

Work Hard, *Play Harder.*
Sabrina Qiao

“So, can I test you on this?” John Freisma, the head bouncer at Plough and the Stars, shined a UV light on the Delaware ID as he scrutinized it.

“Uh, sure.” The owner of the ID, a Penn sophomore, pulled down her black dress and shuffled her feet, her velvet booties adding another inch to her six-foot frame.

“Could you pull up your Facebook for me? Show me the birthday on there?”

She crossed her arms, her red lips downturned. “I don’t have my birthday on there.”

“You don’t have your birthday on your Facebook?”

“No—why would I have that?” She gave her friends behind her a look.

“So you don’t have a secondary form of ID, and you don’t have your birthday on your Facebook?” Freisma raised an eyebrow.

“No, but I can assure you: I’m 21.”

“Really?” He turned the ID over, shining a flashlight on the back. “Hmmm, so if I ran this to check it, it would come up as real? You know that’s a felony, right?”

Tonight was the winter formal for TSO, Penn’s Transfer Student Organization, and Freisma was handing out wristbands: blues for those who were old enough for the bar, and red for those who had to stick with soft drinks.

“Well”—the sophomore reached for her wallet—“how about a twenty? Am I 21 then?”

He laughed and shook his head. “Sorry hon, I’m an ex-cop. I don’t do that.” At a typical college event, Freisma is routinely bribed, sometimes with as much as one-hundred dollars slipped under a license, the confident smirk of an underage college kid handing it over. For fraternity events, the brothers sometimes offered up lump sums of three hundred dollars or more, hoping to buy a blind eye for every shoddy fake ID that passed through Freisma’s hands.

“Okay, fine.” She straightened and tossed her hair behind her shoulder. “Can I just have my ID back?”

He mulled it over, squinting at her signature on the card. “Sorry, hon. I don’t think I can do that either.” He handed her a red wristband, sliding her license across the table. “If something happened, I’d feel real bad.”

At Penn, events like the TSO formal are called “downtowns,” because they occur off-campus, in Center City, Philadelphia, where student organizations rent out bars and clubs for the night. Armed with fake IDs, students swarm the bar for unregulated access to cocktails and vodka shots. The minority of Penn students that don’t have fakes learn to get crafty: flasks snuck inside lapel pockets or bras, boxes of Franzia wine hidden underneath folded jackets, bladder bags slipped up trouser legs. As much as Freisma tries to regulate, he isn’t able to catch everyone. “I mean, what am I supposed to do? Pat everyone down?” The sophomore, like most of the red-braceleted guests, ended up getting friends to buy her drinks all night. By the time she left, she was stumbling down the stairs.

This is a common sight for Freisma. If students want to drink, they’ll find a way to do so. Out of the 91 guests at the formal—most of whom had been tipped off not to use their fake IDs—he saw 18 fakes and took three, choosing only to confiscate the “unique” ones that provided a sampling of “what was on the market.” There were, however, at least two fake IDs that he missed, one of which the student reporter who was shadowing him used.

This is what the drinking culture of Penn is like: fake IDs, downtowns, pre-games, frat parties—all facets of keeping up appearances at the “social ivy.” Messages such as, “It’s not alcoholism till you graduate” and “work hard, play hard” permeate the social scene here, where partying extends way past the limits of the campus.

Patrick, a 20-year-old junior at Penn, characterizes the drinking culture as “fucking weird.” He didn’t go to TSO formal. He doesn’t often go downtown, preferring to stay in and drink with friends instead, since he finds the social hierarchy here exhausting. “People here don’t go out to have fun,” he says. “They go out to make an impression.” Patrick used to be in a fraternity, but ended up dropping due to the rampant classism he experienced, even though Patrick himself comes from an affluent background. However, dropping his fraternity also meant that he was no longer as privy to the “scene,” a student-coined term to describe a particular social stratum unique to Penn. A “scene-y” person is someone who is wealthy, dresses a certain way—often in a variety of luxury brand outfits—and frequents downtowns, sometimes dropping hundreds of dollars in one night.

