

Ryan Woodward

Flash Story

### **Even Smart People Can Act Stupid**

Everyone at the party fit the definition of the word ‘popular’: Jocks, cheerleaders, preps, and badasses. Then there was me: scrawny, awkward, and desperate for acceptance. I couldn’t remember how I got invited. I think that my friend Cary did homework for Buddy Cuthbert, the captain of the lacrosse team, and in return, we got invited tonight. The last time I recall being invited to anything by Buddy Cuthbert was to a birthday party at Chuck E. Cheese when we were seven. But even then, it was a technicality. Buddy’s mom made him invite everyone in the class; simply by association, I was invited.

Fast forward eleven years and look at me now... I couldn’t even tell you what music was blasting through the stereo. Whatever drink I was handed from Patrick Chen tasted like a concoction of rubbing alcohol, hydrochloric acid, and grape Kool-Aid. The alcohol burned my throat so badly that I almost started crying. Taking small sips in ten minute increments kept my eyes from tearing up... I was *such* a party animal.

Taking another sip of my Jonestown Kool-Aid, I glanced around the crowded rec. room, trying to find Cary. The room reminded me of a documentary about New York nightclubs... wall to wall people... a claustrophobic’s nightmare. I spotted him by the dart board as he was getting ready to make his move on Tanya Davis, who was sitting in a leather recliner close to him. I could hear the desperate pick up line he pitched: “Hey, I lost my phone number. Can I have yours?”

I didn't know if it was his pick up, the alcohol, or both that made me cringe. Tanya stared blankly back at Cary, her mouth hanging open slightly. An eruption of drunken laughter escaped from her partially open mouth. It didn't take Cary very long to understand that Tanya laughing was her way of telling him to get lost. Still laughing, Tanya stood up and stumbled through the crowd towards the patio. Cary's face turned red; almost as red as the Solo cup he was holding. Playing down his rejection, he took a large gulp from his Solo cup, quickly turned around and walked away, and then tripped over a potted plant in the process.

I felt so bad for Cary that I decided to go and tell Tanya off. Making my way through the crowd towards the sliding glass door, I plotted what I might say to her. I wanted to make her feel terrible for what she did. I found her sitting on a patio bench a few feet away from the door. She leisurely glanced over as I approached her and gave me a drunken smile. I didn't understand why, but as I was about to air my grievance to her, she blurted out: "You wanna make out?"

Everything that I was going to say to her abruptly departed and after a pause, I stared back at her stoically and simply replied: "Uh... okay."