

FRAGILITY AND HOPE IN A WORLD OF UNCERTAINTY



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Savannah

Marina Bishop

Everyone knows Savannah is the school slut.

She's been fucked by every guy on the football team — every guy except me, it seems. She wears lipstick shades named Russian Red and Audacious on a mouth that has done who knows what. Her hair falls to her waist in a mass of blonde extensions. Her school skirt is three inches shorter than the mandated length, exposing her taut, spray-tanned thighs. Her purple bras are always peeping out suggestively from underneath her sheer crop-tops, which she buys a couple of sizes too small.

That's why no one cared about what happened at the party on Friday night, I suppose.

Savannah was stumbling all over the place, drunk as anything, her black dress riding up her hips and her hands grabbing at the air for something to hold onto. Her dress was damp from a mixture of vodka and other people's sweat, and her hair was tangled from dancing. She was trying to make her way to the door, I think, but I couldn't tell for sure because she wasn't walking straight in any direction.

That's when Gary came up behind her and grabbed her waist with his meaty hands.

Gary was a big bloke, a forward on the school rugby team. As I watched him move clumsily to the thumping music, Savannah's head lolling to the side as she struggled to stay upright, a conversation in the locker room that morning

suddenly popped into my mind. An emergency assembly had just been announced, and we were trying to figure out why.

'What if they finally found the weed in Johnny David's locker?'

'D'you think they caught a couple rooting behind the sports shed again?' 'Hey Gary, you been fucking any chicks behind the sports shed?'

We all laughed, because Gary has a face full of craters and a beer gut at sixteen. If anyone was doing any fucking, it wasn't him.

'Nah, everyone knows Gary's a faggot,' one of the boys retorted.

We all laughed again, because it was funny and because Gary's face was turning the colour of beetroot.

'Fuck you guys.' Gary stormed out, slamming the door behind him. 'What a pussy, can't even take a fucking joke,' someone else said. We mumbled our agreement.

Anyway, Gary was holding her waist, and he started to grind on her. She was just standing there, or rather, he was holding her up because she could barely support herself. Then he guided her into a bedroom, and the guys smirked at each other because we knew what Gary was going to do. She was trying to say something, but no one could make out her slurred words over the music blasting through the speaker system. Her fingers clutched the doorframe as he led her in, but he easily pulled her into the room after him. He gave us a thumbs up as he closed the door, and I glimpsed Savannah collapsing onto the bed behind him. My stomach twisted and I suddenly felt vaguely ill. Must be the alcohol, I thought, as I went in search of some chips or pizza. As I wandered back, Gary had emerged from the bedroom and the guys were all cheering and clapping him on the back. He was showing the boys some pictures he'd

taken of her after he'd finished.

'Jesus, you need to send those to us mate.' someone slurred, and the others agreed.

Gary's eyes had a manic glint in them, and he puffed out his chest with the confidence of a peacock.

'She's free, if you want a ride,' he joked, nudging his head towards the door he'd just exited, which was slightly ajar.

I looked into the bedroom, and suddenly, unwillingly, I locked eyes with Savannah. There was something in her eyes that caught me off guard. She suddenly looked so ... so vulnerable. She was in the middle of trying to get off the bed. Her lacy black undies were around her ankles, and her bra strap was halfway down her arm. Her eyeliner had smudged into dark streaks under her eyes. Something glistened on her cheek. Tears? Couldn't be, must have just been the lighting. Suddenly, I remembered sitting next to her in maths a few weeks ago. We were both late and had ended up together at the back of the class. I asked her if I could borrow a pencil, and she smiled and gave me two. Then, when I had trouble with a question, her manicured hands patiently graphed polynomials on my page until I understood how to draw them myself.

But then my friends, laughing, filed into the bedroom and closed the door, and the moment passed. For a second I considered doing something to stop them, I didn't exactly know what. But then I turned around and went outside instead. It was getting late, the party wasn't that good anyway, and I thought I might as well head home.

I mean, it's not like they raped her or anything. That happens to women who walk alone down deserted alleyways in the middle of the night, or to little girls on the news who get stolen by creepy men. Rape is bad, but this was different. If she didn't want it, she shouldn't have dressed like that. Or drunk

that much. She was practically asking for it. Besides, I know my friends. They're nice guys, not weirdos. They do well in school and are on the rugby team. They're the kind of guys who volunteer at the homeless shelter and help old women cross the street, not rapist kind of guys. No, of course it wasn't rape, it was just boys being boys. I felt a bit uneasy, that's all.

Come to think of it, I haven't seen Savannah at school this week. Maybe she's sick or something? Anyway, there's no point worrying. It wasn't my responsibility. She brought it on herself. Right?