As an omnipresent aspect of the drinking culture here, the “scene” embodies the excesses of an Ivy League education. It’s not uncommon for a fraternity downtown event to be described as “scene-y,” with a professional photographer circulating around clusters of students at the open bar. Events like these happen in venues like Rumor, a nightclub in Philadelphia known for its bribable bouncers, and Arts Ballroom, a wedding venue that is self-described as a “hidden gem of Philadelphia.” In the photo albums uploaded to Facebook, special effects are added, streaks of copper-colored light zigzagging around the frame, making the subjects look glamorous, beautiful, and untouchable. To be in the “scene” provides a level of impunity—these are students who aren’t afraid to bribe bouncers, especially if they can lawyer up fast if anything happens. “It’s like a fake Hollywood, honestly,” Patrick says. “People like money, and they like

to seem like they have money—it’s what the scene revolves around.”

One of the most anticipated “scene-y” events is the “Magic Gardens” Halloween party. It happens twice a year, on an empty lot in West Philadelphia that the on-campus fraternity known as Castle buys out for the night. For 40 dollars, students are handed red satin wristband that gave them access to: fire performers, a silent disco, an EDM concert, and three open bars. This year, tickets for the event were released two weeks prior and sold out within ten minutes.

Peter, a 20-year-old junior, attended. He had been looking forward to the event since the summer, and in the weeks leading up to Halloween, he worked extra hard to make sure he would look good, especially since it “made for great social media posts.” If you look through his Instagram, you’ll find a photo of him there: shirtless, smirking, and standing next to a girl dressed as a French maid. His fairy wings glitter under the strobe lights, but he probably doesn’t remember posing for the photo. He doesn’t remember a lot from that night.

He remembered getting out of the Uber and stepping into the smoke-filled warehouse lot. He remembered the open bar and the small plastic cups the bartenders were handing out like candy. He remembered the sting of cheap vodka: five shots at the pre-game, a half-full flask snuck into the venue, five more shots at the party. Then the last complete memory he has occurs around 12:30 a.m. The rest come in misplaced and disorienting chunks:

Him sitting, head resting in his hands, on a metal chair outside of the public bathrooms. Then, a screen of black.

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Red devil horns. A straight, white smile. A cute boy—someone he was interested in. They hugged, and then talked, about what? He couldn’t remember. A blur of colors and sounds and then nothing.

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Another boy. Someone he didn’t like. He walked past him multiple times, purposefully not saying “hi.” Then a sudden gaping hole in his memory.

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Strobe lights. Pounding music. Smoke, everywhere. Tendrils of fire streaking through the night from the fire performers. People shouting for their friends in the crowds, couples kissing on the dance floor. Then blankness.

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“Chelsea!” A blonde sorority girl dressed in leather called for her friend. She was in one of Peter’s classes, but he didn’t know her personally.

“Chelsea!” He sneered, mocking her. She turned and stared, shocked; he kept on walking. Then the memory cut off into nothingness.

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Grass and his brown boat shoes slowly tramping across it, towards the exit. He was leaving? Was he? Where was he going?

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All black. At 8 a.m. the next morning, Peter woke up in his own bed. When he walked out of his room, he found one sock floating in the toilet bowl, his costume fairy wings strewn on the linoleum floor of his kitchen. He couldn't remember how much he had to drink in total. He couldn't remember how he got home

Peter experienced a “brown out,” a ubiquitous term used to describe a type of alcohol-induced memory lapse wherein a person can still recall pieces of his night, even though large chunks of time in between are missing. Although Peter called it a “terrifying” experience, it wasn't his first time blacking out. In fact, it's common to drink to blackout on Penn's campus, to aspire to it, even. On a weekend night, you can frequently hear students say things such as: “I'm gonna get blacked tonight,” and “If I remember tonight, I did it wrong.”

The science behind blacking out paints a frightening photo: a blackout occurs when someone has oversaturated his hippocampus with so much alcohol that it can no longer encode memories properly. It's not that someone experiencing a blackout forgot what happened; it's that those memories were never made in the first place, like a photograph that was snapped but never developed—just a continuous blank reel of film staring back at him.

Blacking out is an alarming aspect of Penn's drinking culture, but it's one that students acknowledge, and perhaps, celebrate. Peter connects it to the competitive nature of the school, both academically and socially. “There's a goal to get blackout because Penn is a lot and Penn is stressful. Penn students are categorized with incredible achievement, which is where I think Penn's competitive nature creeps in. You want to keep up with people in every sense of the word, and that relates to what happens inside the classroom and what happens outside: you want to be a CEO of investment banking, but also blackout on a Friday night.”

