul, a guy in my data class, wanted to attend Queens.

Sarah had just won another round of beer pong, so that meant she would be heading to the bathroom. I followed her upstairs, ready to hold her hair back. Before I reached her, my closest friend, Thomas, came up behind and tapped me on the shoulder. He gave me a drunken hug and then rambled about how he wanted to get pizza. I listened to him, and promised that on our way back home, we'd stop by Frank's and get a large pepperoni pizza. Thomas smiled, bigger than I had ever seen him smile, and walked towards the crowd.

I caught up with Sarah, who barely made it to the bathroom. I opened the door for her and moved the bath mat in front of the toilet. She plopped down on her knees and threw up. I patted her back and tied up her hair. I reached into my back pockets, checking to make sure I hadn't lost anything. My lip balm was there and so was my phone. My keys however, were missing.

I remembered going back downstairs to look on the couch. They were not there. I looked around for Thomas, and he was missing too.

After that night, I stopped going to parties, and I started drinking. I stopped driving myself places and took the bus instead. I avoided Frank's Pizza and the street where it happened. I moved on, on enough to function.

I looked up from my backpack and saw that the flyer was now at my feet. I picked it up and shoved it into my bag before taking a swig of the gin. I saw the bus arriving, and I got on it with two empty bottles and a piece of paper.