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Cerrando La Puerta

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Cerrando La Puerta

By Mireille A. Roman

I'm not sure when it started, when I had developed the itch to drink, when I could not say no to another round, when it all came crashing down. This drinking testimony is not a love story in fact it's more of a romanticization to keep going even when the going bad. A story of an 18-year-old 700 miles from home with generational qualms that were thirsty for healing, healing quenched by the gold at the bottom of a Modelo. This Rosa de Guadalupe episode was my life these past couple years. These are snapshots of my personal entanglement with alcohol.

I had my first drink during Spring Break at 18 in Elijah's dorm in College Creek, someone snapped a picture celebrating my sip of a Great White, strangers goading me on. I had a taste of the goofy giggles, the lust for making love, sloppy steps home accompanied by Z's giggles, and I got to Sankofa at six am like those song lyrics say... I was finally a main character, the star of a movie, my movie, this movie called life, my life. I couldn't just let the drinks suck me into a sinful consumption and I mean Jesus turned water to wine *so as long as I don't lose control I could consume this*. The shame didn't linger long because drinking was more digestible than getting baked as a cake, Momma won't mind.

When I moved off campus at 19, I began to enjoy the luxury of a beer after work, a cider to calm the nerves, a shot to silence the stress of school, a \$5 Lagunita with my roommates, mimosas with the girls at brunch. Then the invitations were to \$2 Pint Nights at Sidelines where I reminded myself not to bring my good shoes, river trips sharing Black Cherry White Claws with strangers who turn into friends. There's the night at TJ's where you pregame in the car cause my friend beat cancer and drove up from The Bay, I'm shedding tears of hidden sorrow for the dead homies who couldn't be out here for my birthday. I was in a relationship with the consumption of alcohol as long as it was conditional to celebration, I was growing up.

It's all dandy when the drinks help you process the growing pains, there's community, there's comradery, there's joy, other people feel you, they know where you are coming from, they're there with you. There are hella people around when the rounds are bought, when the pitchers are full, when the tabs have been covered, it's all fun until someday it's not. One night someone uses alcohol against you, robs you of your innocence as you lay unconscious in your bed, you wake with the meanest hangover, a head full of confusion, and when you realize what's happened to you. You run to the bottle to make it go away and it's there to receive you.

After that the nights aren't filled with enough hours to have fun outside the reality brought on by daybreak. An innocent flashback to a spiked drink in my HSU canteen at the last football game in Humboldt's history justified my need to drink at school. From then I snuck mimosas into the soccer games as I did homework on the sideline, I had spiked a soda and drank it in the library to make the study time fly by. Then one day I ordered a beer instead of a coffee because it's after 3pm in The Depot and why not? I'm here to relax and play a couple rounds of pool. It's okay to drink after (or before) a three-hour lecture because "damn that was long" and I'm going through a lot. A Black Butte Porter ain't bad after you've been dumped by your twin flame because that's not easy to go through after your midterms, it's okay.

Then it became okay to have a mini shot from The Hutch on my way to school at 10am, to pretend this michelada is just a V8, it's okay. If someone finds out, it's okay, because it's turnt, it's fun, it's sexy, it's cool, you're cool, you're drunk, you're blunt, you're honest, you're savage. You wildin', you trifiln.' You have the audacity. IT'S ALL GOOD, you're showing up, you're trying, there's problems in your head that live up there with the homework and the work projects you have to get done. You can cry for two minutes in the bathroom stall but you gotta go back to the meeting, the classroom, the lecture, the assignment, and *then* you'll go to the Cider Bar after. It'll be fine.

One morning I woke up on my new friend's couch late to a meeting, having to cross town to get there, showing up in last night's outfit. It only happened once or twice or thrice or sum, "get it together Mireille, you're getting sloppy," my little voice would remind me. Then I came to class a little more faded than usual, I led team meetings smelling like the rum I downed before getting there, I ran to The Depot during the 10-minute break at lecture to guzzle down a beer so the professor seemed a little more interesting. I would get to the bars earlier to enjoy the atmosphere more, I would play pool longer, I'd get to know more folks, and I'd mosey home. All excuses to have more time with my lover, my addiction, my single, truest friend. When I got home, I only had to be with myself unoccupied for 20 minutes before bed and then in the morning my consciousness was drowned with busy work to finish this degree...there's no time to check in with me.

It's been two years since Sidelines closed, two years since I've had a real bar crawl, I switched spots and drank at Tomo's, but it wasn't the same. I was hungry for a fulfillment no bottle, shot, or handle could bring me. Truth is I wish someone would have pulled me aside and had a heart to heart, sometimes I wonder if anyone saw the cracks in my character, I wonder if anyone saw how yellow my eyes had become. I can't go down that rabbit hole anymore. I can't wonder why folks couldn't stop their lives for me, I cannot feel entitled to folks like that. So I guess, I'm glad the bar isn't in The Depot anymore, just like as I'm typing this, I look forward to celebrating my eighth month of sobriety in 11 days. Eight months of excusing myself from the show at Richard's Goat cause I feel the need for a drink, cause I feel left out. Eight months of standing firm in my "no thank you's" when the same drunk foo offers to buy me one at Bondies. Eight months of hot sweats, nightmares, and 2 hours of sleep because of the withdrawals, it's been daunting, **and** in the end, it has been worth it for me. If I could go back. I would sit down with **myself**, give me a hug, and share some love instead of some liquor. I would listen, hold space, and be there within a capacity I could commit myself to.

I can't go back; I can only move forward with the progress I've made.

I can't promise I won't relapse and if I do I hope I'm there with open arms to receive myself.