What the fuck happened last night? What did I do? Who do I apologize to this morning? Are there any photos of me floating around? These are the types of questions students ask themselves after they wake up from a blackout. And even if they're frightened or worried about what they did, when they chat about it with their friends, they'll laugh as it turns into a funny anecdote: *Oh wow, last night was crazy! Did I do anything stupid?*

For many students, waking up in their own bed means that nothing *that* bad could have happened. After all, if something terrible occurred, wouldn't they have remembered it? Sure, maybe they woke up disoriented and alarmed, but if none of their things were missing, then wasn't the biggest calamity just a pounding headache and dehydration, maybe some not-so-flattering photographs floating around?

In general, there's a humorous undertone towards blacking out in the student vernacular. Christie, a 23-year-old senior at Penn, was surprised to see how casually and frequently people discussed it, especially compared to the University of Santa Barbra, where she spent her freshman year. “At Penn [blacking out] is just a joke—the way people talk

about it...if I hadn't been older when I transferred here, I would have thought that this is just what happens when you go out." She sees this attitude most glaringly in the Penn meme page, "The Official Unofficial Squirrel Catching Club," a student-moderated Facebook page where members can post memes—humorous photoshopped images and gifs that are spread online. Blacking out is a popular topic for the page. One meme is captioned, "If you didn't blackout at Fling, did you really even go?" and it shows a variety of screenshots ridiculing the aftermath of a blackout at Spring Fling, the most anticipated yearly campus drinking holiday.

Despite the various celebrations that glorify drinking here, imbibing is hardly unique to Penn. It happens at campuses nationwide, considered a rite of passage for young adults on the cusp of real-life responsibilities. A fun-filled four years before taxes, mortgages, and growing up—where binge drinking is the norm and blacking out is a casualty of the weekend.

Recently, however, the national conversation about college binge drinking has been reignited after the grisly death of Timothy Piazza. Piazza died after participating in "the gauntlet," a type of binge drinking game required of new fraternity members in Beta Theta Pi. Video footage from that night shows him visibly intoxicated, stumbling around until he falls down the stairs—multiple times—hitting his head in the process. His fraternity brothers watched as he struggled. They punched his unconscious body. They poured beer on him. They sat on him. Then they waited, hoping he would recover. The hours dragged on, and it became increasingly apparent that something was wrong. When emergency services were eventually called, it was too late.

Piazza died on February 4th, 2017. He was 19 years old, a freshman at Penn State.

Piazza's case is just one out of the many that occur yearly. Compiled statistics on compelledtoact.com shows a record of 14 alcohol-related college deaths in the spring of 2016 alone. Collegedrinkingprevention.gov reports that 1,825 college students die yearly from alcohol-related injuries. Despite these dismal numbers, most campuses do have services in place to prevent the consequences of binge drinking. At Penn, there's the trifecta: MERT, the AOD, and the Task Force.

MERT, a student-run emergency medical service, is the first call for "DPKs," for Drunk Penn Kids. Similar to blackouts, MERT is a popular topic for the Penn meme page. In the Penn lexicon, to be MERTed is synonymous with having a wild night out, as in, *Oh man, Sophie was so fucked up last night she got MERTed.* When a student is considered too inebriated to care for himself, MERT members peddle over on their bikes and ask questions like: "How long have you been here for?" "How many drinks have you had?" "Who is our current President?" while testing pupil reactivity with a pocket flashlight. It's not always possible to discern between who needs medical attention and who can go home and sleep it off, so MERT errs on the side of caution. In most cases, the student ends up loaded onto a gurney and driven the ten blocks to the nearest hospital.

In the morning, MERTed students awake in the emergency room with a splitting headache, a thousand-dollar bill, and a "First Step" appointment at the Office of Alcohol and Other

Drugs (AOD). The inaugural meeting is a “harm-reduction” intervention with “non-judgmental” attitudes, like a slap on the wrist filled with questions such as: *How many drinks did you have? Did you eat beforehand? Do you know what counts as a standard drink?* Penn’s medical amnesty policy prevents students from being subject to “University discipline for the sole violation of using or possessing alcohol or drugs,” which means that the AOD provides recommendations, not punishment. In reality, after the “First Step” meeting, nothing significant happens. Sometimes students get MERTed multiple times in the span of a few months. In those cases, stricter sanctions are enacted: a phone call to their parents on the second meeting, barring them from spending weekends on campus by the fifth. It is unclear, however, whether a student’s MERT record resets yearly or whether it is cumulative. The AOD declined to comment on that.

