

Laura

I placed my head squarely between her thighs and pushed my tongue out into the ether, farther than my eyes could have possibly seen. It wriggled around in this cavern, almost as if it was detached from my head. I can't even remember what it tasted like because I was so focused on keeping the rest of my body still. I finally relaxed the muscles in my neck and tilted my head back. I opened my eyes for the first time in what felt like forever and saw her body writhing. I finally retracted my tongue and administered a deep oral breath to myself, as if I had just surfaced from the depths of an ocean.

Up until this point it was pretty sloppy because we were still drunk. We had been awkwardly groping each other and intermittently fucking so that I wouldn't cum because neither of us had a condom. I made a sad attempt at some dirty talk. I don't think she was taken aback by it but she didn't indulge me. Maybe I wasn't giving her enough to work with. After we were done we lay in bed and talked. I had known her for over a year but this was probably the longest time we had spent in each other's company. In my drunken haze I said something weird which I instantly regretted, to which she laughed politely.

We got out of bed at around 11 and showered separately. As we were putting on our clothes I pointed out to her that she had a hickey low down on the left side of her neck. She didn't seem overly concerned about it, but still bothered to barely conceal it with her wet hair which wasn't

even long enough to touch her shoulders. Before we left the apartment to get some coffee, she realized that the ball on one end of her nipple piercing was missing. What if I had swallowed it? We spent a few minutes half-heartedly looking but my head hurt too much to make any serious effort. She put what was left of the piercing in her pocket.

We still had to retrieve her bike that I stored in my basement the previous night. In an act of drunken and uncharacteristic chivalry, I marched downstairs and came back up with it precariously balanced over my right shoulder. Now that she had everything we could leave. When we got to the coffee shop she ordered a pastry and a cold brew, and I ordered an americano. I offered to pay for what she got and she asked if I was sure, to which I unhesitatingly replied that it was no problem. I don't know why I offered. It was the first and likely the last time this would happen between us. Maybe I wanted her to actually like me. Maybe it was just the weight of expectations — of etiquette — of the least you could do when someone spends a night under your unwashed sheets.

We walked out and down the street to the next intersection, hugged, and said goodbye. She hopped on her bicycle, pushed herself forward with one of her feet, and after a moment of nervous balance, managed to steady herself before riding out east further into Brooklyn. I didn't think very much about what had just happened because my head was still throbbing. By the time I got back to the apartment it was noon. Instead of taking an Advil I took a long nap. I woke up later that afternoon to a pillow soaked with drool and a regurgitated steel ball sitting right by where my mouth was.