

# CONFESSION

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“I don’t drink.” That one little phrase creates a wave of questions. I hear the people all around me asking “Why?” and making false assumptions about me. I’m a prude, I’m weirdly religious, I’m boring, etc. So I merely utter, “I just don’t like it.” But this doesn’t change their opinions or seem to satisfy their curiosity. I’m in college and I don’t drink?! I just sit there and try to enjoy the party sober, but I know I am making some uncomfortable with my sobriety. I don’t see why it matters, and I wonder if I am making them question their own morals. I’m not sure, but I do know that I am the “buzz-kill” and as far as they know, for a bad reason. Yet, I can’t tell them the truth. How can I explain my deep fears and the horrid memories that I constantly carry with me?

I can’t tell these happily drunk college students that just the sight of a beer transports me back to my childhood home, stepping on broken bottles and crying for someone who never helps or comes to my aid. How can I explain that the smell of their “fun” brings me back to dark rooms with older men’s breath on my face, that day’s booze burning my nose? I can’t tell them that my hopes and dreams were smashed when I was young, like the bottles my father threw to make his friends laugh. How can I explain that their alcoholic products that they so enjoy had the power to bring down my household? They wouldn’t understand my fear that just one sip, one taste of this poison, would make me exactly like him. They don’t hear

my baby sister's voice that is always in my head saying, "I'm just like him!" while she is sprawled out on the floor drunk, crying relentlessly. They can't see how I came to be this way.

It started when I was about seven or eight years old. My mother just got her new job that took away all of our financial problems that my father was unable to correct. As she grew more successful, he seemed to become lazier and agitated. My father slept downstairs on the couch every night. He said it was to take care of our new puppy, and we didn't question it, even after our puppy was full grown. He would skip work and make excuses why he wasn't working as much as he should have been. He wouldn't come to dinner when my mother was there, and he never came up for our movie night that we had had for as long as I could remember. Then when my mother would stay far too late into the night, working to support us, he would entertain his friends. It kept us awake, and he made us promise not to tell our mother. I didn't understand it then, of course; I thought my parents would be together forever, like a fairytale. Years later I realized that my father didn't feel like a man.

When I was ten, my father was having one of his parties while my mother was away on a business trip. My sister ran up the stairs, complaining about the party. I heard the words "drunks" and "perverts" as she rushed by me, muttering. A little while later, I heard my father and his friends move their party to the pool. They were yelling and splashing around, keeping us up even though it was very late. My father called us out to the pool. My younger sister and I went out to the men; my older sister had locked herself in her room, blaring music. My father was on his knees, laughing hysterically like he had just heard or seen the funniest thing in the world. His friends started commenting about how pretty I was, and how I would have to beat the men off with sticks some day. I blushed and tried to leave, but my father said no and fell forward, forgetting to put out his hands to catch himself. There was blood everywhere. My sister and I screamed and didn't know what to do. The men laughed and laughed and no one seemed to be helping. But it was all right. My father sat up and laughed through the blood. Something dropped from his hand and rolled by my feet. I looked down and saw the bottle, and I finally understood that alcohol was doing this, alcohol was ruining my family.

There is no happy ending to this story. My father continued to drink and treat us badly, especially my older sister, whom he confided in. He would tell her all his secrets; that he was unhappy in his marriage; that he felt suffocated here. She was only 18 years old; she didn't need to hold these secrets for him, keep them from our mother. Eventually my parents got divorced, and my father got away without even having to pay child support. In fact, my mother had to pay him alimony. A few months after the divorce, we found out that my father had cheated on my mother the last year of their marriage and moved in with the woman. She doesn't push him to be better, and she drinks almost as much as he does. We all felt betrayed. We all remembered the days when my father was a hero. When he was big and tall and could lift anything. The days before he drank away his life and yelled and became less of a man. My little sister still clings to those memories. She won't open her eyes and see who my father is. We try to tell her, but she'd rather be ignorant. My older sister and I gave up after he forgot our birthdays and forced my sister to take drugs with him. I can't remember a time in the last ten years where I haven't smelt alcohol on his breath.

I would love to say I learned a big lesson or I became stronger after all that I have experienced, but unfortunately I don't think that I have. These experiences have weakened me. I don't trust anyone, and I am perpetually afraid that the people I care about will leave me, just like my father did. I don't trust men, and I don't trust fidelity. How could I when my father cheated on my mother after twenty years of marriage and three daughters? I am unhappy about my mother's new husband and his sons and the fact that my father married the woman that he left us for. I haven't completely dealt with everything, partially because I am finding out new horrors everyday, now that I am old enough to know. I don't want to know these things. So here I am, a screwed up girl who avoids alcohol like the plague, going to a college known for its parties. What do I tell these students who I live with?

I simply say "I don't drink" and leave it at that. Even if I explained all of this, which I never could, they wouldn't completely understand. They haven't lost so much because of one substance that can be completely harmless. They haven't seen someone who used to be their hero turn into an adulterer, an alcoholic, a liar. I don't want my new friends, my new



world, to know where I come from; what I come from. I don't want to be the buzz-kill and make them feel bad about having so much fun with something I hate so much. So I leave them to their fun, and I pretend that I just don't like the taste or the feeling because how could I explain all of my horrible memories and my deepest darkest fears? I couldn't. I can't.