On the other hand of the spectrum is the Task Force, which tackles preventative measures, shutting down campus parties before they get too rowdy. As the newest administrative initiative, the Task Force was created earlier this semester after a sexually suggestive email from OZ, an off-campus fraternity, circulated around the school. The email, written as a poem addressed specifically to female students, was an invitation to a “Wild Wednesday” event, with instructions such as: “Wednesday nights will get you going / With bankers flowing all night / Tonight is your first showing / So please wear something tight.” OZ received administrative reprimand, but as an off-campus fraternity, there was nothing else the administration could do to the fraternity’s charter. Immediate campus backlash reached news sources such as *Buzzfeed.com* and *The Huffington Post*.

Consequently, Penn created the Task Force with the objective of preventing sexual assault through lessening the drinking occurring on campus. The initiative requires that all organizations register social events with the administration 10 days before the event. The rules are: only four standard-sized drinks per person, only two types of hard liquor at a party, no hard liquor at parties with over 150 guests, sober hosts must be available, and no alcohol may be served past 1 a.m.

To enforce these stipulations, the host organizations must hire security guards and school-sanctioned bartenders. Bartenders cost \$25 per hour and security guards—who work in pairs—cost \$32.50 per hour, with a minimum of four hours each. Obeying all of these stipulations won’t necessarily prevent an event from being shut down, but the non-compliant parties are weeded out by the Alcohol Monitors who patrol campus, popping into fraternity parties and calling Penn Police when deemed necessary. In an effort to increase the number of monitors available, the administration now pays graduate students \$35 per hour to stand vigil on a weekend night.

The policies in the Task Force aren’t new, per se. A link on the AOD website redirects visitors to the University of Pennsylvania Almanac, which lists similar provisions as recommended in a 2005 Alcohol Response Team evaluation. The difference is that these stipulations were hardly enforced until recently, inciting the full wrath of the student body. Soon after the Task Force convened, a change.org petition titled “The Ability to Have a Social Life at Penn” circulated through the student body, calling for the Task Force to be disbanded. Cami Potter, a junior, wrote the 1,356-word manifesto, which listed alleviating stress, strengthening friendships,

and lessening financial inequality as reasons why students should be allowed to drink, on campus. To date, it has 2,528 out of the 5,000 requested signatures. It concludes with the line: “I ask of you something simple and feasible: let [students] live.”

Potter’s petition demonstrates the overwhelmingly negative student attitude towards the Task Force, but it also touches on a broader resentment that festers once parties are moved off-campus. One section of the petition reads: “This recent tendency toward downtown events ... limits the availability of social life off-campus to the select few who are willing and able to pay unnecessary sums to participate.” As Potter points out, an economic disparity opens up between the students who can afford to party downtown and the students who cannot.

Usually, fraternity parties are the gold standard for undergraduates: no one is at the door checking IDs and taking cover—plus, there’s always free liquor. But, if fraternity parties are being shut down left and right, then the only place to go is downtown, where a night out can easily cost anywhere from twenty to several hundred dollars. If the administration won’t let students party on campus, they’ll just have to move further and further off campus, hunting for those elusive few hours of freedom in seedy bars and crowded clubs.

To get downtown, students need a fake ID, which has spawned a gigantic online industry, through mediums like Reddit.com and the dark web. Sometimes students even have multiple fakes: on Friday, a student could be from Cincinnati and by Saturday his ID pegs him as resident of Tallahassee. Despite the omnipresence of fake IDs, it’s an expensive endeavor, ranging anywhere from 50 to a 200 dollars per ID. Sometimes orders come with a backup copy, in case a bouncer or cop confiscates the original fake. However, if the ID doesn’t come with a duplicate, students have to return and repurchase every time they run into trouble. To refuse to do so would mean missing out at the “social Ivy,” a price that many are unwilling to play.

Group orders are one way to lower the costs. The more people involved, the cheaper it costs per ID. Freshman fall is a time of forged friendships: 10 to 20 students come together to order from a website such as IDGod.ph, where the shadowy online vendor promises “Premium scannable fake IDs.” With 10 people in an order, each person pays around 50 to 70 dollars, a considerable discount compared to the one to two hundred dollars it would cost for a single order. With IDs, price correlates with quality; IDGod is known because of the accessibility and the low price point of its products, not because of the product believability. Any slightly experienced bouncer should be able to point out the obvious template flaws on IDGod licenses. Luckily, in Philadelphia, bouncers usually aren’t known to be strict, especially near the college campuses.

However, savvy students know to look deeper online to find the best fake, sometimes traveling as deep as the dark web, where maximum privacy is offered for the most experienced vendors. For buyers that are interested in discussing the merits of having a fake ID, Reddit.com has a subreddit dedicated entirely to this art. On it, vendors and purchasers alike discuss everything from how to take the most believable license photo to questions about a particular vendor’s product. The fakeid subreddit has 32,884 subscribers and 36 verified vendors listed.

Verified vendors have established their reputations enough to prove trustworthy, and buyers can vouch for them online by posting a review of their products, including sections that detail: communication, cost, shipping, signature, scanning, UV, Photoshop, and template.

Those are the same properties in an ID that bouncers look for: does it scan with an ID scanner? Are the holograms showing up correctly under UV light? Does the license photo look real, with believable shadows behind the subject's head? Are the edges of the laminate serrated, like it was cut haphazardly during mass production? Does the signature look too perfect to be real? Certain IDs are so over-faked that, coupled with a baby-faced owner, they're dead giveaways: Connecticut, Rhode Island, Ohio, Florida, Arizona or Illinois. Other IDs have security features that are easy tells: On Delaware IDs, there should be a red DELAWARE stamped across the photo box that appears under UV light— if it's blue, it's fake; On Rhode Island and New York IDs, there's a ghost image, a smaller, transparent copy of the license photo stamped somewhere on the right-hand side—if the photos don't match up, it's a fake; On Texas and California IDs, there are perforations that pop up clearly when a flashlight is shined behind them, a bear for California and the state outline for Texas—if they're not visible, it's a fake; On Maryland IDs, the thick line down the center of the card is actually a continuous stream of MarylandMarylandMaryland written in microscopic text—if the words are blurry, or just a series of dots, it's a fake.

Law enforcement and campus administration struggle to tackle the fake ID industry. For every ID a bouncer confiscates, another backup lies at home in a sock drawer. Most college students on urban campuses have fakes—it's part of the culture. Not having one would mean missing out on every downtown event, every fraternity date night, and every "college night" at the campus watering hole. The real danger isn't in buying one, but rather in what these students gain access to once they own an ID. Students won't stop drinking; if the Task Force shuts down a party, they'll just find somewhere else to drink, but once they're miles off campus, there's no MERT around to carry them home.

Not everyone is convinced that controlling the drinking on campus is going to somehow disrupt drinking patterns elsewhere. Bob Saltz, a Senior Research Scientist at the Prevention Research Center, bristles at this idea of "displacement theory." For him, the task force is a step in the right direction, a built-in safety precaution for on-campus parties. "It's not like we have to convince people that a party is going to lead to somebody getting killed—it's just a probabilistic thing, like why you wear a seat belt when you get in the car."

What Saltz hasn't accounted for is this: if fewer parties are available, students are going to go harder when there is one. Perhaps decreasing the availability of on-campus parties would not lead to an increase in the number of downtown events occurring. Yet, when downtown events do occur, there's a greater anticipation for them, like what happened with Peter, who waited weeks for "Magic Gardens" and then drank so much beforehand he could barely remember the party at all, much less how he got home.

Not remembering how she arrived home is a common occurrence for Christine, a 22-year-old senior. She often wakes up in her bed, surprised, the last memory of the night a blurry image of her holding a drink.

In many ways, Christine is the perfect storm, the embodiment of the loopholes in Penn's drinking culture: she's old enough to legally drink, but she doesn't always know how to hold her liquor; she likes fraternity parties, but she has the economic means to spend a weekend downtown as well; she blacks out often, but always manages to get carried home; she maybe has a problem, but she's also just a kid in college, enjoying her life.

Like Peter, Christine couldn't remember how she got back to her apartment on Halloween. Unlike Peter, she claims this is a weekly occurrence. As a soon-to-be alum, she wants to make the most of her remaining time at Penn. And for her, making the most of it often results in blacking out. She likes to have fun, at frats, at bars—it doesn't matter as long as there is alcohol and good music. The promise of a fun-filled weekend is how she slogs through the week, counting down the days until she can disappear from the stresses of her nursing coursework.

Before she turned 21, she loved going to fraternity parties. Now that she's legal, she likes to mix it up a bit. Half the night at a fraternity to pre-game—since the liquor there is free and she hates buying drinks—and then the remaining half at a club downtown, where she can dance, sing, and maybe see if they have a loyalty program. Ever since she applied for membership at Voyeur Nightclub, she realized that these programs offered discounts and waived entry fees, giving her even more of an incentive to schlep downtown.

On Thursdays, she likes to go to The Blarney Stone, a bar located right behind her apartment building. Thursdays are “college nights,” where a five-dollar entrance fee buys her one-dollar drinks until midnight. The line sometimes snakes around the corner, and inside, a fortress of bodies forms around the bar, clamoring for the attention of the two bartenders. Groups of girls carry small drink buckets with the Malibu Rum insignia stamped across them, and even the football players trade in their usual Bud Lights to chug fruity cocktails out of cups that seem tiny in their hands.

Tonight, on a Friday, Christine is off to a fraternity for a pre-game before she Ubers downtown. She's not thrilled to be going. Alpha Sigma Phi isn't exactly a “top-tier” frat, but she ran out of alcohol with which to pre-game, so it's the economical option, especially since a club “sucks ass” if she has to attend sober. One of her good friends is a brother at Alpha Sigma, so she's confident she'll get in. Ever since Penn established the Task Force, most fraternities descended underground with their parties, meaning that only a select few are notified about events that are happening. Tonight, she is one of the select few.

Christine is 5'2” and whippet thin, with long blonde hair, ice-blue eyes, and a proclivity towards red lipstick. “It's always a crazy night when I wear red lipstick,” she says while rifling through the closet for a “fracket,” a “frat jacket,” that she wouldn't mind losing on a night out. “It's just like, when I wear it, I know something is going to happen—whether it's getting kicked out of an Uber, getting kicked out of a nightclub, or getting pepper sprayed.”

All of these things have happened to her before, and she has animated stories about each incident that she brings up while her roommate, Jacob, a 22-year-old junior, gets ready. The two of them operate as a dynamic duo, calling themselves “Coobie and Steenie,” and loudly proclaiming, “Coobie and Steenie are going *out*.”

Unable to find her “fracket,” Christine decides to brave the 30-degree weather in just her black minidress. She hobbles ahead of Jacob as they walk to the party, and by the time she arrives at the fraternity house, she is shivering, antsy for her first drink of the night to warm her up.

Outside, Alpha Sigma Phi is a nondescript brownstone, indistinguishable from the row of houses nearby except for the Greek letters hanging above the porch. Inside, bottles of liquor are passed around as partygoers meander through the first floor, mingling and dancing with the brothers.

Tonight’s party is technically a mixer with one of the sororities on campus, but it’s really a “dirty rush” event. Official fraternity recruitment begins in the spring semester, but by “dirty rushing” members, a fraternity could call dibs on which guys to nab for its incoming pledge class. In the living room, a Ping-Pong table is set up, and four boys are split into two teams. Behind the table, the kitchen counter is littered with bottles of alcohol, from bottom-shelf Banker’s Club Vodka to a bottle of Tito’s. A few girls are huddled around the counter, pouring margarita mix into their sugar-rimmed, red-solo cups.

"Jacob, they have blowjob shots in there. Come take one with me!" Christine nods towards a table in the center room. It’s filled with shot glasses, identical rows of plastic brimming with a combination of Baileys Irish Cream liqueur, Kahlúa, Amaretto, and dollops of whipped cream on top. Next to these shots is an ice luge, and two partygoers are kneeling, mouths sealed against the edge of the structure as a fraternity brother pours a generous trial of tequila down the luge.

Christine beelines for the kitchen counter, blindly pouring a combination of vodka and orange soda into a cup as she chats with one of her friends. In the corner, Jacob whispers, "Christine doesn't know how to drink. She just keeps going." He takes a sip of his own drink, watching as her laughter grows louder and her movements more animated. He shakes his head, amused. “She has no self-control when it comes to alcohol. None. Zip. Zero.”

At 11:30 p.m., the Uber arrives. Christine is four drinks in at this point, and she carries her cup out of the house, tossing it onto the pavement right before she steps into the car.

At iCandy, a popular gay club that is notoriously easy on fake IDs, the bouncer scans everyone’s licenses. Back when Jacob used to have a fake, he went here often. Although he may now legally drink, there’s still something nostalgic about iCandy, with its first-floor bar and second-floor discotheque, half-naked servers with Jell-O shots circulating between the levels.

“I’m so hungry, I could eat myself,” Christine announces, before ordering a vodka and

cranberry, her fifth drink of the night. Drinks in hand, the roommates head upstairs, where strobe lights rebound off the bodies of three sweat-slicked dancers clad only in underwear. Christine and Jacob throw their arms up in the air, careful not to spill their drinks on each other. The night amps up as the two chug their cocktails:

At 12:30 a.m., Christine starts to shriek, wildly, for no particular reason. The sound that comes out of her is so guttural it seems incongruous with her small stature. The music is loud, but her scream is louder, and several people glance over, flabbergasted.

At 12:40 a.m., Jacob saunters up to the stage and stuffs a one-dollar bill into the leopard print underwear of one of the dancers. Soap bubbles rain down around him.

At 12:52 a.m., Jacob and Christine begin to playfully bicker:

"I'm texting your mother, Christine! I'm telling Kathleen what a naughty girl you are!"

"It's Kathy, you asshole!"

At 1 a.m., they're in the Uber, heading back to campus for "mozzeys," their nickname for mozzarella sticks. "We just want pizza and mozzeys," they scream, as Christine reaches for the Aux cord in the car, putting on Jacob's "party songs" playlist.

At Allegro's pizza place, surrounded by similarly inebriated students, the two have a brief argument over whether to eat there or at home. Eventually, Jacob relents and the two begin to walk back. A hundred feet from the entrance to their apartment building, his hand darts out, whipping up Christine's dress. "Fuck! My whole ass was just exposed to the outside," she shrieks as she pulls it back down, almost falling over in the process. In turn, Jacob laughs hysterically and jogs ahead to swipe into the building.

Once inside their apartment, Christine seems to forget her prior distress and plops down on the couch. She bites into a slice of Margherita pizza and recounts the time she drank eight drinks at a Halloween party and told "this gay guy to cut his dick off—just cut it right off! He was a bottom, so it wasn't like he was using it anyways!"

By the time she has finished her three slices of pizza, her sentences have begun to taper off. Her red lipstick is smeared across her bottom lip, and the gold glitter eye shadow she meticulously applied earlier rains down her cheeks. She stands, wiping the crumbs off her dress and announcing: "I'm going to remember all of this tomorrow morning. Tonight wasn't a typical Coobie and Steenie night out. It wasn't as lit." On a typical night out, she probably would have gone to a few more clubs, stayed out a little later, had three or four more drinks. But tonight, she's ready for bed. She has a big exam Monday morning that she needs to study for tomorrow.

Out of all her friends from home, Christine is the only one who blacks out. Her therapist has expressed concern over her drinking, recommending rehab. "I admit that I do have some issues with controlling what I drink, but I don't think it's extreme enough for *rehab*." Curled

in a pile of blankets, Christine rides out her hangover, using her water bottle to gesture emphatically as she discusses her relationship with alcohol. “I’m not an *alcoholic*. I feel like everybody here is like me. Who’s sober? People black out here—it’s part of college. Everybody is so stressed out here, and it’s really nice to be drunk—to laugh and dance and not worry about homework and exams.”

In a few hours, she’ll have to get up and study, spend the majority of her Saturday at an overcrowded Starbucks, hunched over her notes. But for right now, she’ll stay cocooned in bed, hoping that by afternoon the room will stop spinning. She takes a long sip of water, finishing the bottle and tossing it to the side. “Sure, I get a little disappointed in myself after a blackout, but that doesn’t scare me away from drinking.”